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A Review of Effective Communication and Its Impact on Interpersonal Relationships, Conflict Resolution, and Decision-Making

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Abstract: *The purpose of this research paper is to review effective communication and its impact on interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution, and decision-making in the workplace. In order to address the research topic, this research has been done by a qualitative method. Qualitative research included 10 semi-structured interviews with an average of 25 to 30 minutes. Participants were selected from diverse groups of people, and the average age group was 18-45. The result of this research study included perceptions of effective decision-making, interpersonal relationships, and conflict resolution were linked with the potential application in both the practical and academic fields. In the practical field, the focus was set on making rational decisions, building interpersonal relationships, and resolving conflicts on time. Humans are inherently flawed and biased in information processing. An effective decision mostly depends on the quality of information, and decision-making is one of the most important functions performed by a business leader. The higher the amount of accurate and relevant information a person has, the higher the quality of the decision will be.*

Keywords: Effective Communication, Interpersonal Relationship, Conflict Resolution, Decision-Making.

JEL Code: M10

1. Introduction

Information is the result of processing, manipulating, and organizing data in a way that adds to the knowledge of the receiver. In other words, it is the context in which data is taken. The Oxford dictionary (2015) defines information as knowledge communicated concerning some particular fact, subject, or event of which one is apprized or told, intelligence, or news. Using of right information has a linear relationship to making an effective decision, whether it is an organization or personal life (Ittner & Larker, 2006, Davenport and Harris, 2010). It is essential providing correct and accurate data because most organizations have plenty of data available which to make a decision but complain about drawing in data whilst thirsting for the right information (Herrmann, 2001).

2. Research Elaboration

The research outline of this study is qualitative. Qualitative research focuses on the perception of the individual and his or her experiences. It thereby assesses how people make sense of the world and the underlying concepts and contrasts they use to explain various perceived casualties. A semi-structured interview template was developed following research into interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution, and decision-making in the organization. Dictaphone was used to record the interviews and digital editing software to aid transcription. Data were collected by conducting face-to-face interviews on a one-to-one basis at the participant's place of work. Each participant spent half an hour and frequently asked an average

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of 31 semi-structured questions. All the interview data was collected and transcribed before being submitted to a thematic analysis. The thematic analysis followed the method described by Braun and Clarke, (2006). This involved noting initial ideas throughout the transcription phase and then coding the data and collating the codes for themes. The themes which came out of the initial collation were then reviewed and refined as the researcher went back to the transcripts reading and re-reading to ensure that the themes worked across the entire data set and that each had clear definitions and evidence to support them with any contradictions within the data highlighted for note.

Decision-making is an essential part of the management function. It is the process of choosing what to do by considering the possible consequences of different choices (Brockman and Russell, 2009; Walker, 2001). Flin O'Connor and Crichton, (2008) stated that decision-making is the process of reaching a judgment or choosing an option to meet the needs of a given situation. When the interest of stakes is too important, it quite often happens that people don't sure what to decide, (Bouyssou et al, 2000). Making a decision can be complex because of the large number of factors that influence the decision-making process (Brockman and Russell, 2009). One of the big factor is the quality of information to make a good decision because human is inherently flawed and biased in information processing (Wallace et al, 2003).

An interpersonal relationship is the driving force of our everyday life. Most American report that the quality of their lives is determined by the number and quality of their interpersonal relationship (Tesser & Campbell, 1980). Individuals with good relationships live longer and report less physical and psychological illness and greater satisfaction with life (Duck, 1981). The failure of interpersonal relationships has been associated with suicide (Stech, 1980). Psychiatric problems (Bloom, Asher, and White, 1978), social stress (Chiriboga, 1979), and family instability (Albrecht, 1980) might be happened because of poor interpersonal relationships. Conflict is defined as an incompatibility of goals or values between two or more parties in a relationship combined with attempts to control each other and antagonistic feelings toward each other (Fisher 1990). It is also thought that conflict is a perceived divergence of interest or a belief that the party's current aspiration cannot be achieved simultaneously (Pruit and Robins, 1986). Hart (2002) stated that differing personal values can cause conflict, and segregation in the workplace leads to gossiping and suspicion.

Growing numbers of management experts suggest that emotional intelligence contributes to work performance (Goleman, 1998; Huy, 1999; Mayer et al, 2000). At the same time, some researcher has begun to specifically consider the impact of emotional intelligence on performance in teams (Druskat and Wolff 2001, Jordon et al., 2002). Goleman (1998) also suggested individuals with high emotional intelligence will have superior conflict resolution skills and engage in greater collaboration where emotion is both controlled and generated to develop new solutions that satisfy both parties' needs. Indeed, recent research by Jordon et al. (2002) found a positive link between collaboration as a prepared style of conflict resolution and high individuals emotional intelligence. Jamieson and Thomas, (1974) showed compromise or accommodation was appropriate and acceptable conflict resolution behavior when time and resources are limited, and the issue is not important.

3. Results

The 10 interviews with an average duration of 25-30 minutes, and each interview were analyzed using the analytical framework of the thematic analysis that is introduced by Ely (1991) and Willing (2008). For increasing readability and consistency, longer or combined quotations will be referenced. The category internally inconsistent does not mirror the discrepancy between the two assessments but indicates that the person referred to or displayed both characteristics in self-descriptions in a not consistent manner. The matching of the inconsistency with the differences in the assessment does not seem to be coincidental but an expression of how the inconsistency might have influenced the perception of the interviewer. In this research project total of 10 participants, interviews were taken, and included the Line Manager, deputy manager, team leader as well as customer assistant. In interview 2, decision-making in the workplace was identified as a

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'main management function'. Management theorists also agree that decision-making is an important function for all management activities. Interviewee 3, stated that an effective decision produces a good outcome, and a wrong decision produces the opposite. To make good decisions, management should work rationally stated in interview 3, and we should get rid of cognitive bias while we make a decision. The topic of decision-making was addressed by the participants in various manners and included interesting concepts and their importance in the organization. Before analyzing the sub-topic, the most common and repeatedly given statements about the importance of decision-making in organizational life.

The quality of information exchange and its accuracy is very important for effective decisions in the workplace. Interview 6, stated that in their workplace quality of information exchange is low, when someone passes information to another person, one shows biases in his information processing because human is fundamentally faulty and prejudiced in information giving out. The main attribute of quality information is solid and faultless information for better decisions in the workplace. In interview 7, stated that some of his employees make accurate information rather than biased information and their judgment is most of the time accurate. On the other hand, interview 10, stated that most of the time, information is manipulated and imperfect in the workplace, and employees interpret information based on their knowledge and experience.

Personality traits are highly correlated with relationship satisfaction. Positive emotionality was related to higher quality relationships in the workplace and low levels of negative relationship outcomes. In an interview 4, stated that 'positive emotionality' helps to build good relationships in the workplace. The extroverts were mostly described as strong in the area of communication while sometimes being a little rougher' or even very aggressive. On the other hand, introverts are described as someone who are calm, cool, and reflective. This was also introduced in the statement concerning 'quitter people' and 'not really outgoing'. Emotional stability was described as a 'leadership' trait, and neuroticism was described as an 'aggressive' and 'non-leadership' personality type. Conscientiousness traits were thought of as a 'deep thinker and 'articulate' in their work. Conscientious people make a 'deep relationship' in the workplace, and they are 'trustful'. Conflicts were mostly described by participants' incapability of goals or values between two or more parties in a relationship combined with attempts to control each other. In interview 6, they stated that perceived 'divergence on interest' or 'belief' differs from others' opinions. Conflict is also stated as a 'fact of life' in interview 6, and dealing with conflict is a 'great challenge' to management.

Therefore, the probability of conflicts arising is very high. Conflicts have both positive and negative outcomes for the individual's employees and organizations at large. There is no source of conflict, which occurs in organizations at all levels of management. The main reason behind workplace conflict is differences in 'personality' stated in interview 1. Furthermore, participants described the causes of conflict as 'poor communication', and 'poor work environment'. Participants also described the 'unfair workload' stated in interview 10, and 'bullying and harassment, as major causes behind the conflict. In interview 7, they stated that an 'unresolved problem' from the past was the reason for conflict.

Personality affects an individual choice of conflict strategy through various motivational, cognitive, and affective processes. For example, people with different personalities may have different motivations and thus use different conflict strategies because they value and seek different outcomes in the conflict situation. People tend to experience more positive affect when they engage in behaviors that are compatible with their personality and, therefore may find the use of some conflict strategies more rewarding than others. Most of the participants agreed that emotionally intelligent and conflict resolution have a direct positive link. Emotionally intelligent people have 'superior conflict resolution skills' stated in interview 4, and acceptable 'conflict resolution behavior' stated in interview 8. Indeed, positive link between collaboration as a prepared style of conflict resolution and high individuals' emotional intelligence. Compromise or accommodation was appropriate and acceptable conflict resolution behavior when time and resources are limited and the issue is not important.

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4. Discussion

Decision-making is a vital part of the management function. Even a low-level supervisor makes several decisions in a workday. In this research project, decision-making and its accuracy are being studied, and how different types of intellectual predispositions influence decisions is explained. The fact that one participant acknowledged that their decision-making process is not accurate. When management makes any decision, most of the time, they do groupthink or conformity. This shows that their decision-making is not accurate. Another participant described that when they make a decision, most have the time, the quality of information exchange is not correct, or information is distorted. Therefore, decision-making can be complex because of the large number of factors that influence the decision-making process (Brockman and Russell, 2009).

Interpersonal relationships are the driving force of our everyday life. Individuals with good relationships live longer and report less physical and psychological illness and greater satisfaction with life (Duck, 1981). One participant said that his interpersonal relationships are not good. He finds it difficult to share feelings with his colleague. One of the main components of better communication among colleagues is active listening. One participant described that top management individuals very rarely listen to them. Personality traits are most highly correlated with relationship satisfaction. Agreeable individuals are described as compassionate, flexible, fair, generous, and considerate. In the interview, one participant described those positive personalities, such as openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientious people make a stronger relationships in the working place. On the other hand, introversion and neuroticism traits are very difficult to approach. Conflict is generally regarded as disengagement regarding interests and ideas (Esquivel and Kleiner, 1997). One participant described that he has conflicts in the workplace. Most of the time his attitude and opinions are not similar to his colleague. Another participant described that conflict sometimes brings positive effects in the workplace. However, Hocker and Wilmot, (1995) stated that people tend to view conflict as a negative force, but conflict often leads to positive effects, such as improving the quality of the decision, and Knippen and Green, (1999) stated that resolved conflict could increase organization performance.

Personality traits are one of the most important determinants of the conflict management process. Most of the participants agreed that personality traits also could contribute to better conflict resolution, quality decisions, and better interpersonal relationships. One participant described that neurotic's people are very aggressive and difficult to approach. On the other hand, the open and agreeable people are very warm and kind. Emotionally intelligent people can handle conflict in any situation. This type of person is self-aware and empathetic. Goleman (1998) also suggested individuals with high emotional intelligence will have superior conflict resolution skills and engage in greater collaboration where emotion is both controlled and generated to develop new solutions that satisfy both parties needs.

5. Conclusion

Effective communication is vital for maintaining interpersonal relationships, resolving conflicts in the workplace, and improving decision-making. It is found that positive interpersonal relationship depends on effective communication, causes of interpersonal conflicts are personality traits, and people with higher emotional intelligence have higher conflict resolution skill, and they can maintain a positive interpersonal relationship in the workplace. On the other side, effective communication has a linear relationship with appropriate decision-making. When the information process is wrong, the individual perceives things wrongly, and communication becomes ineffective. Thereby, wrong information exchange leads to poor communication, and poor communication triggers wrong decisions. Thus, quality information exchange requires effective communication and effective communication helps individuals to take accurate decisions.

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