

Role of Emotional Intelligence in Conflict Management

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Abstract

This study explores the interplay between emotional intelligence (EI) and conflict management and advocates that there is a strong positive relationship amid the variables. Practical implications for leaders in conflict management are provided.

Keywords: EI, conflict management

Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer and Salovey, 1997a, b pp. 3-33). Salovey and Mayer (1990) categorized EI into five key domains as follows: self-awareness, managing emotions, self-motivation, empathy, and relationships' handling. Goleman (1995) later developed four key dimensions of EI to include knowing and managing emotions of oneself, self-motivation, empathy toward others, and social deftness. Comparatively, Conflict is a pervasive phenomenon that pervades a multitude of organizational processes and outcomes. Its omnipresence and the importance of conflict management has been acknowledged in diverse fields including psychology, communication, organizational behaviour, information systems (IS), and marketing (Deutsch, 1990; Greenhalgh, 1987, 229-271; Pondy, 1967; Pruitt and Rubin, 1986; Putnam and Poole, 1987 pp. 549-599; Robey et al., 1989; Thomas, 1976; 1992; Wall and Callister, 1995). The purpose of this study is to establish the relationship between the two variables: EI and conflict management.

Literature Review: Correlation between EI and Conflict Management

Scholars identify that there are numerous conflict management styles at the workplace and the integrating style has been considered a significant style in managing interactions with other individuals in conflict scenarios, enhancing proper resolutions of conflict and producing greater productive results (Gross and Guerrero, 2000). Research also demonstrates that EI plays an important role in resolving conflicts functionally (Jordan and Troth, 2002, 2004). Jordan and Troth (2004) argued that "the ability to be aware of and manage emotions is also thought to facilitate functional than dysfunctional conflict resolution and consequently contribute to better team performance". Emotionally intelligent people have the ability to better manage and regulate their own emotions and the emotions of others (Ng et al., 2007; Mayer et al., 2008). With greater EI, leaders display greater empathy that encourages individuals to consider other interests when they want to solve conflicts. Moreover, this empathy can lead people to be altruistic (Singer and Fehr, 2005; Declerck and Bogaert, 2008), cognizant of the existence of other people's needs (Kamdar et al., 2006) and more skillful in anticipating how other people will behave and act (Singer and Fehr, 2005; Declerck and Bogaert, 2008). With these characteristics, EI leaders may regard other

people's needs and interests in solving conflict. In addition, EI leaders are more likely to select integrating and compromising styles because those styles may have more beneficial outcomes in terms of the efficacy and suitability (Gross and Guerrero, 2000; Sharma and Sehrawat, 2014). Given that integrating and compromising styles have positive effects on conflict resolution (Gross and Guerrero, 2000), these styles are preferably the styles selected by leaders as part of their EI in conflict resolution.

Methodology

The study utilized exploratory research and depended on scholastic reviews of the literature to explain "correlation amid EI and conflict management". Key implications are elucidated in the study from the reviews.

Discussion

Scholarships have suggested that EI may be used by organizations to select effective leaders (George, 2000; Kobe et al., 2001). Other scholar's highpoint that leaders can benefit from providing EI training to leaders (Barling et al., 2000). Mayer et al. (2004) stated that leaders need to cope with the mood of their organizations and that a mysterious blend of psychological abilities known as EI is what leaders need to accomplish that goal. Kellett et al. (2002) report that perceiving other's feelings and empathizing with them may establish an effective bond that is beneficial for leadership. Leaders' use of emotions can enhance cognitive processes and decision making (George, 2000). Rosete and Ciarrochi (2005). The reviews are very helpful for developing assessment and appraisal tools to determine the congruency and association amid the leaders EI and the conflict management strategies in practice in various organisational contexts. This also has implications for EI training to be better able to manage conflicts at the workplace. It is also pertinent to diagnose authentic versus unauthentic emotions at the workplace and the way differing leadership and conflict styles can be integrated in different national and cultural contexts.

Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, this research advocates for more investigations on the topic in different context, nationalities and cultures. It also stresses on the significance of assessment/appraisals, trainings and evaluation of the importance of EI for individual, team and organisational effectiveness. A multi-tiered approach in investigating leaders, peers and all echelons of staff is essential. EI can also be explored on different work dimensions and OB areas.

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