CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP STYLES. COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY WITH FUTURE LEADERS

Csilla MIZSER

Óbuda Univeristy Keleti Faculty of Business and Management Department of Economics and Finance;
e-mizser.csilla@uni-obuda.hu, ORCID: 0000-0002-9908-4536

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the leadership styles and how economics and manager students vote to manage conflicts within their relationships and with other entities.

Design/methodology/approach: an exhaustive review of the literature on leadership decision-making and conflict management has been carried out, focusing on trust, conflict management theories, models that have distinct influence in conflict management. In addition, a study of conflict management has been carried out in Óbuda University and in Pontifical University of Salamanca.

Findings: In the course of work of the study was found the identified comparison of the most striking conflict management styles, that explain how students manage conflicts.

Originality/value: The questions answered by future leaders provides that the paper is able to mediate new mark. The value of the paper that it reflects the direct answers of future leaders in 2022 and it is addressed to university students, teachers, leaders, for employers and employees, both in the private sector and in the public sector.

Keywords: conflict, conflict management, leadership styles, alternative dispute resolution, litigation.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

Human beings are above all social beings that relate to each other, forming different types of groups to carry out multiple activities. Business organizations are not exempt from this type of relationship; moreover, it is usual for individuals in this type of entity to organize themselves hierarchically in such a way that some interrelate with others through leadership mechanisms, therefore, it is important that leaders develop an adequate role in the resolution of conflicts that are generated in organizations (Khanaki-Hassenzade, 2010).

Furthermore, globalization has made decision-making and conflict resolution increasingly complex as new causes and types of conflicts have emerged (Jehn, 2000; Matthew, 2009; Kahai, 2004). The role of leadership, in order to resolve conflicts should have a series of mechanisms that help establish what type of relationship exists between the leader and the subordinates (Saeed et al., 2014). In most cases, in companies these leadership mechanisms are usually established precisely by leaders in the way they relate to their subordinates.

2. Literature review. Hypothesis of the paper

2.1. Leadership style as basis of conflict management

Many business executives often find themselves in need of conflict resolution within their own organizations and between organizations, and they must use all their leadership skills to do so.

We can define leadership as the process of influencing and motivating a group of people towards a common goal (Galinsky et al., 2008). I also understand that the first responsibility of the leader is to define reality and the last is to thank his subordinates for the tasks carried out. Between these two stages the leader has to play a double role of serving and demanding (DePree, 2004).

In any organization, the presence of emotional tensions and conflicts of all kinds is common, and it is here that they can help them release tensions, harmonize misunderstandings and deal with disruptive behaviors (Fisher, 2000).

However, the style with which conflicts are managed has been and continues to be measured using different classifications. One of the first conceptual outlines to classify conflict management started from the idea that conflicts must be identified and managed fairly and sensibly, for this, those who have to find solutions to conflicts must enjoy skills such as Communication, being oriented to problem solving and negotiation skills, is therefore a simple dichotomy of cooperation-competition (Deutsch, 1949).

For many scholars this dichotomy is too simplistic to reflect the complexity of individual perceptions of conflict behavior (Ruble, 1976; Smith, 1987) and this led to the development of a more applied style classification (Blake, 1964).

Although many researchers have proposed numerous classifications, for example, it has been argued that individuals select between three or four conflict styles (Pruitt, 1983; Putnam et al., 1982); the most accepted one has been the conceptualization of (Rahim, 1979). These authors differentiate the styles of interpersonal conflict resolution in two basic dimensions: caring a lot about themselves and caring about others. We can say that while the first dimension explains the degree to which a person tries to solve his own problems,

the second dimension tells us to what extent the individual also tries to solve the problems of others.

As a result of the combination of these two dimensions, five specific styles of conflict management emerge: 1) The integrating style in conflict resolution is characterized because the individual focuses his leadership in solving the problems of oneself and others, 2) the leadership style in avoiding conflict resolution corresponds to that individual who shows a low concern for solving the problems of himself and others, 3) the obliging style implies a low involvement on the part of the leader in solving his problems, but nevertheless with a high concern for the problems of others, 4) the dominating conflict resolution leadership style is characterized by a high concern for the problems of himself and a low concern for the problems of others, and 5) the leadership style compromising in the conflicts are associated with an intermediate involvement. both in solving his own problems and those of others.

As this is the classification accepted as suitable by the academic community, it is the one we have used in the conduct of our study.

Many studies have focused on analyzing the factors that determine the leadership style adopted. In this sense (Rahim, 1983; Rubin, 1985), suggest that women have a more cooperative orientation towards conflict management than men, other studies show that women are more competitive (Bedell, 1973; Bem, 1974) while some authors consider that the difference in conflict management is not so much in the sex of the individual as in the role of gender played (Bem, 1974; Bem et al., 1976; Spence et al, 1978), of In this way, they maintain that the differences in conflict management do not affect the behavior of men and women by their sex in itself, but by learned behavior patterns with masculine and feminine characteristics (Cook, 1985).

Psychological studies show us that men and women tend to carry out conflict management strategies according to their gender role (Wachter, 1999).

Furthermore, many academics maintain from their studies that men tend to be more conflictive (Rosenthal et al., 1988), aggressive (Kilmann-Thomas, 1977) and competitive (Rubin-Brown, 1975), while women seek consensus (Greeff et al., 2000). Although, on the other hand, other research suggests that men avoid conflict mediation more than women (Greeff, 2000) and when a woman avoids them it has more to do with power differences than with her gender (Korabik et al., 1993; Randel, 2002; Watson, 1996). The reason may be that many men experience anxiety in social settings, and this may explain why men are more likely to avoid conflict intervention than women (Heavey et al., 1993).

So it can be said that in general there is a consistent agreement in the literature on gender differences in the style of managing conflicts, we can cite in this sense to other major works regarding whether women prefer compromising styles (Holt et al., 2005), easy-going or avoidant (Cardona, 1995).

The question that arises next is whether there are other demographic variables that influence the way conflict is managed, and in this sense we can affirm that if based on, for example, the research that was carried out to determine if demographic characteristics affect organizational conflict where 5 questions were asked to collect information on the sex, marital status, income, education and work experience of the participants (Korkmaz et al., 2015).

The importance of the age of leaders in taking into account the leadership style and the conflict resolution model is highlighted in the research (Uzonwanne, 2016), which shows how leadership patterns are changing, even existing intergenerational collisions.

2.2. Conflicts

Conflict and conflict management is a key element in leadership analysis. The concept of conflict from a management point of view does not have a unique meaning (Coser, 1956; Dahrendorf, 1959; Pondy 1963; Fink, 1968), however Rahim (1983) considers conflict as an interactive process that becomes manifested in the incompatibility, disagreement or dissonance that occurs within or between social entities or individuals, deepening the disagreement (Marquis et al., 1996) that establish that the conflict arises from the difference of ideas, values or feelings between two or more people.

The conflict can also be considered as a collapse in the usual decision-making mechanisms, which causes the individual or group to have the need to look for new ways of looking for solutions (Rahim, 2010).

Logically, every organization is going to try that the conflict does not occur and in the event that it arises, it will solve it due to the negative consequences that it will have, therefore it will be sought that in any organization that there is stability and harmony between the individuals that they form it (Nadler et al., 1999).

But unfortunately conflict is a widespread phenomenon in all social spheres, thus (Landau et al., 2001) states that conflict has always existed in human relationships and that it will probably always exist, in fact, people who never experience conflict in their lives are because they live in fiction or confined or isolated from the rest of the world.

Once the existence of conflict in any human relationship is confirmed, it is important to know the inconveniences that it generates in organizations (Seval, 2006): It causes delays in decision-making, divergences in the objectives of the organizations, high staff turnover, reduces worker motivation, excessive energy consumption that limits the ability to achieve goals and reduces the efficiency of the organization.

In the search for a solution to a conflict, companies can resort to judicial procedures, but this has clear disadvantages for them, since in judicial litigation the parties lose control of the process that comes to be in the hands of the lawyers and the judiciary Furthermore, this conflict resolution procedure can take years.

Therefore, alternative dispute resolution methods have become increasingly used instruments for conflict resolution and can be classified as mediation, conciliation, negotiation and arbitration (Lieberman, 1986).

While in judicial cases the court has absolute jurisdiction to resolve the conflict and enforce the decision in compliance with those strictly established by law, in alternative dispute resolution methods the parties may take into account many other aspects such as their interests commercials (Bercovitch et al., 2001).

2.3. Leadership style and conflict resolution

Leaders in organizations must manage human resources and conflicts (Smith et al, 2003), their role is very important since employees are often attentive to the leadership style used in conflict management (Ekvall, 1996).

The Integrating style in management conflicts seeks the exchange of information and examines the differences to arrive at an effective solution acceptable to both parties. When leaders use an integrative style, they care as much about themselves as about others and solve problems (Rahim, 2010). Leaders who use an integrative style ensure that there are fewer disputes and that conflicts are short-lived in organizations. (Rahim et al., 1990).

The obliging style seeks to minimize differences and maximize commonalities to satisfy the concerns of the other party. It is a very suitable system when it is very difficult to find meeting points, but still the leader must make a decision. Like the integration style, it is a cooperative style, but it differs from this in that it is indirect and passive (Blake et al., 1964).

The dominating style is characterized in that leaders are more concerned with their own interests than the interests of the other party, it is very uncooperative. Managers who adopt this style tend to be ineffective in achieving their objective and tend to treat their subordinates inappropriately, which often leads to conflicts and is unlikely to comply with management directives (Rahim et al., 1990).

The style of avoiding is associated with situations of withdrawal or evasion, leaders who adopt this style for conflict management are not usually concerned with themselves or with others, it is a non-cooperative and indirect style. This style has also been called non-confrontation, inaction, or withdrawal, and is often inappropriate and ineffective. The compromising style is based on what you have to give to receive, which is why it starts from the principle that in all conflict situations both parties have to give in something to reach a solution acceptable to all. Available research on this style of conflict management tells us that it is a style that is perceived by organizations as moderately appropriate and effective (Gross et al., 2000).

2.4. Hyphotesis formulation

In this paper qunatitative methods will be used during testing hypotheses. The empirical study gave an opportunity to find the answer for the hypothesis.

The hypothesis is:

H0: There is no relationship between the conflict management style and choice of alternative dispute resolution.

H1: There is a relationship between the conflict management style and choice of alternative dispute resolution.

3. Data collection and methodology

On trust, McKnight (1996) and Rousseau et al., (1998) stated that it can support conflict management and provide a picture of the general state of society and can influence individuals — individuals, legal entities, communities, states, countries, nations — including. Mediation, mediation, and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) as one of the options for resolving and resolving conflict also serve to restore trust that has typically broken down in a conflict situation.

The topic of trust has been an issue for many since the global financial crisis erupted, and the level of trust in organizations and companies remains low. Having trust in an organization brings significant benefits and advantages to both the organization and the employees. Studies show both direct and indirect benefits, such as better performance, reduced costs, and increased social behavior. There is a direct link between trust and the efficiency and performance of organizations. Many believe that trust indirectly improves an organization's performance by fostering desirable workplace behavior and creating a more conducive atmosphere to improve collaborative organizational performance. In addition, trust contributes to increased knowledge sharing and innovation, discretionary behavior, and greater motivation and a positive attitude. Research shows that employees with a high level of organizational trust put more effort into their work as well as collaborate with others. In contrast, those with low levels of organizational trust are less effective or leave the company. Thus, trust can be linked to positive workplace behavior that supports the achievement of the organization's goals. This is clearly related to the central idea of human resource management, which emphasizes the facilitation of positive and desirable behavior for the organization, which contributes to the achievement of corporate goals, results in employee engagement and better performance. Today, organizations where lack of trust can be detected cannot remain competitive in the marketplace (Csókás, 2019).

The responses of 135 persons show that more people choose to settle amicably than to settle litigation. 57 answers were collected in Óbuda University Budapest and 78 answers were collected in Salamanca University from students during alternative dispute resolution lecture. According to the Thomas-Kilmann conflict model (1974) Figure 1 presents the dispersion of the collected answers. For the avoiding type (A), the answer "I always choose out-of-court settlement" is nine times the answer "Decide the court". Four and a half time of the answers „I always choose the out of court settlement" in case of accomodating (Ac) persons versus „go to court" answers, and more than four times as many of the problem-solving (P) persons would settle their conflict out of court as they would through litigation. The compromising (C) would sue 5 of the 18 main respondents and 13 would not, and more than 3 and a half times more of the competitive (Co) would settle a dispute out of court than they would sue. In total, 109 main respondents would be out of court, while 26 main respondents would settle their conflict in court in 2022.
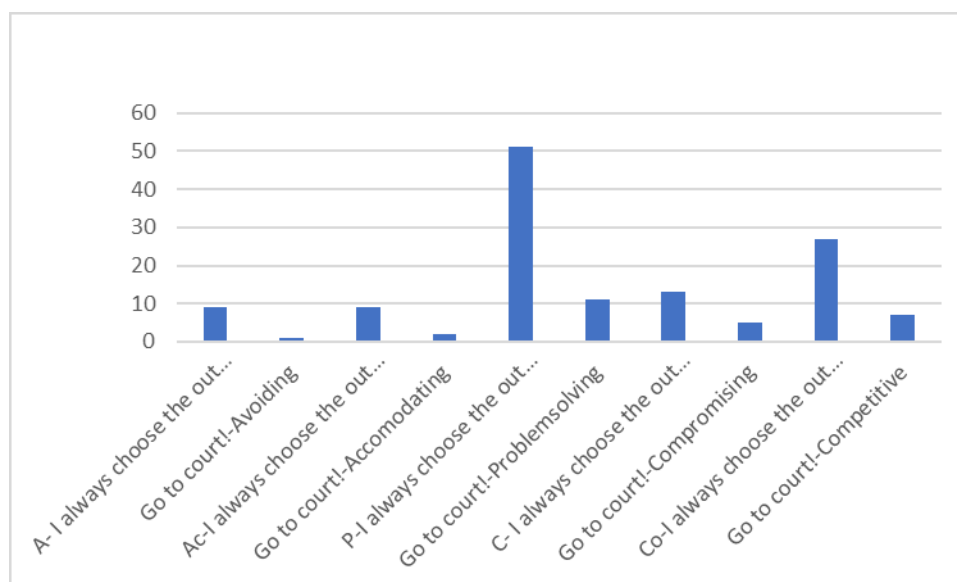

Figure 1. Conflict resolution decisions based on the Thomas-Kilmann model - Question: In a conflict, in a disputed situation: a.) I always choose out-of-court settlement, b.) Decide the court - own editing, 2022.

As shown in Figures 2 and 3, after responding from the types of conflict management according to the Thomas-Kilmann model, it can be demonstrated that most respondents belong to the problem-solving type and have the second highest rate of out-of-court alternative dispute resolution. Avoidance-type conflict resolution has the highest rate of out-of-court alternative dispute resolution. Considering only the answers of Hungarian students, most of the respondents belong to the problem-solving type of conflict management and the possibility of out-of-court alternative dispute resolution has the highest rate. Internationally, problem-solving conflict management is also in a leading position. Hypothesis H1 can be confirmed by the empirical part of my paper: there is a relationship between the conflict management style and choice of alternative dispute resolution.
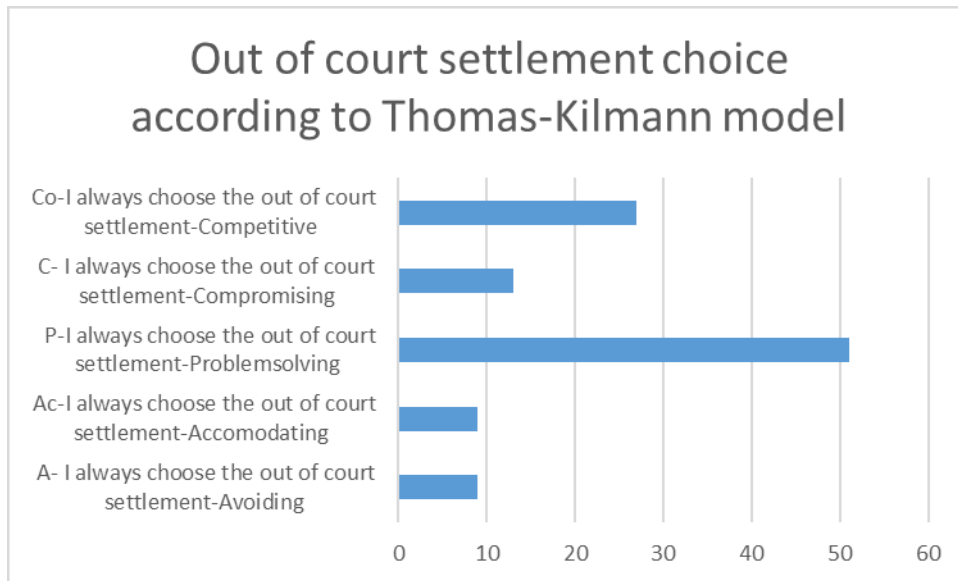
Figure 2. Conflict resolution decisions based on the Thomas-Kilmann model - Question: In a conflict, in a disputed situation: a.) I always choose out-of-court settlement, own editing, 2022.
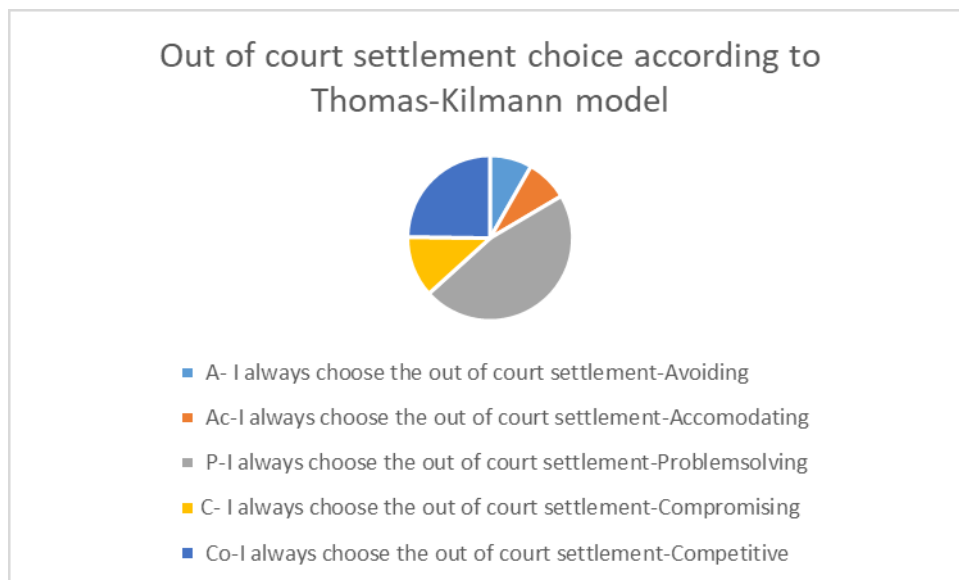

Figure 3: Conflict resolution decisions based on the Thomas-Kilmann model - Question: In a conflict, in a disputed situation: a.) I always choose out-of-court settlement - own editing, 2022.

4. Results

Both internal and external measurable trust affects an organization's financial performance. By internal trust, I mean the level of trust that employees have in each other and in the leaders of the organization. External trust is the trust that customers, partners, vendors, and investors have in a brand. Trust is made up of several factors.

The first component is competence; the belief that an organization is capable of delivering what it says. It is able to sustain itself and compete in the market. The second component is integrity; belief that the organization is fair and equitable. The third component is reliability; the belief that the organization keeps its promise and acts consistently. Trust is a dynamic process, so your measurements need to be done consistently, and not just through simple processes. It affects everything from cognitive and emotional perceptions to the intellectual level (Csókás, 2019).

The mediation process is preceded by one or more conflicts. In the conflict, in addition to the conflict of interests, trust between individuals has been lost, without which it is difficult to reach an agreement. Trust is needed to sign a contract. The goal and slogan "to trust the other party to perform the contract, to follow it voluntarily" often sounds unusual, surprising, unexpected at first for people in conflict who are just starting the mediation process. And this is one of the essential elements of the process - the mediation procedure seeks to build up the lost trust or to strengthen and transform it by concluding an agreement. Figure 4 summarizes this process. It is emphasized that conflicts of interest often stem from their inappropriate expression, and one party does not understand what the other party's needs or interests really are.

5. Conclusion

Where trust characterizes the organizational system, individuals perform better in that organization. Internal trust builds, strengthens, trust works back and forth, as does the opposite of trust, with distrust — of course, the opposite consequences. In a conflict situation, the organization and its leader can decide which path to take. Alternative dispute resolution, settlement, a realistic option for the existence or restorability of trust in the event of a conflict between persons. The number of legal disputes and lawsuits may decrease if trust is present in the organizational system and dispute-based dispute resolution is in place.

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