

A Study on Sport and Recreational Organizations' Conflict: The Moderating Effect of Conflict Management Style

Tzuyi Kao, Graduate Institute of Physical Education, Fu Jen Catholic University, TAIWAN, 495086069@mail.fju.edu.tw

Hung Yan Chen, Department of Physical Education, Fu Jen Catholic University, TAIWAN

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Abstract

It is unavoidable to have conflicts in an organization. Different conflicts will produce different effects on team effectiveness. Basically, team conflict is mainly divided into two kinds. One is task conflict, which is based on task and caused by discrepancies of the perspectives about job content and goal. It is generally believed that task conflict of an appropriate level is beneficial to an organization, it is a functional conflict. The other is emotional conflict which is a destructive conflict and is incompatibility of the perceptions about interpersonal relationships. The occurrence of team conflict will have great influence on both team performance and satisfaction of internal employees. However, currently there are few research on employees in sport and recreational industry, therefore, this study aimed to investigate the tendency of handling style as they confront with conflicts, the influence of background variables on leadership style, frequent conflicts in the organization, and leadership model in the hope that these results can be the basis in developing conflict management strategy and building management model for related industries.

This study consisted of two parts. In the first part, it utilized objective method – questionnaire survey of Likert 5-point scale – to measure the characteristics of 208 employees in the related industries of sport and recreation, including physical fitness trainer, dancing coach, managers of marketing and customer services department and employees. It investigated the distribution of the tendency of conflict management style and the conflict type in the decision-making process of the organization. In the second part, this study conducted in-depth interviews with the subjects who were willing to be interviewed further.

This study categorized conflict management style into the following 5 types based on Thomas' theory: integrating, competition, compromise, obliging and avoiding. For employees' characteristics, "integrating" was the most one which accounted for 71% of the sample, and the second was "compromise" which accounted for 16% of the sample. Among the variables, the conflict management styles of "integrating" and "obliging" were negatively correlated with emotional conflict (correlation coefficients respectively were -0.260 and -0.291), and the conflict management styles of "competition" was positively correlated with emotional conflict (correlation coefficients was 0.411), and only "integrating" variable had significant influence on task conflict. To investigate further, this study categorized these management styles by scores. The influence of the management style with higher level of integrating was significantly higher than the style with a lower one. It showed that if leaders demonstrate higher level of integrating in managing conflict, then they will facilitate

the production of task conflict more in a decision-making process of a team, and if leader demonstrate lower level of obliging, higher level of compromise, or higher level of competition, then it will lead to more emotional conflict. In other words, if a team want to reduce emotional conflict, then it is appropriate to choose a leader with higher level of obliging or lower level of compromise and competition. For the interview part, these subjects indicated that currently the source of conflict mainly came from customers. Therefore, they needed to utilize the method of problem solving that was cooperating with colleagues in the organization to brainstorm and work out ways to solve customers' problems in order to satisfy their needs. In other words, they united together and cooperated with each other to devote to solving problems and did not need to manifest their personalities and look for opportunities to gain good performances. Therefore, most of the time they utilized "integrating" conflict management style. On the other hand, these subjects also indicated that the good working environment and ambiance and open and roomy working field reduced the occurrence of conflict, besides, most customers came here delightedly, consequently the employees were delighted also. Generally, the subjects were all well-adapted in the organization, hence actually there were few perceived organizational conflict and most of them were external. Thus, this study suggested that future research do further investigation on external conflicts.

References

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