

MANAGING CONFLICT THROUGH TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

IS COLLABORATIVE STYLE A SOLUTION?

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PURPOSE
THE behavior pattern of transformational leaders towards handling of conflict is investigated in this paper.

Design/Methodology/Approach: *Hierarchical regression was used on of a survey among 206 professionals holding leadership roles from Indian Information Technology organizations.*

Findings: *Results show that the behavior pattern of Transformational leaders such as risk taking and the ability to understand others' feelings contributed significantly towards collaborating style. The demographic factors like age and experience have a strong influence on the style.*

Research Limitations/Implications: *The study was based on self rating questionnaire that limits checking of biasness due to social desirability. Also, the scope of regional culture influencing the relation among the variables remains desirable.*

Practical Implications: *This paper shed light on the importance of transformational leadership in reaching win-win situation during conflict resolution through risk taking and understanding attitude that can be developed and encouraged through assessment centers for greater integrity at the workplace.*

Originality/Value: *The significance of risk and feelings towards collaboration style of conflict handling is established.*

Key Words: *Transformational Leadership, Managing Conflict, Collaboration, Risk, Feelings.*

Introduction

Small groups working in teams are a common feature of organization structure and process in companies dealing with information technology (IT). These teams are headed by project leaders to facilitate the completion of assignments given to the team. In such small groups, leadership is viewed as a process that includes influencing people to implement the strategies and achieve the objectives (Yukl, David & Fleet, 2002). The desire of a single individual to bring about a change/transformation may not be adequate to push the organization ahead. There is a need for this desire to be planted in a larger number of individuals in the enterprise (Singh, et al., 2000). The desire of a single individual to bring about a change/transformation may not be adequate to push the organization ahead. There is a need for this desire to be planted in a larger number of individuals in the enterprise (Singh, Maheshwari,

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Rastogi & Chatterjee, 2000). In past lot of work have examined how specific types of leadership behavior are related to leader effectiveness. These empirical researches suggest that managerial effectiveness is predicted better by specific behavior exhibited by the leaders (Erkutlu, 2008). In IT organizations, the managerial effectiveness is focused on satisfying customers through redesigning of system and product development through the structure based on project management. The project manager's transformational leadership style has a positive impact on actual project performance (Leban & Zulauf, 2004; Keller, 1995; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sibasubramaniam, 1996). At the organizational level an environment should be created where human values get the prime importance to provide satisfaction among the human beings which is the ultimate objective of human development. This can be achieved only when the society and organizations in general and individuals in particular decide to transform knowledge workers into wisdom workers and transformational leaders for which purity of mind is the most essential pre-condition (Singh, 2002). Even, the transformational leadership literature points towards the capabilities of such leaders to enact change successfully with effective decision-making (Eisenbach, Watson and Pillai, 1999; Tourish and Pinnington, 2002).

The environment of a department or an organization, constitute of different elements which influence conflict in a variety of ways (Sheppard, 1992; Dess & Miller, 1993; Guzzo & Shea, 1992; Hackman, 1992). Specific performance indicators and availability of certain resources in the workplace vary, and the requirement of collective effort for results by the members opens the doors to conflict. The management of such organizational conflict involves the diagnosis and intervention of conflict at different levels of the organization. Designing of the appropriate intervention for various conflict situations enable the organizational members to effectively deal with it (Rahim et al., 2002). Studies have shown that positive conflict management actions, such as collaboration and competition positively impacted virtual team performance (Montoya- Weiss et al., 2001). Collaboration among team members allows for exchanges of help and division of work through better communication throughout the tasks (Verma, Rangnekar & Barua, 2012). The conflict handling approach adopted by the manager depends on their leadership style. Evidences indicate the extraordinary impact of transformational leadership on followers (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002). But, the impact of transformational leadership on performance is less known (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003; Dionne et al., 2004). One way of explaining the performance can be through the ability of such leaders in unifying the followers (Bass et al., 2003; House, 1998; Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999). As an explicit relation of their skills in resolving of conflict has not been clearly delineated (Kahai et al., 2000; Yammarino, 1996), this paper attempts to establish the behavior patterns of transformational leaders leading to conflict management.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is an intrinsically based motivational process whereby leader engage followers to create a connection that raises the level of effort and moral aspiration in both (Singh & Kumar, 2013). The early idea of transformational leadership was conceived as a process in which leaders and followers raise one another to a higher level of morality and motivation (Burns, 1978). Later it was established as a follower motivation and performance enhancer (Bass, 1985). It is defined in term of the leader's effect on followers: they feel trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect toward the leader, and they are motivated to do more than they are originally expected to do. It includes four behaviors: charisma (idealized influence), intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation (Bass & Avolio, 1990). They create vision, mobilized commitment and institutionalized change. Transformational leader is one who energizes others with vision and strategies of how to refocus and revitalize the larger organization so that change meets people's enduring needs. The level of transformational leadership in three levels is different from each other. The upper management level exhibits maximum transformational leadership trait followed by middle management level and then the junior management level (Pandey & Singh, 2011).

The study measures transformational leadership exhibited by professionals based on six leader behavior pattern, they are management of attention, management of meaning, management of trust, management of self, management of risk, and management of feeling (Sashkin, 1997).

Management of attention focuses on paying attention to people with whom one is communicating. The focus is on the key issues under discussion and helps others to see clearly these key points. There is clarity of ideas about the relative importance or priorities of different issues under discussion.

Management of meaning centers on the leaders communication competencies, specifically their ability to get the meaning of a message across, even if this means devising some quite innovative approach.

Management of trust focuses on the perceived trustworthiness as shown by the leader's willingness to follow through promises, avoidance of 'flip-flop' shifts on positions, and prefer to take clear positions.

Management of self concerns the general attitudes toward self and others: that is, leader's overall concern for others and their feelings, as well as for 'taking care of' feelings about themselves in a positive sense.

Management of risk focuses on effective transformational leaders being deeply involved in what they do. They do not spend an excessive amount of time or energy on plans to protect themselves against failure or blame. These leaders are willing to take risks, not on a hit or miss basis, but after careful assessment of the odds of success or failure.

Management of feelings deals with the attributes of transformational leaders to consistently generate a set of feelings in others. Others feel that their work becomes more meaningful and that they are the 'masters' of their own behavior; that is, they feel competent. They feel a sense of community, a "w-ness" with their colleagues and coworkers (Sashkin, 1997).

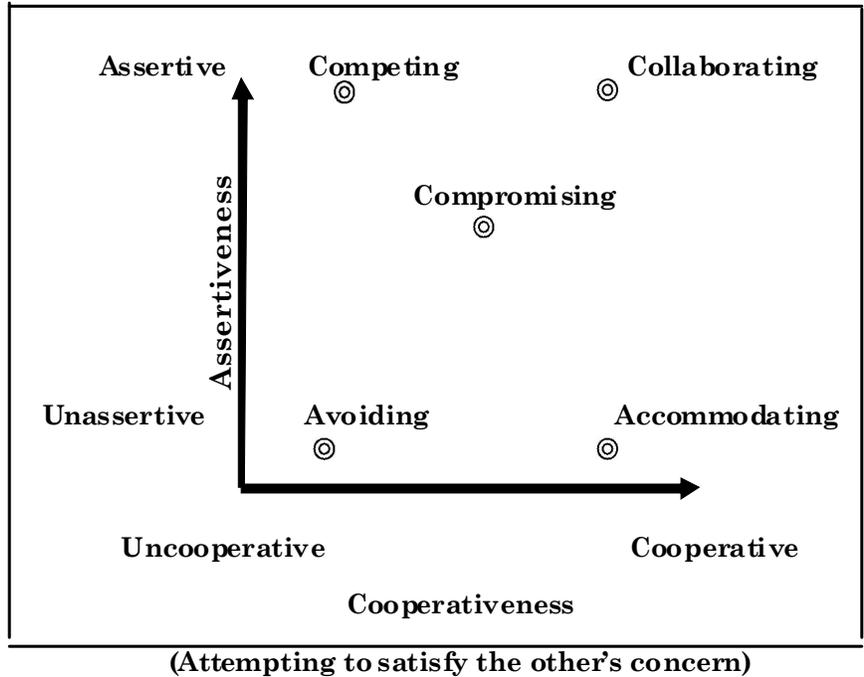
It has been known for sometime that transformational leaders trigger, cognitive and affective consequences among followers, including emotional attachment and motivational arousal. The literature indicates three fundamental components of transformational leadership behavior; vision, vision implementation and transformational communication styles that reduce the divergence of views and the accompanying conflict (Groves, 2005; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; House, 1998; Howell and Hall-Merenda, 1999). Their behaviors, such as inspirational motivation and individual consideration, helped employees in coping up with frustrating conditions at work (McCull-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002). Importance is given to leadership development programs in the organizations as they influence organization performance (Aragon-Correa et al., 2007; Lowe et al., 1996).

Management of Conflict

Conflict refers to an interactive process manifesting incompatibility, disagreement or dissonance between two or more interacting individuals (Rahim et. al., 2002). Conflict exists for a variety of reasons- conflicting goals or desires or scarce resources in interdependent systems. Conflict also exists over what to do and how to do the activities. According to the friction model of conflict, it is assumed that interaction naturally leads to conflict. From this perspective, conflict is to be expected and should be managed constructively (Roark, Albert and Wilkinson, 1979). "Conflict" is a word that causes a great degree of discomfort, anger, frustration, sadness, and pain to people (Singh & Antony, 2006).

Conflict management is necessary by the top brass of the corporation by exercising the supporting forces to overcome the inhibiting forces which affect the managers badly (Gupta, 2000). Methods of conflict management vary considerably in theoretical basis and in how much emphasis they place on each of the factors influencing conflict. The conflict management framework developed by Thomas and his associates in 1977 (Thomas-Kilmann conflict mode scale) deals with five approaches of conflict management; they are competing, accommodating, avoiding, collaborating and compromising (Thomas & Killmann, 1977). Certain curing measures for the resolution of conflicts are improved communication skills, team counseling, relinquishing, accommodating, collaborating, listening, responding, understanding, etc (Singh & Antony, 2006).

They are determined by how cooperative and assertive an individual is in a conflict situation: (a) forcing



From 'Conflict' by K. W. Thomas, 1979. in S. Karr (Ed.), *Organizational Behavior* (p. 154). Grid Publication

Figure No. 1: Two-dimensional Taxonomy of Strategic Intentions

or competing, having a focus on winning the conflict; (b) avoiding, withdrawing from a conflict, and allowing the other party to gain all demands; (c) accommodating, making concessions in a conflict situation; (d) compromising; based on giving concessions, and (e) collaborating, seeking mutually advantageous gains by both parties.

Transformational Leadership and Conflict Handling Style

The manager or team leader adopts any of the conflict handling styles to manage the conflict situation. Leaders should avoid expecting too much from the employees rather a leader should sit together with the employee and jointly set the target or goal as well as check points (Singh & Kumar, 2013). Behavioral scientists have attempted to discover what traits, abilities, behaviors, sources of power, or aspects of the situation determine how well a leader is able to influence followers and accomplish group objectives (Bansal, 2008). The behavior exhibited by the leader influences the way conflict is handled, and is guided by the two underlying dimensions, assertiveness and cooperativeness (Thomas, 1977). Evidences show clear and interesting ties between conflict management and leadership constructs (Lewis & Jobs, 1993). Moreover, a strategic intention need not remain fixed during the course of a conflict and may change with party's reconceptualisations and emotions. As a study states that conflicts have a negative association with perceptions of supervisors' leadership behaviors (Xin & Pelled, 2003). Another study reveals a significant interaction between non-forcing influence styles used by leaders and their forcing styles on their coworkers' behavioral compliance (Emans et.al., 2003). Therefore, an understanding of the leadership behavior and style helps to comprehend the conflict handling strategy.

Management of employees' emotions has become an essential component of effective leadership (Pescosolido, 2005; Ozcelik, Langton, & Aldrich, 2008). It has been suggested in studies that individuals with high emotional intelligence have superior conflict resolution skills, engaging in greater collaboration (Goleman, 1998). This assertion is based on the beliefs that individuals with high emotional intelligence

work to maintain relationships as it includes the ability to problem solving using both emotional and cognitive abilities (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Therefore, the collaboration method of problem solving is the task of leaders with high emotional intelligence as it requires abilities to recognize the other's emotional requirements and to control one's own emotions in the pursuit of these super ordinate goals (Thomas, 1977). Findings strongly support that effective and appropriate conflict management skills rely strongly on an individual's skill of self management and the ability to find solutions without negative effect (Carlopio, Andrewartha, & Armstrong, 1997).

The ability of leaders to intellectually stimulate employees and encourage them to solve task-oriented problems in new and different ways make employees face challenges (Yukl, 2006). These leaders promote employee's ability to analyze and solve organization problems (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). Also, the individualized consideration, supports employees in achieving self actualization through fulfilling their expectations by individual understanding (Rowe, 2007). This in turn develops better interpersonal relationships among employees and avoid conflict (Nemanich & Keller, 2007; Birasnav, Rangnekar & Dalpati, 2011).

The project leaders exhibiting transformational leadership communicate an inspirational vision, provide intellectual stimulation, and develop a high-quality leader-member exchange (LMX) relationship with project members and these are associated with project success (Elkins & Keller, 2003). The influence of manager's leadership style on both the level and the nature of conflicts at workplace reveal the role of transformational leaders in the process (Doucet, Poitras, & Chenevert, 2009).

Objectives of the Study

This empirical research paper aims to study the following:

1. To study the behavior pattern of transformational leader towards conflict handling style.
2. To find out the role of transformational leader in collaborating, competing, accommodating, avoiding and compromising styles in conflict situations.
3. To analyze the role of demographic factors such as age and experience on the conflict handling styles of a leader.
4. To critically examine the contribution of transformational leader in collaborating style of conflict handling.

Hypotheses of the Study

H^1_a : The behavior pattern of a transformational leader is associated with conflict handling style.

H^1_b : The transformational leader is more likely to foster collaborating, competing, and accommodating style and less likely to foster avoiding and compromising styles in conflict situations.

Demographic factors often affect the choice of conflict management styles (Kozan, 2002). Age of employee and good or bitter experiences in work develops insight which contributes in decision making. Therefore, it is assumed that age and experience influence the decision taken while choosing a particular conflict handling style.

H^2 : Demographic factors such as age and experience influence conflict handling styles adopted by the leader.

To make conflict more productive, the style used to handle interpersonal conflict is a crucial factor in successful conflict resolution. When individual goes for collaboration, they are primarily linked to their ability to discuss and control their own emotion rather than to their initial emotional awareness (Jordan & Troth, 2002). The integrating style of conflict management improves job performance when the solution to a conflict would benefit both parties. Both conflicting parties are encouraged to satisfy their interest through exchanging information (Mayer, 2004). Moreover, integrating style had a strong

association with job satisfaction and job performance (Weider-Hatfield & Hatfield, 1995). The literature and studies on the features of transformational leader enumerates of above behavior reflected by such leader (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985). These leaders can move employees involved in a conflict situation toward an integrative and collaborative solution, thus transforming the conflict into a mutual problem to be solved (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Their behavior is linked to higher rates of cohesion and it strengthens the collective identity of the group of employees (Tourish & Pinnington, 2002; Carless et al., 1995; Shamir et al., 1993). It was argued that transformational leaders reduce conflict level among employees involved in a group support system (i.e., an interactive-based tool that helps decision making and task completion in a group) (Parent & Gallupe, 2001).

Evidences from prior studies highlight the role of transformational leader in creating an environment of innovativeness (Jung et al., 2003; Jong & Hartog, 2007). They are better able to align the values of their subordinates leading to intrinsic motivation and intellectual stimulation among them (Gardner and Avolio, 1998; Mumford et al., 2002). Also, it is evident in the research on TL and LMX (leader-member exchange) that the relational aspects of TL like individualized consideration and idealized influence strongly influence the behavior of the subordinates by promoting and protecting their interests (Yukl et al., 2008; Yukl 1999; Deluga, 1992; Bass & Riggio, 2006). This makes these leaders more positive and their strong desire for win-win situation leads us to assume their role in collaborating intention of conflict handling in order to make an attempt to fully satisfy the concerns of the two parties to achieve an integrated settlement.

H³: The behavior pattern of transformational leader significantly contributes in collaborating style of conflict management.

Method

Based on the previous research in the areas of transformational leadership and conflict handling strategies, the current investigation was designed to determine the predictive relationship between them. The researcher conducted hierarchical regression to determine if transformational leadership variables are predictor of different conflict handling strategies.

Sample population and selection

The researcher contacted HR managers of varied sample organization to seek permission. After receiving the permission, the researcher sent the questionnaires explaining the purpose of study. The researcher contacted 250 Indian IT executives through stratified sampling method. Respondents of both the gender were contacted from different departments including Software development, human resource, finance, marketing, commercial, research and development, etc. The executives contacted were in the role of team leader in their organizations. Out of 250 questionnaires, 231 questionnaires were returned within ten days- a rate of return of 92 percent. The second attempt to collect the questionnaires yielded none.

Measures

Transformational Leadership: Transformational leadership was measured on five point Likert scale using transformational leadership questionnaire prepared by Sashkin (1997). The questionnaire consists of 24 items covering six variables covering four items in each, namely; 'management of attention' (i.e., "pay close attention to what others say when they are talking"), 'management of meaning' ("communicate clearly"), 'management of trust' (i.e., "be trustworthy"), 'management of self' (i.e., Care about self and other people), 'management of risk' (i.e., "Not put excessive energy into avoiding failure"), and 'management of feelings' (i.e., "Make the work of other more meaningful"). For the questionnaire the alpha reliability coefficient is 0.75.

Conflict Handling Style: Conflict handling style was measured on five point Likert scale using Rahim (1983), Thomas-Kilmann instrument (1977). The questionnaire consists of 15 items covering five conflict handling styles. Each variable has 3 items. These are 'competing' (i.e., "I argue to

Table No. 1: Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation for the Transformational Leadership variables and Conflict Handling Styles

S No.		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.	Age	24.55	1.74	1												
2.	Experience	2.12	1.25	0.668**	1											
3.	Attention	16.36	1.88	0.015	0.058	1										
4.	Meaning	16.01	2.10	0.050	0.040	0.484**	1									
5.	Trust	16.30	2.03	0.052	0.027	0.332**	0.459**	1								
6.	Self	16.54	2.08	-0.011	0.011	0.278**	0.473**	0.532**	1							
7.	Risk	15.29	1.95	-0.096	-0.039	0.079	0.298**	0.263**	0.306**	1						
8.	Feelings	15.81	2.22	-0.104	0.050	0.367**	0.336**	0.297**	0.369**	0.262**	1					
9.	Competing	9.80	2.33	-0.103	-0.002	0.202**	0.268**	0.267**	0.136	0.156*	0.175*	1				
10.	Accommodating	10.63	1.91	0.100	0.072	0.173*	0.194**	0.084	0.149*	0.165*	0.347**	0.205**	1			
11.	Avoiding	10.09	2.21	-0.110	-0.008	0.068	0.135	0.223**	0.064	0.140*	0.209**	0.320**	0.147*	1		
12.	Collaborating	11.68	1.82	0.211**	0.308**	0.187**	0.205**	0.197**	0.227**	0.297**	0.287**	-0.012	0.281**	0.133	1	
13.	Compromising	10.28	2.16	0.122	0.091	0.168*	0.115	0.112	-0.134	0.121	-0.046	0.337**	0.314**	0.336**	0.169*	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

prove my position”), ‘accommodating’ (i.e., “If the other’s position seems important to them, I would try to meet their wishes”), ‘collaborating’ (i.e., “I attempt to deal with all of another’s and my concerns”), and ‘compromising’ (i.e., I negotiate for a compromise”). For the questionnaire the alpha reliability coefficient is 0.65.

Analysis Strategy

Initial screening of the data was performed by preparing box plot for finding out the outliers. The questionnaires were eliminated from the study for calculation which carries the extreme values beyond 3 box length as may affect the results. Further, the extreme values up to 1.5 box length were considered and rectified by lowering or increasing the values to the acceptable limit. Only 206 questionnaires were found to be fit for use for further analysis. The remaining questionnaires were rejected due to extreme values of outliers and half filled questionnaires as the information were vital for the analysis. After that Kolmogorov-Smirnov goodness-of-fit test for normality followed by log transformation was conducted and results of the regression analysis were compared with the untransformed data. No significant difference was found between the two data sets. The untransformed data was used for all further analyses. Hierarchical regression analysis is computed in this study to determine the effects of transformational leadership on conflict handling strategies.

Results

Table No. 1 shows the mean, standard deviations, and correlations for the transformational leadership variables and the conflict resolution styles. As expected, significant correlations were found between Transformational Leadership and Conflict handling styles. An investigation of the means shows that collaboration is the preferred style of conflict handling confirms the earlier study of Jordan and Troth (2002). Detailed analysis revealed the significant associations between collaboration and different variables namely; Attention ($r = 0.187, p < 0.01$); Meaning ($r = 0.205, p < 0.01$); Trust ($r = 0.197, p < 0.01$); Self ($r = 0.227, p < 0.01$); Risk ($r = 0.297, p < 0.01$); Feelings ($r = 0.287, p < 0.01$). This pattern of results strongly suggests that individuals with higher inclination for TL prefer collaborative style of conflict handling.

Given the strong univariate links found between age, experience and different Transformational Leadership variables and the conflict handling strategy of collaboration, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to assess the relative importance in predicting collaboration. Age and experience was entered at Step 1 as a control variable because of earlier analyses showing age and experience influence the amount of collaboration. However, age did not emerge as a significant predictor of collaboration in the regression analysis. The overall regression equation at the first step was statistically significant with Multiple $R = 0.308, R^2 = 0.095, R^2 \text{ Change} = 0.095, F(2, 203) = 10.609, p < 0.001$.

At Step 2, addition of transformational leadership variables resulted in a significant increase in explained variance. This effect was attributable to the variables which were associated with greater use of collaboration. The addition of the transformational leadership scale resulted in a statistically significant increase in the amount of variance in collaboration. The overall regression equation at the second step was statistically significant with Multiple $R = 0.49, R^2 = 0.24, R^2 \text{ Change} = 0.15, F(6, 197) = 6.478, p < 0.001$.

The Figure No. 2 shows the contribution of feeling, risk, and experience towards collaboration style of conflict handling. The term feeling and emotionality have been used interchangeably in the literature (Fineman, 1993). Some writers, however, consider the feelings as private sensation that becomes emotions when enacted in social situations (Rosenberg, 1990). The cognitive appraisal of emotions is an important element in understanding conflict. Therefore, they consider their own emotions and the emotions of others as a basis in framing their relationships with other people (Mayer & Salovey, 1993, 1997). This characteristic might generate the empathy (Mayer et al., 1999; Schute et al., 2001) that encourages individual to consider other interests when they want to solve conflicts. Moreover, this empathy can lead people to be altruistic (Singer & Fehr, 2005;

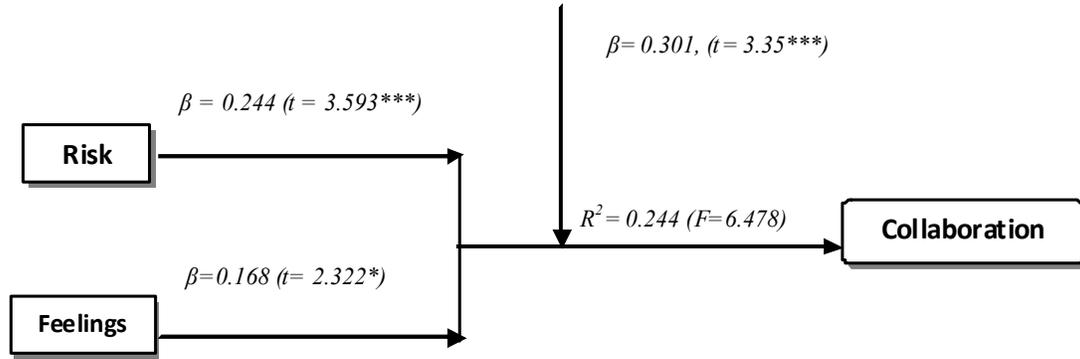


Figure No. 2

Table No. 2: Prediction of Collaboration with Age, Experience, and different Transformational Leadership Variables as Independent Variables

	Predictor	β	t	R	R Square	R ² Change	F Change
Model 1	Age	0.010	0.113	0.308	0.095	0.095	10.609***
	Experience	0.301	3.350***				
Model 2	Age	0.088	1.022	0.494	0.244	0.149	6.478***
	Experience	0.245	2.895***				
	Attention	0.072	0.964				
	Meaning	-0.012	-0.147				
	Trust	0.019	0.243				
	Self	0.064	0.814				
	Risk	0.244	3.593***				
	Feelings	0.168	2.322*				

Dependent Variable: Collaborating

*** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$

Declerck & Bogaert, 2008), cognizant of the existence of other people's needs (Kamdar et al., 2006) and more skillful in anticipating what other people will behave and act (Singer & Fehr, 2005; Declerck & Bogaert, 2008), with these characteristics emotional people may regard other people's need and interest in solving conflict. Thus a win-win solution produced by collaborating style in resolving the conflicts among individuals is crucial to satisfy everyone's interest. Creativity alignment with members in an organization appears to be proactive by preparing people for and fostering progressive conflict that helps to move the organization forward (Fitzpatrick, 2007). Proactivity was explained to exist in individuals who collaboratively pursue the goals of the organization (Limmerick & Cunningham, 1993; Stevens, 1999) and individuals understand that conflict is integral to both individual and organizational transformation (Shelton & Darling, 2003). Further, it is explained that proactivity means we are responsible for our lives (Covey, 1989). Hence, it is assumed that this responsibility bring with it calculated risk taken by those going for collaboration.

Discussion

Our study attempted to examine the influence of transformational leader behavior on handling of conflict. Central among our findings is the notion that transformational leader styles have a great propensity for handling conflict. Our results indicate that the antecedents of transformational leader behavior are related to the five different styles of handling conflict. These results strongly support the

work of Lewis (1998) as clear and interesting ties between conflict management and leadership constructs appear in the study.

It is also revealed in the study that more number of behavior patterns of the transformational leader is related to collaborating, competing, and accommodating style. It is in line with the theoretical anchoring of transformational leadership, which clarifies the behaviors of transformational leader such as innovative approach, clear communication, creating vision, attention to the needs, and growth of followers (Shamir et al., 1993; Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1985) and also, motivates them (Howell & Avolio, 1993).

Further, investigation of the nature of transformational leadership and conflict management style reveals that the demographic factors such as age and experience influence the choice of conflict management styles. The results show strong positive correlation of age and experience with the collaborating style. In other words, the older and experienced employees become more collaborative when they are in a conflict situation. This reflects the learning process where people gradually learn to work together with others to resolve the conflicts, to sit down and talk with the other sides to work it out (MaZhenzhong et al., 2010).

At the level of conflict management, the result in particular attracted our attention is the preference of collaborating style and high contribution of the leader behavior patterns such as risk and feelings toward collaboration. Though this finding complements related studies (Liu, Fu, & Liu, 2009), but contradicts another finding, in which compromise was found to be the most commonly used conflict management strategy (Hendel & Galon, 2005). This may be attributed to the later study made on the sample of nurses in a hospital, perhaps were compromising a better way of handling conflict looking into the nature of job. Our results indicate towards the management of risk followed by management of feeling significantly influencing collaborating style of conflict handling. Collaboration involves both cognitive abilities to assist in the formation of super ordinate goals and creative solutions (Thomas, 1977) and emotional abilities to recognize others emotional requirements and to control one's own emotions in the pursuit of these superordinate goals (Jordan & Troth, 2002). In the literature (Canary & Cupach, 1988; Canary & Spitzberg, 1987) collaboration is the conflict resolution strategy that relies most on an individual's ability to deal with the opinions and rights of others, as well as their own, to achieve a win-win outcome. In this process it is anticipated that collaboration establishes positive feelings by each party and minimizes feelings of anger, threat or defensiveness by depersonalizing the problem (Pareek, 1992).

The significant contribution of feeling highlights the importance of creating a common vision and to incorporate the needs of employees if feasible in developing a climate of cooperation (Mareschal, 2005). In other words, the integrating style is characterized by individuals who have high concern for themselves and for others (Rahim et al., 2002). These leader behavior patterns of transformational leaders help in conflict handling through relational and cognition attributes.

Implications and Limitations

The finding of this study has implications in academics as well as HR practices. It contributes to literature on TL and provides further opportunity to study the influence of such conflict handling on the subordinates or the team members. For HR practitioners, it opens an avenue for leadership training and subsequent leader efficacy. The training of leaders could become more focused. The transformational leader is authentic and true to self and contributes highly in creating a moral environment for the organization (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999) and conflict may be useful if it awakens members to alternative points of view and stimulates creativity in problem solving and decision making (Dyer, 1987, 1995; Zander, 1994). Hence, conflict can also be beneficial (Amason, 1996; Ayoke et al., 2002; Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven, 1990; Jehn, 1995; Tjosvold, 1998; Ven de Vliert and de Dreu, 1994). This also invites studies on the ethical part of TL.

Collaboration aspect of conflict handling should be highlighted in the process. It can be linked to a range of skills that are useful for management and employees during any change episodes (Jordan and Troth, 2002). These include mediations skills, leadership style, and the use of social networking at work. It provides the human resource development practitioner with a profile of individuals who may be able to successfully manage their emotions and work through change processes. The leadership characteristics of transformational leader can be talked to individuals at all levels within an organization and that it can positively affect a firm's performance. It can be used in recruitment, selection and promotion, and training and development. It can also be used in improving team development, decision making groups, quality initiatives, and reorganizations (Bass and Avolio, 1990). Another important aspect of training is teaching leaders to exhibit greater individual consideration and intellectual stimulation towards their followers. It was found that this is partially valuable for lower level leaders in organizations (Lowe et al., 1996).

Several limitations were encountered during the completion of this research. First, although our target population, Indian IT professional, work in a team based structure with innovative minds, this study selected only 250 such professional working in the role of team leader in their organizations. For these reasons, the results might lack generalisability. Future research should consider extending the sampling size as well as collecting data at a broader scale to test our arguments.

Second, the questionnaire survey was conducted using self rating evaluation. Though one of the advantages of self report measure is feedback about one's ability to handle a situation, nevertheless, self reporting assessment may have some drawbacks such as misleading self perception, positive affectivity, common method variance, and social desirability which may produce bias of answers and incorrect findings (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Third, this research was conducted in a specific region. A regional culture plays an important role at which we did not consider at the beginning. Therefore, studying conflict management in different cultural contexts can also help refine the findings of the study. This would also help to study the impact of collectivism on conflict management in Indian IT industries (Dhawan et al., 1995; Dhar, 1994; Gupta, 1991; Singh 1990; Hofstede, 1980). Since, collaborating style is most preferred conflict management styles in such culture (Ma et al., 2010). This study is exploratory in an effort to speculate how transformational leadership style determines the conflict handling style used in conflict situations. Therefore, we suggest a longitudinal study to further establish the finding as often argued that most effective conflict resolution strategy is contingent on the situation (Borisoff & Victor, 1998; Womack, 1998).

Finally, testing the intermediary mechanism between the leadership dimension and conflict in order to better understand their dynamics would probably prove to be a promising avenue.

Globalization and the competition will reduce company's resources. At the same time, many organizational processes will increase the interdependence among persons and units. This mix of reduced resources and heightened interdependence will underpin many conflicts. Future workforces will be more diverse, and such diversity will set the stage for conflict (Donnellon and Kolb, 1994) as it spawns differing goals, perceptions, values, commitments, and demands on resources. As conflict will be prevalent in the future (Bartunek, Kolb, and Lewicki, 1992), transformational leaders can prove to be a great asset to the company.

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