

Relationship between Conflict Resolution and Sense of Acceptability

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the situation in which members of a group are placed at the time of a problem occurrence and their sense of acceptability regarding the handling of the conflict. When a problem occurs, group members recognize the problem from their own standpoints, but the situation in which they are placed at that time differs from person to person. Therefore, it is assumed that each person has a different approach to dealing with conflicts. In this survey, we sought to clarify the relationship between members' situations and their sense of acceptability in dealing with conflicts, based on the question of under what circumstances group members feel a sense of acceptability when dealing with conflicts. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested regarding the members' sense of acceptability in dealing with their situations and conflicts. As a result, we were able to prove both hypotheses.

Keywords: Conflict, Resolution Strategy, Sense of Acceptability, Problem-Formulation

1 Introduction

We make various decisions every day. Decision-making is a process in which the decision-maker clarifies the objectives, finds alternatives that meet those objectives, and selects the alternative that the decision-maker believes is best. In this process, the decision maker clarifies the objective, i.e., what is the problem to be addressed, and then works to solve that problem. The authors have found in previous studies that in the problem formulation process, decision makers determine whether they recognize a situation as a problem based on whether the situation, they currently perceive exceeds the decision maker's own threshold of dissatisfaction [1].

The above studies discuss problem recognition in individuals; this is not the case with problem recognition in groups. In a group, many procedures are required to treat a problem recognized by an individual as a group problem. In the process of implementing these procedures, there are often gaps in opinions and perceptions among the individuals who recognize the problem. These gaps exist as conflicts in the activities to solve the problem, and they become impediments to the activities.

Baer et al. studied strategic problem formulation in teams, or groups, consisting of various factors in business, and they identified impediments to strategic problem formulation in groups and proposed a process to improve problem formulation in groups. In proposing this process of improvement, Baer et al, proposed the unanimous resolution of conflicts as a solution to this situation, but this does not seem to be a very realistic solution [2].

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The authors focus on the concept of acceptability of the situation of group members when dealing with conflicts. While acceptability means the act of agreeing with something and approving of it, the occurrence of conflicts is a manifestation of the differences in acceptability in decision-making by each member of the group, and it is thought that how to bridge these differences is required. Therefore, it is meaningful to conduct research on a sense of acceptability felt by group members when conducting research on conflicts.

Based on the question of under what circumstances group members feel a sense of acceptability in dealing with conflicts, this study aims to clarify the relationship between the work situation in which group members are placed and their sense of acceptability in dealing with conflicts.

2 Previous Studies

2.1 Previous Studies on Conflicts

The word "conflict," according to the dictionary, is a situation in which people, group or countries are involved in a serious disagreement or argument. It includes not only the dissatisfaction within a group, such as a group or country, but also the dissatisfaction within the mind of an individual. It can be thought of as including dissatisfaction in the mind of an individual as well as a group or country. In this regard, March and Simon classify conflicts into three categories: personal conflicts, organizational conflicts, and interorganizational conflicts. Of these, individual conflict can be thought of as indicative of psychological struggle. In organizational conflicts, on the other hand, there are both individual struggles and confrontation, as there are also individual struggles within the organization and confrontations occur as a group within the organizational structure. In interorganizational conflicts, the confrontations are one that occurs between the group and the group [3]. Rahim defines conflict as two basic dimensions: concern for self and for others [xx]. Robbins defines it as a process that begins when one party perceives that the other party has had or is about to have an adverse effect on matters important to him or her [6]. Thus, conflict can be thought of as occurring in the process from problem recognition to problem solving in a group, due to the inner conflict felt by each member of the group.

Jehn and Mannix classified the factors that cause conflicts in organizations into three categories: task conflicts, process conflicts, and relationship conflicts [7]. Minimal conflicts bring about organizational vitality, while relationship conflicts, which are interpersonal disagreements with emotional components such as tension and anger, are said to be unproductive in most cases [7]. Maruyama et al. conducted an interview survey and found that the factors that cause conflicts are as follows: some people do not do their jobs according to their roles as a project team, some people cannot cope with changes, some people do not give priority to their own ideas and values, and some people do not give priority to their own ideas and values [8]. They conducted an interview survey and extracted the following as factors causing conflicts in project teams: some people do not do their jobs according to their roles, some people cannot cope with change, and some people prioritize their own ideas and values [8].

According to Thomas et al., the process by which conflicts occur consists of five processes: frustration, conceptualization, action, reaction of others, and consequences. In this process, it

can be thought of as clarifying the causes of the conflicts that are occurring and considering concrete plans for dealing with them. In this regard, Thomas states that coping behavior is oriented along two axes: assertive - nonassertive and cooperative - non-cooperative [9].

2.2 Previous Studies on Group Members' Attitudes Toward Conflict

Members who deal with conflicts have to make decisions on how to deal with conflicts. What kind of consciousness do they have in making decisions at that time? In this paper, Simon and Hosoda's research on satisfaction and acceptability in decision-making is surveyed as a study of values in decision-making.

Simon's theory of decision making is quite extensive, but here focuses mainly on the concept of the satisficing, which he argues that humans do not have perfect rationality, but only bounded rationality, because the size of the problem space that needs to be clarified for objectively rational behavior in the real world and the size of the problem space that needs to be clarified for objectively rational behavior in the real world [10]. He explained that this is because the problem-solving capacity of human beings is very small compared to the size of the problem space that needs to be clarified for objectively rational behavior in the real world [10].

Under bounded rationality, it is impossible to consider and enumerate all alternatives. Therefore, Simon argued that under such circumstances, humans make decisions according to the satisficing principle, whereby they set a certain goal level and choose an alternative as soon as they discover an alternative that can achieve that goal level. He stated that a decision maker who selects an alternative that meets or exceeds certain criteria but is not guaranteed to be the only alternative or the best one in any sense is satisficing [11].

The object of acceptability in decision-making, as Simon argues, is mainly alternatives, but Hosoda, one of the authors, extends Simon's theory and explains satisfaction with the decision-making process in terms of the concept of acceptability. Hosoda defines acceptability in decision-making as the satisfaction with the decision-making process, which is to objectify and evaluate one's own decision-making process and to accept it in light of one's own values. He argues that this claim is both an explanation of acceptability in decision-making in individuals and an explanation of acceptability in decision-making in groups by accepting the decision-making process of others in light of one's own values [12].

2.3 Implications from Previous Studies

Focusing on the studies on conflicts surveyed in the previous studies and on the consciousness of the parties involved in dealing with conflicts, this section examines the responses of group members when conflicts occur.

Conflicts can be classified into task conflicts, process conflicts, and relationship conflicts. In this process, the process of conflicts as pointed out by Thomas develops, and members are forced to take necessary actions to resolve the conflicts. At that time, the business situation of the members will be one of the major points. In this regard, Suzuki states that the feelings of the parties involved in a conflict situation should be emphasized [13], and it can be assumed that the situation in which a member is dealing with a conflict influences his/her consciousness toward dealing with the conflict.

Although the situation in which members are placed varies depending on the type of conflicts, this study will focus on the coping with conflicts in the situations in which members are placed on the job, when they are highly satisfied with their jobs and when they have a heavy workload. Since it has been shown that in conflicts, positive emotions favor more cooperative strategies [14], clarifying the impact of this subject can clarify the relationship between work situations and conflict coping, and is expected to contribute to conflict management.

Specifically, the following hypotheses were formulated.

H 1: People with a high level of job satisfaction have a sense of acceptability in dealing with conflicts.

H 2: People with a heavy work load do not have a sense of acceptability in dealing with conflicts.

3 Method

3.1 Survey Subjects

The survey was commissioned to a research company. The subjects were registered monitors in Tokyo, Kanagawa, Chiba and Saitama prefectures in Japan, aged between 20 and 60 years old, full-time employees of companies with 100 or more employees, and those who had worked in teams or organizations.

3.2 Survey Contents

The questionnaire survey items consisted of questions on individual attributes such as gender, age, and type of job, experience of changing jobs, career change intention, and the most memorable conflict experience to date based on previous research. In this paper, conflict resolution strategies and sense of acceptability are the subjects of the analysis. Conflict resolution strategies were selected on a five-point scale (1 to 5), ranging from "not at all applicable" to "very applicable". The respondents' sense of acceptability in dealing with the conflicts was determined by a 5-point scale (1 to 5), ranging from "not at all acceptable" to "very acceptable".

Table 1: Q6. Please select your level of job satisfaction when confrontation occurs. Please answer the question about the most memorable experience of conflict you have encountered.

1	I was satisfied with the promotions I have received since joining the company
2	My current salary is commensurate with the responsibilities and content of my work
3	I have had equal opportunities for advancement in the company
4	I was satisfied with the way my immediate supervisor treated his/her subordinates and his/her skills
5	I was satisfied with the way my immediate supervisor took responsibility for my work
6	I was satisfied with the cooperation of my co-workers
7	I was satisfied with my current job because it allowed me to use my abilities

	(judgment, problem-solving skills, and expertise)
8	I was satisfied with my current job because it allowed me to use my skills and abilities
9	I was satisfied that the actual hours worked at my current job were commensurate with my abilities
10	I was satisfied with my workplace
11	I was satisfied with the content of my job
12	Overall, I was satisfied with my job

Table 2: Q7. Please select the following questions regarding your work situation and workload when confrontation occurs. Please answer the question about the most memorable experience of conflict you have encountered.

1	The work I was doing was challenging
2	The work I am doing is very important
3	The work being done was very challenging
4	There was extreme time pressure
5	Unrealistic levels of productivity were required
6	Workload was too heavy, inhibiting creative work
7	Had to do a lot of work in a very limited amount of time

Table 3. Q9: How much sense of acceptability do you have about the way you handled the situation that you responded to in Q9_1? Please answer the question about the most memorable conflict experience you have ever encountered.

1	Tried to work with the other party to find a solution that would satisfy both parties' expectations
2	Tried to integrate their own ideas with those of the other party to reach a common conclusion
3	Communicated accurately each other's intentions in order to solve the problem together
4	Discussed with the other party to reach a compromise
5	Tried to find a compromise to get out of an impasse
6	Suggested a pause to break an impasse
7	Tried to avoid unpleasant exchanges with the other party
8	Tried to avoid openly discussing his/her differences with the other party
9	Tried to avoid confrontation in the moment and keep differences to myself
10	Tried to accommodate the other person's wishes by making a concession

11	Tried to accommodate the other party's wishes
12	Tried to meet the other party's expectations
13	Tried to force them to come to a conclusion that you liked
14	Tried to make the other person accept your ideas
15	Tried to insist on your own position

3.3 Analysis Method

First, the analysis method was based on the total score for satisfaction with the job (Q6), sense of burden on the job (Q7 : 4-7), and sense of acceptability in dealing with conflicts (Q9), and then each group was classified into two groups: 1 to 2 for dissatisfaction, 3 to 5 for satisfaction, 1 to 2 for low burden, 3 to 5 for high burden, 1 to 2 for disapproval, 3 to 5 for acceptability. Chi-square test was used for the comparison of the two groups. SPSS ver. 29.0 was used for statistical analysis, and the significance level was set at 5%.

4 Result

There were 741 respondents, 600 males and 141 females. 46 were in their 20s, 101 were in their 30s, 255 were in their 40s, and 339 were in their 50s.

4.1 Result of the test of hypothesis (1)

As a result of examining the relationship between the group that feels satisfied with their job (satisfied) and the group that has a sense of acceptability in dealing with conflicts (acceptability), a significant difference was found between the "satisfied" group and the "acceptability" group ($\chi^2(1) = 20.700, p < 0.001$). This supported the hypothesis (1) that "people with a high sense of job satisfaction have a high sense of acceptability in dealing with conflicts" (see Table 4).

Table 4: Cross Table for Q6 and Q9

		Workload		Sum
		Low	high	
Acceptance	Low	216	189	405
	High	123	213	336
Sum		339	402	741

4.2 Result of Test against Hypothesis (2)

As a result of examining the relationship between the group who felt a sense of burden toward work (high burden) and the group who did not feel a sense of acceptability in dealing with conflicts (non-compliance), a significant difference was found between the "high burden" group and the "non-compliance" group ($\chi^2(1) = 57.105, p < 0.001$). Thus, hypothesis (2), "Those who have a high sense of burden (high workload) do not feel a sense of acceptability in dealing with conflicts," was supported (see Table 5).

Table 5: Cross Table for Q6 and Q9

		Workload		Sum
		Low	high	
Acceptance	Low	275	130	405
	High	135	201	336
Sum		410	331	741

5 Discussion

This paper analyzes the results of a questionnaire survey on conflicts at work, regarding the handling of conflicts and the sense of acceptability felt in dealing with them. The following is a discussion of the results.

The results revealed that those who have a high level of job satisfaction tend to have a high sense of acceptability in dealing with conflicts. A high level of job satisfaction is expected to be associated with a commensurately high level of motivation. Since positive affect has been shown to favor more collaborative strategies, we can assume that such an attitude was revealed as supporting the present hypothesis.

On the other hand, it was also evident that a higher sense of workload also leads to a lower sense of acceptability in dealing with conflicts. This point is also reasonable in light of the earlier motivation theory. Many people who have a busy work schedule are often overwhelmed by the task at hand, and their motivation is often low. As a result, they tend to neglect their work and deal with conflicts as a stopgap measure. As a result, the sense of acceptability in dealing with conflicts is low.

The hypothesis test revealed that the sense of acceptability in dealing with conflicts may be greatly affected depending on the situation in which they are placed in their work. This may have an impact on the choice of how to respond to conflicts, and future research should clarify this point.

6 Conclusion and Future Work

In this paper, the authors sought to clarify the relationship between members' situations and their sense of acceptability in dealing with conflicts, based on the question of under what circumstances group members feel a sense of acceptability when dealing with conflicts. In order to examine the relationship between members' situations and their sense of acceptability in dealing with conflicts, two hypotheses were formulated and tested. As a result, two hypotheses were developed.

However, these hypotheses are only a part of the situation of the members of the group, and it is possible that they may have a sense of acceptability or disagreement in other situations as well. We would like to increase the number of variations of the members' situations and continue the research.

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