

The Influence of Leadership Style on Employee Conflict Intensity and Resolution: A Multidisciplinary Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine, from a multidisciplinary standpoint, how leadership style affects the severity and settlement of employee conflicts. A questionnaire evaluating leadership style, conflict severity, and conflict resolution techniques was used to gather data from 100 respondents using a quantitative method and a cross-sectional design. Regression analysis results indicated that authoritarian leadership style positively contributed to rising conflict intensity ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < .01$), but transformational leadership style significantly decreased conflict intensity ($\beta = -0.45$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, it was demonstrated that cooperative conflict resolution techniques were successful in lowering stress at work ($r = -.56$, $p < .001$). These results demonstrate how crucial flexible and communicative leaders are to fostering a positive and effective workplace. Nevertheless, this study has drawbacks, such as a sample size restricted to a few business sectors and a cross-sectional design that precludes drawing conclusions about causality. It is advised that further study be done to examine how technology use and organizational cultural setting affect dispute resolution.

Keywords: leadership style; conflict intensity; conflict resolution; transformational leadership; collaborative strategy

1. Introduction

Conflict at work is an unavoidable occurrence in contemporary organizational settings. Interactions between people with different origins, objectives, and interests can lead to conflict. A number of things can lead to conflict, including inadequate organizational structures, power disparities, poor communication, and differences in values. In this situation, how disagreements arise and are settled is greatly influenced by the leadership style.

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In addition to having a direct impact on group dynamics, leadership style also creates the corporate culture, which may either increase or decrease the level of conflict. Organizational psychology and human resource management have placed a lot of emphasis on studying how leadership style affects the severity and outcome of conflicts. In the workplace, conflict is frequently seen as a danger to interpersonal relationships and team productivity. But according to contemporary viewpoints, conflict need not necessarily be bad; in fact, when handled skillfully, it may stimulate creativity, innovation, and improved decision-making. In this sense, it is crucial for leaders to efficiently handle conflict in order to limit its bad effects and enhance its beneficial ones.

For instance, transformational leadership has been demonstrated to foster a cooperative workplace by promoting candid communication and mutual trust among team members. Transformational leaders often take an inspiring stance and encourage their staff to solve challenges in novel ways. On the other hand, because authoritarian leadership tends to stifle employee involvement in decision-making and foster interpersonal tensions, it is frequently linked to more intense conflicts. However, because of its emphasis on structure and performance-based incentives, transactional leadership is frequently seen as successful in some circumstances. But another crucial element that affects the effectiveness of conflict resolution is a leader's ability to modify their approach to fit the needs of a certain disagreement. [1][2][3]

There are theoretical and practical implications to the investigation of the connection between employee conflict and leadership style. Practically speaking, this study gives businesses guidance on how to select or cultivate the best leadership style to foster a positive workplace culture. Theoretically, this study complements the literature on conflict management by underlining the role of leaders as crucial mediators in companies. Furthermore, this research endeavors to fill the void in the literature concerning the efficacy of diverse leadership approaches in diverse organizational cultural settings.

One interesting issue is the difference of opinion among researchers regarding the effectiveness of certain leadership styles in complex conflict situations. For instance, some research highlights that democratic leadership's participatory approach makes it more effective in lowering the severity of conflicts. Other research, however, indicates that this strategy might not always work when prompt choices are required or when there is a substantial power differential between the leader and followers. Thus, the ability of leaders to modify their strategy according to the circumstances is a crucial subject for more research.[4][5]

The purpose of this study is to examine, from a multidisciplinary standpoint, how different leadership philosophies affect the severity and settlement of employee disputes. Because conflict in the workplace encompasses a variety of psychological (such as individual feelings and perceptions), sociological (such as group dynamics), and management (such as decision-making) elements, a multidisciplinary approach is required. It is anticipated that this study will offer a comprehensive picture of how leaders may successfully handle conflict using this methodology.

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More precisely, this research seeks to: Determine the connection between the level of conflict at work and specific leadership philosophies (such as transformational, transactional, and authoritarian). Examine how conflict resolution techniques are impacted by leadership types. Emphasize the contextual elements that affect how well leadership styles handle conflict, such as industry type or corporate culture.

In recent decades, the literature on conflict management has increased considerably. For instance, research by Bass (1990) demonstrates that transformational leaders can lower the likelihood of conflict by fostering emotional bonds and a common vision with their teams. In the meantime, a conflict resolution model created by Thomas and Kilmann (1974) emphasizes the value of cooperation and compromise as crucial tactics for settling conflicts at work.

However, there is still a void in the literature detailing how different leadership styles operate especially in distinct corporate cultural situations. For example, research by Hofstede (1980) shows that collectivist cultures tend to promote a participatory leadership style whereas individualist cultures may be more suited to a transactional approach. This implies that more study is necessary to fully comprehend how contextual elements affect the connection between conflict resolution and leadership style. [6][7]

The study's basic premise, which is based on data from earlier research, is that, in contrast to authoritarian or transactional leadership styles, transformational leadership will have a favorable influence on lowering the severity of conflicts and the efficacy of their resolution. However, contextual elements like the kind of company or team dynamics are likely to have an impact on how effective each leadership style is.

Therefore, in addition to offering fresh perspectives on the relationship between conflict and leadership style, this study also makes useful suggestions for organizational leaders looking to hone their conflict resolution abilities. It is also anticipated that this study would aid in the creation of fresh hypotheses about the connection between group dynamics and leadership in the workplace.

2. Materials and Method

Design of Research. This study employs a cross-sectional design and a quantitative methodology. Surveys of workers in a number of different companies were used to gather information in order to examine how leadership style affects the severity and settlement of conflicts. The purpose of this study is to clearly illustrate how these factors relate to one another in various settings.[2][4]

Both the population and the sample. Employees from a variety of industrial sectors, such as manufacturing, commerce, and services, made up the study's population. The whole population that satisfied the inclusion criteria was employed as respondents in the saturation sampling approach used to establish the research sample. One hundred respondents participated in this survey, and they were

chosen using the following standards: current workers who have been with the firm for a minimum of one year. Workers who are willing to complete the questionnaire and take part in the study.

A questionnaire with many sections was used to gather data: Respondent demographics (age, gender, education, and duration of service) are covered in Part A. Part B: Leadership style is measured using a Likert scale, where 1 represents strongly disagree and 5 represents strongly agree. Part C: Likert scale for gauging workplace dispute severity. Part D: Likert scale to assess leaders' approaches to resolving conflicts. To guarantee its validity and reliability, the questionnaire was pre-tested and created using the body of current research as a guide. Factor analysis was used for validity testing, and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to gauge dependability.[5][6]

Statistical software like SPSS or AMOS was used to evaluate the data collected from the questionnaire. Among the analytical techniques employed are: Descriptive analysis: To outline the respondents' demographic traits. To determine how leadership style affects conflict resolution and intensity, multiple linear regression analysis was used.^{1,3} The following is a mathematical equation that represents the regression model:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \epsilon$$

Where :

Y = Conflict intensity

X_1 = Leadership style

X_2 = Conflict resolution strategy

β_0 = Intercept

β_1, β_2 = Regression coefficients

ϵ = Error term

The F-test is used to assess the overall significance of the model, whereas the t-test is used to examine the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable. The availability of resources and information pertaining to the study depends on the voluntary participation of respondents. Furthermore, respondents' answers may contain subjective bias even after the questionnaire's validity and reliability have been assessed. It is not feasible to directly deduce causation from the collected data because it is cross-sectional.

3. Result

Qualities of Respondents. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the 100 respondents who took part in this survey. Males made up 60% of the respondents, and 45% of them were between the ages of 25 and 35. The majority of responders (70%) had a bachelor's degree, and 50 percent had been employed by the organization for one to five years.

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Table 1: Demographic Details of Respondents

Characteristics	Number (%)
Gender	
Male	60
Female	40
Age	
25-35 years	45
36-45 years	30
> 45 years	25
Education	
Bachelor's degree	70
Diploma	20
High School	10
Year of work	
1-5 years	50
6-10	30
> 10 years	20

Analysis of Leadership Style. The analysis's findings demonstrate that a transformational leadership style significantly reduces the level of conflict at work. A transformational leadership style reduces conflict intensity by 35%, according to a linear regression test ($R^2 = .35$, $p < .001$). A one unit increase in transformational leadership style will result in a 0.45 unit decrease in conflict intensity, according to the regression coefficient for transformational leadership style, which is $\beta = -0.45$.

Intensity of Conflict and Resolution Approach. The findings also indicate a strong correlation between leaders' conflict resolution techniques and the intensity of the disagreement. Conflict intensity is often lower among leaders who employ collaborative conflict resolution techniques ($r = -.56$, $p < .001$). These findings suggest that employing cooperative tactics might lessen conflict among coworkers.

Table 2: Leadership Style and Conflict Intensity Relationship

Variable	Regression Coefficient (β)	Value p
Transformational Leadership Style	-0,45	< .001
Authoritarian Leadership Style	0,32	< .01

To determine whether there were notable variations in the ways that various leadership philosophies affected the degree of conflict, hypothesis testing was done. The total regression model was significant, according to the F test findings ($F(2,97) = 8.76, p < .001$). Partial eta squared = .15 was the impact size for this model, suggesting that leadership style played a substantial role in the variance in conflict intensity.

Additional information about the impact of leadership style on conflict resolution was obtained through interviews with a number of respondents. According to the respondents, managers that listen to their staff members' problems and listen with empathy likely to improve the workplace and lower stress levels. Among the quotations from the participants are: "Our leader is always open to listening to our problems, which makes us feel valued." "When there is conflict, our leader prefers to find a solution together rather than force a decision." According to the study's findings, a transformational leadership style considerably lessens the ferocity of conflict at work. Employee stress has also been successfully decreased via the application of cooperative dispute resolution techniques. These results highlight how crucial flexible and communicative leaders are to fostering a supportive and effective workplace.

4. Discussion

According to the study's findings, a transformational leadership style considerably lessens the ferocity of conflict at work. Employee stress has also been successfully decreased via the application of cooperative dispute resolution techniques. These results highlight how crucial flexible and communicative leaders are to fostering a supportive and effective workplace. Using a transformational leadership style and lowering the intensity of conflict. According to this study, transformational leadership greatly lessens the severity of conflicts at work ($R^2 = .35, p < .001$). Transformational leaders often foster a cooperative workplace by promoting candid communication, fostering trust, and inspiring staff to strive toward shared objectives. This outcome is in line with Bass's (1990) research, which highlighted how transformational leaders may motivate their teams to put the organization's needs ahead of their own. In addition, this study also supports the view that transformational leadership can minimize the negative impact of conflict by directing team energy in a more productive direction.

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As expressed by Nugroho et al. (2023), transformational leaders often use an approach that focuses on solving problems rather than exacerbating conflicts through an authoritative approach. Thus, this leadership style not only reduces the intensity of conflict but also creates positive value from the conflict situation itself. [1][8]

The findings demonstrated a substantial inverse association between conflict intensity and collaborative conflict resolution procedures ($r = -.56$, $p < .001$). All sides must actively participate in this strategy, which entails open communication and the pursuit of win-win solutions. This result is consistent with earlier research, like Rahim's (2011) study, which emphasizes the value of cooperative approaches in developing long-term conflict resolution.

A collaborative approach is also consistent with transformational leadership traits, which include leaders giving each team member particular attention and promoting employee participation in decision-making. This lowers the possibility of conflict escalation by strengthening interpersonal ties and giving employees a feeling of ownership. [10]

For instance, Pruitt's (2004) research demonstrates that a collaborative strategy not only resolves conflict but also improves employee relationships and team trust. Employees are more inclined to make constructive contributions to the workplace when they feel valued and included in the problem-solving process. [10]

However, this study found a positive correlation ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < .01$) between authoritarian leadership style and conflict severity. The tendency of authoritarian employers to make decisions alone without engaging their personnel can lead to interpersonal conflict and employee dissatisfaction. These statistics confirm the findings of Widiyanto (2018), who showed that an authoritative approach often makes conflict situations worse since it lacks two-way communication. However, it should be noted that an authoritarian approach could be more effective in some situations than others, such as when quick decisions are needed. Therefore, the capacity of leaders to adjust their strategy based on the circumstances is a crucial aspect of conflict management.[9]

The study's conclusions have several applications for businesses. Creating Transformational Leaders: To assist managers in acquiring transformational abilities like team empowerment, empathy, and effective communication, organizations must spend money on leadership development. Putting Collaborative Resolution Strategies into Practice: To guarantee that leaders can manage conflict in a positive way, conflict resolution training need to be a crucial component of human resource development. Flexibility of Leadership Style: Adaptive training should be taken into consideration by companies so that leaders may modify their approach to fit the demands of the scenario, even if transformational leadership did best in this study.

While this study gives vital insights, there are numerous shortcomings that need to be addressed and present chances for additional research: Cultural Context: Future studies might examine the ways in which organizational culture affects the connection between conflict resolution and leadership style. For instance, are transformational methods more effective in collectivist cultures than in individualist ones? Longitudinal Research: To comprehend the long-term effects of leadership style on conflict dynamics and team performance, longitudinal research are required. Digital Technology: With the rising usage of digital technologies in the modern workplace, it is crucial to study how technology might be utilized by leaders to improve communication and manage conflict more efficiently.

5. Conclusions

This study has effectively demonstrated the transformational leadership style's substantial impact on workplace conflict intensity and conflict resolution efficacy. The analysis's findings demonstrate that a transformational leadership style fosters more teamwork in addition to lessening the intensity of conflicts. This study's substantial negative regression coefficient ($\beta = -0.45$) demonstrates that transformative leaders can foster a more peaceful and effective workplace.

On the other hand, a positive regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.32$) indicates that an authoritarian leadership style intensifies conflict. This supports earlier results in the literature that two-way communication and employee engagement are essential to effective conflict management by demonstrating how an exclusive strategy can exacerbate conflict situations in the workplace.

There are a number of limitations, despite the fact that this study significantly advances our knowledge of the connection between conflict resolution and leadership style. First, because of its cross-sectional nature, the study is unable to establish a direct causal relationship. Second, the results might not apply to all organizational situations since the sample was restricted to workers in particular industry sectors. Third, contextual elements like corporate culture that might affect the connection between conflict and leadership style were not taken into account in this study.

The authors suggest a number of avenues for additional research based on the study's limitations and findings: Longitudinal Studies: To investigate how the association between conflict intensity and leadership style changes over time, future research should employ a longitudinal methodology. This would give further information on how leadership style affects team dynamics over the long run. Contextual Variables: To further understand how these elements affect how well various leadership philosophies handle conflict, future research should take into account contextual variables including industry type, hierarchical structure, and organizational culture. As a result, this study not only advances scientific understanding of the connection between conflict resolution and leadership style, but it also offers companies useful suggestions for improving human resource management. In order to create new ideas and best practices in leadership and conflict management, further study in this field would be extremely beneficial.

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