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The Impact of Islamic values on interpersonal relationship conflict management in Egyptian business organizations "an applied study"

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Abstract

Purpose – the purpose of this paper is to investigate the impact of a number of Islamic values on interpersonal relationship conflict management in Egyptian Pharmaceutical Organizations, and to provide useful frameworks for diagnosing and managing conflict.**Methods** – using a survey instrument, this paper gathered data from 597 managers representing all managerial levels of pharmaceutical industrial organizations operating in Alexandria, Egypt. Data were analysed using Correlation analysis, frequency distribution along with regression techniques that were used to test the frameworks that were introduced: The diagnostic framework for investigating the reasons and consequences of interpersonal conflict and the Management framework investigating the impact of the selected Islamic Values on the processes of conflict management including conflict prevention, resolution, and exploitation.**Findings** – The reasons of conflict as represented by 2 major basic drives: Animalism (Materialism) drives and Angelism (Egoism) drives; both showed high levels of agreement among respondents. The proportions of agreement/high effect for Animalism drives (sub-factors) were ranked as follows: Materialism 84.9%, stupidity 57.8%, while Sexual Harassment was only 30.3%. Whereas the Angelism drives were ranked as follows: Superiority 87.1%, Prestige 84.3%, Position 81.6%, Eternity 80.6% and Domination 73.5%. The proportions of agreement/high effect for Lionism "Predatory Bullying" behaviours (sub-factors) as manifestations/consequences of conflict were ranked as follows: Gossip 77.4%, Driving Wedges Between People 76.7%, Backbiting 75.7%, Lying 72.2%, False Promise 71.9%, False Testimony 69.7%, Stealing 55.6%, Cursing 52.8%, Beating 41.5% and Sexual Harassment 34.0%. Proportions of agreement/high effect for Satanism "Emotional Anger" manifestations (sub-factors) as consequences of conflict were ranked as follows: Jealousy 81.6%, Envy 77.7%, Arrogance was 77.1%, Malice 76.5% and Rancor 71.5%. The overall results supported our hypotheses denoting the impact of the selected Islamic values on conflict management. Furthermore the results supported that the investigated reasons of interpersonal Conflict namely Animalism "Materialism" and Angelism "Egoism" have a significant impact on the investigated conflict consequences namely Lionism and Satanism that consequently affects productivity. **Practical implications** – Based on findings specific implications related to work environment, were identified strengthening Islamic perspective of business management, and enhancing conflict management

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strategies. Furthermore, the framework presented could be used for managing interpersonal conflict in business pharmaceutical organization through designing "Values Training Programs" to be implemented by Human Resources Managers.**Originality/value** – The present study is one of the few studies in the Islamic management field considering the Qur'an and the Sunnah [1] as the main source of literature. It is therefore, a starting point for future studies that may lead to develop this aspect in conflict management. The paper highlights not only the importance of the role of Islamic Values in management of interpersonal conflict in business organizations in Egypt, but also provides a useful insight into the linkage between Reasons and consequences of conflict and productivity in a country that has recently experienced a social, political and economic turmoil.

Introduction

Conflicts are common in organizations. This is confirmed by the verse advising mankind to accept conflict as inevitable. Allah reveals to Adam (p) [2] in the Qur'an [3] (2:36): "Go down (and live in the earth); you will remain in conflict with each other, and now in the earth has been destined a dwelling place and sustenance for you for a fixed time".

The morale and effectiveness of individual employees, teams and entire organizations depends on how they manage interpersonal conflict at work (Tjosvold, 1998 cited in De Deru, 2001). Managers spend an average of 20 per cent of their time managing conflict (Thomas, 1992, cited in De Deru, 2001), and evidence suggests that conflict and conflict management at work substantially influences individual, group, and organizational effectiveness (De Dreu et al., 1999; Spector and Jex, 1998 cited in De Deru, 2001).

Interpersonal relationship conflict occurs when two interacting social entities have incompatible feelings and emotions regarding some or all the issues (Amason, 1996 cited in Nair, 2008). This category of conflict has been labeled psychological conflict (Ross & Ross, 1989 cited in Nair 2008), relationship conflict (Jehn, 1997a cited in Nair, 2008) and interpersonal conflict (Eisenhardt, Kahwajy, & Bourgeois, 1997 cited in Nair 2008). Pelled et al.1999 cited in Nair, 2008) defined it as "a condition in which group members have interpersonal clashes characterized by anger, frustration, and other negative feelings".

The successful management of conflict involves two steps: first, becoming aware of the existing conflict and the need to resolve it, i.e. consciously incompetent, and second, developing the tools, policies, and procedures necessary to resolve that conflict, i.e. consciously competent (De Deru et al., 2001). To clarify this; People are always aware of the needs of the level of consciousness and the needs of the previous levels, but unaware of the needs of the subsequent levels of consciousness. They are unconsciously incompetent at the next level of consciousness. When first become aware of a need, people are generally unskilled at satisfying it—consciously incompetent. By learning the skills that are necessary to satisfy a need, they become consciously competent. Eventually, upon mastering the skills that are necessary to satisfy the needs at a particular level of consciousness, people become unconsciously competent at that level (Barrett, 2006).

Conflict management influences individual wellbeing, group performance, and organizational effectiveness. Knowing the importance of conflict management in organizations, it is vital to have and develop reliable and valid measurement instruments that help managers to diagnose conflict management strategies at work (De Deru, 2001).

It has been identified by Tjosvold (2006) that there is a lack of agreement about conflict management and there is still a considerable need for empirical studies on the consequences and the reasons of conflict at work. In the same manner, (Einarsen, 1999) illustrated that there is a special need for studies that explicitly address how conflict is perceived and construed by recipients, offenders and observers. Moreover, Tjosvold (2006), highlighted that previous research illustrated that confusion about conflict parameters very much frustrates understanding and managing of conflict. Furthermore, previous research shows that conflict has developed with an almost complete neglect of emotions, and even when emotions have been considered in the conflict literature, it has been examined more as fallout of conflict (Nair, 2008).