



The Relationship between Conflict Management Styles and the Effectiveness of Premier Football League Teams of Hamadan Province

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ABSTRACT

Conflict is a process in which one party feels that other groups have prevented him from doing other activities, interests and goals. Conflict comes about when two or more people come into clash with each other because of difference in their needs, wants, aims and values. It is an indispensable part of team works which, if not properly managed, can result failure or even success for a team. The present research aims at studying the relations between conflict management styles and the effectiveness of football teams from Hamadan province present at the premier league. This study is of descriptive-correlational type that has been conducted based on case study. Three different questionnaires were applied for collecting the necessary data: one for getting the demographic information of the subjects; Robbins' questionnaire of conflict management (1991), and Moghimi's (2013) questionnaire for team effectiveness. The statistical community of the study consisted of all the players of football teams in Hamadan province in 2013 from among whom 113 ones were randomly selected as the subjects of the study. Results from applying the Pearson correlation coefficient to the data showed that there was a significantly inverse relation between conflict management styles of completion and team effectiveness ($P < 0.05$). It was also found to be a significant relation between conflict management styles of collaboration and team effectiveness, and finally between conflict management style of avoidance and team effectiveness ($P < 0.05$). we can conclude that collaboration style is the best and most effective one for facing and overcoming conflicts in the teams. Applications of this style can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the teams.

Keywords: Conflict management styles, team effectiveness, football.

INTRODUCTION

It is a fact universally acknowledged that as long as there are human beings there are conflicts. Differing viewpoints sometimes lead to the destruction of the relationships. Different people hold widely differing values and preferences and all are subject to change and transformation. All these would certainly bring about conflicts and clashes in our lives and at work. Thus, conflict is a natural part of our daily lives; it is a fact with which men have been faced all through their history, and unfortunately, because of not properly managing their conflicts, they have most often come up in the form of fierce contradictions and hostilities. That is why nowadays most people disparage conflict as something negative in their lives. Basically, however, conflict is a kind of knowing effort intended by A for deactivating the efforts of B. It is, of course, done by barring the way of B so that he or she might feel exhausted in the ways toward their goals, or it can add to the advantages of A instead (1). Conflict comes about when two or more people come into clash with each other because of difference in their needs, wants, aims and values. It is an indispensable part of team works which, if not properly managed, can affect the failure or even the success of a team (2). Conflict may also occur when two or more people with differing aims, values or needs come into contact with each other (3). Rahim (2001) believes that conflict is the result of lack of conformity, agreement and harmony within and among the social institutions, and Slabbert (2004) considers it as a fact that causes disorder in the performance of people or organizations (4 & 5). Thomas (1992) proposes 6 methods for managing the intra-personal conflicts: competition, collaboration, avoidance, conforming and reconciliation (6). Later on, Putnam and Wilson (1988) formulated these 6 methods into 3 main approaches namely: 1- resolution-oriented approach (including collaboration and reconciliation methods in which the parties involved seek cooperation with each other); 2- collation-avoiding approach (consisting of avoidance and conformity methods in which they tend to avoid opposition); 3- control

approach based on equal competition (parties care only for their personal interests which leads to opposition) (7). When, in a conflict, one side is strongly after satisfying his own needs and ignores those of the opposite side, or shows barely any effort for meeting the wants of the opposite party, he has, in fact, moved toward the style that is oriented toward competition (8). The avoidance or resignation style involves a lack of cooperation and being creditor. When one of the parties involved does not take care of their interests and desires of either itself or the other one involved, it tends toward the avoidance or resignation style, that is, they simply ignore their conflict (9). respect and consideration for those of the opponent.(10).This style is focused more on conflict resolution through cooperation.(11). In collaboration style, one or both sides of the conflict tend to seek the satisfaction of both their own aims and those of the opposite side (2).The approach following this style would often lead to a win-win outcome. In this style, which most scholars call problem-solving method, the aim is to arrive at a solution which may cover the demands of both parties. Therefore, they come to believe that helping the achievement of the aims of the other one is a great help to themselves and brings about their agreement(12). As any of the style of avoidance, agreement and reconciliation provide only temporary solutions to the conflict, the two styles of competition and collaboration have now become more strongly noticed by the scholars (13). Thus, conflict management styles enhance the harmonious collaboration in which fruitful methods are provided for solving the problems (14). Studies done by Naghizadeh et al (2011) show that, from the viewpoints of coaches and players, collaboration style of conflict management has significant positive effects on team effectiveness, while competition has negative effect on team effectiveness. Alpar et al (2000) state that compared to the competition-oriented style, collaboration style in directing the conflicts makes the performance of the teams more efficient. Hensel et al. (2006) in their study conclude that there is a meaningful relationship between conflict and organizational effectiveness. Slabbert (2004) have emphasized the positive relations between the collaboration style and the job satisfaction in their respective studies. Studies by Tjosvold (2006) showed that collaboration style of conflict management is more useful in enhancing team effectiveness than competition style of conflict management. Ghafarzadeh (1996) has concluded in his study that among the conflict management styles, managers most often follow the collaboration style after which such other styles as agreement, reconciliation, avoidance and domination are followed , respectively .Iranzadeh et al (2012) in their study, demonstrate that there are no significant relationship between the avoidance and cooperation styles and the creativity of the personnel .Mozafari et al(2012) In their study concluded that in order to become familiar with the advantages and disadvantages of each of the coaches of conflict management strategies in this regard, they must be given the necessary training. *Shamaila* et al (2012) Concluded that there is a meaningful relationship between the cooperation style and team effectiveness while the relationship between avoidance style and team effectiveness is negative. Football is a highly popular sport which is always underlined by a series of conflicts. These conflicts are caused by mismanagement, disorganization or misdirection of a game. Some of such conflict is also caused by the misbehavior of the players who often ignore the rules of the game and provide the ground for the conflicts. In the present study, attempts have been made at investigating the most prevalent conflict management styles among the football players in Hamadan along with a study of their effects on the team effectiveness. What stands out among the interests of this study is attending to the parameters that have significant roles in sports management and have not so far been considered with regard to professional sports especially football. Regarding the importance of each of the parameters mentioned in sports management, analyzing and studying their relations to each other and their roles could yield highly fruitful results for the managers and coaches of sport teams providing for their more efficient management of their teams. Therefore, this study aims especially at answering this question: is there any significant relationship between the conflict management styles and team effectiveness in football teams?

METHODS

The present study is of descriptive-correlational type, which was done based on case study using three questionnaires. The statistical community of the study were all the football players of the premier league of football from Hamadan province, Iran (N=380). Using Morgan table, we finally came up with 311 persons randomly selected as the subjects of the study. For collecting the necessary data, 3 different questionnaires were used. One for gaining the demographic information of the subjects, Robbins' questionnaire of conflict management (1991) which consists of 30 questions for measuring the conflict management styles, and the questionnaire of Moghimi (2013) for team effectiveness, which comprises 38 questions. For determining the stability of each of the questionnaires, Kronbach alpha was used upon which the values of 0.88 for conflict management questionnaire, and 0.83 for that of team effectiveness were found, respectively. The justifiability of the questionnaires was also approved of upon the comments of 14 university professors of the field of sports management. Such descriptive statistics parameters as

mean, and standard deviation were used for analyzing the data. For testing the naturalness of the data, K-S test was employed, and testing the validity of the assumptions, Pearson correlation test and multi-variable regression were used from the SPSS 18 software with a significance level of $\alpha=0.05$.

RESULTS

Based on the data thus gathered, we gained the following results

I. descriptive findings

Table 1 presents the values of descriptive statistical items for the variables of the study. As we can see from the table, the average age of the football players is 23.46 ± 8.26 according to which we may come up with roughly 23 as the age of most of the subjects. Also from the table 1, we see that the average value for the variable of activity background is 1.95 ± 1.39 years based on which we can account for almost a two-year experience for the players. Of the total 113 players that we selected as the subjects of the study, 78 ones (69%) held a high school diploma or less, 18 others (15.9) held pro-diploma as their educational certificate, 10 people (8.8%) had a B A degree, and finally 7 others (6.2%) held MA or higher degrees.

Table 1- values of descriptive statistics for the variables of the study

variable item	subjects	Mean	Standard deviation
age	113	23.46	8.26
experience	113	1.95	1.39
education		Number	Percentage
Diploma or lower		82	75
Pro-diploma		21	16.2
B.A		10	8.8

Based on the data taken out of the questionnaires and upon the application of K-S test, we get the following significant values for the test; 0.65 for the control variable, 0.91 for the collaboration variable, 0.20 for that of avoidance, and finally 0.13 for the effectiveness variable. All these values are greater than 0.05 showing a normal distribution of the variables. Thus, we used parametric tests for analyzing the assumptions. As we can see from table 2, the value of Pearson correlation coefficient between competition style and effectiveness is $r = -0.38$ with a significance level of 0.023 showing a significantly inverse statistical relation between these two variables.

Table 2- Pearson correlation coefficient for relation between competition and team effectiveness

Statistical Variable	n	r	Sig
Competition style—team effectiveness	113	-0.38	0.023

As one can see from table 3, the Pearson correlation coefficient between collaboration style and effectiveness is $r = 0.471$ with a significance level of 0.003 showing a significant statistical relation between these two variables.

Table 3- Pearson correlation coefficient for relation between collaboration and team effectiveness

Statistical Variable	n	r	Sig
collaboration style—team effectiveness	113	0.471	0.003

As is shown in table 4, the Pearson correlation coefficient between avoidance style and effectiveness is $r=0.562$ with a significance level of 0.001 showing a significant relation between these two variables.

Table 4- Pearson correlation coefficient for relation between avoidance style and team effectiveness

Statistical Variable	n	r	Sig
avoidance style—team effectiveness	113	0.562	0.001

Upon affirming a linear relation between the variables, assuming the independence of the errors, and knowing of the variance inflation factor (VIF) being close to 1, and regarding the assumption that there is no overlapping among the variables of this study, we put the present variables into the regression model. As shown in table 5, all the styles of conflict management with a significance level of smaller than 0.05 confirm our results regarding their relation to effectiveness. In other words, these different variables can well affect the variable of effectiveness. In addition, we know that the avoidance variable with 0.623 coefficient has the greatest effects on team effectiveness, next to it, are the collaboration and competition variables with 0.561 and -0.482 coefficients, respectively. About the competition variable, as we see, the relation is inverse.

Table 5- Regression model coefficient for each of the variables

Source of change	Value of standardized β coefficient	Sig	T
Competition	-0.482	0.023	-5.23
Collaboration	0.561	0.003	7.23
Avoidance	0.623	0.000	8.84

CONCLUSION

As conflict management and its different styles are among the important factors affecting the effectiveness of sports teams, this study attempted to investigate the relations between conflict management and its different styles and team effectiveness in the football players in Hamadan, Iran. Our results first showed that there was to be seen a significant inverse relation between competition style and team effectiveness. This finding of ours accords with those of Alper et al. (2000), Shamaila et al. (2012), Richard (1997), Naghizadeh et al (2011), and Anit et al (2009). Such results, together with ours, prove that competition style has a negative effect on team effectiveness. That is to say, the more the coach may apply the competition style against conflict situations, the more team effectiveness would deteriorate. This style, directly or indirectly, leaves a negative effect on the efficiency of the teams among the reasons for which is that the coaches follow their own intentions and do not care for those of the players involved. Our results also proved that there was a meaningful relation between collaboration style and team effectiveness. This finding of our study also agrees with those of Alper et al. (2000), Shamaila et al. (2012), Richard (1997), Naghizadeh et al (2011), Tjosvold (2006), and Anit et al (2009). All such results show that collaboration style of conflict management has positive effects on team effectiveness so that, compared to competition-oriented style, this style helps the efficiency of the teams by directing and controlling the conflicts. In such situations, the parties involved are firm in their attempts toward the intended goals while seeking collaboration with each other and care for the interests of each other. In other words, they employ a win-win strategy for overcoming the conflicts. This is by far better than the other two styles. Our findings also show that there is a meaningful relation between avoidance style and effectiveness, which is in agreement with results from the studies of Richard (1997), and Naghizadeh (2011), though it does not conform with those of Shamiala et al. (2012). Reasons for this disagreement can be the different subjects and place of

conduction of the studies. These results, after all, show that the avoidance style of conflict management has had a significantly positive effect on team effectiveness helping its enhancement. This style prevents anarchy and the clash of ideas in the teams. Considering the results from this study, we can conclude that collaboration style is the best and most effective one for facing and overcoming conflicts in the teams. Applications of this style can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the teams, while the competition style, used in the same situations, leaves corruptive effects on the efficiency of the teams. In fact, collaboration style is the only one in which the parties involved in the conflict listen to each other and together try to find the source of the trouble, and by fruitful collaborative measure try to find a solution for the conflict in which the viewpoints of both sides of the conflict are taken into account. They may alternatively solve the problem by exchanging some advantages between each other, while under the competition style, the coaches of the teams involved just try to assert their own personal demands to the other side. Results from this study have also shown that using conflict management styles may lead to different degrees of effectiveness under different conditions, so that each of the would bring about proper effects in proper conditions and low effectiveness in improper conditions. Thus their use and application well depend on the situation and issues involved, that is, people should use various styles as the situation may demand.

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