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CONFLICT AS BEHAVIOUR AND CONSCIOUSNESS MANIPULATION TOOL ON ARCHITECTURAL FIRM'S EMPLOYEES EXAMPLE

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Abstract

The paper examines conflicts as a behavior and consciousness manipulation tool on the example of an architectural firm's employees. The purpose of the study is to determine the subjects' propensity for conflictual behavior and aggression, domination, and amiability. In the study, we applied observation methods and two psychodiagnostic techniques, such as E. Ilyin's technique of personal aggression and proneness to conflict and Leary's Interpersonal Behaviour Circle technique. The findings showed a low level of amiability, which demonstrates the subjects` propensity for aggression and competition that hinders successful cooperation between co-workers. Moreover, the study discovered an average level of conflict, high irascibility, average aggressiveness and sensitivity. Average vengefulness and intolerance in all employees showed their reluctance to forgive and treat one another respectfully and friendliness. The subjects were middle-aged, family people with higher education, great skills and more than five years of professional experience. Although the personality traits described above were not distinctly visible, they still indicate intrapersonal conflicts. The study proved that the employees` propensity for conflicts might be closely related to such emotional qualities, as high irascibility, average aggressiveness and sensitivity, stubbornness, vengefulness, intolerance to opinions of others, suspiciousness, a high level of dominance and a low level of amiability.

1. Introduction

Proneness to conflicts is a personality trait that demonstrates a person`s willingness to come into conflicts with others. It is also one of the key factors that allow for manipulation of other people`s behavior and consciousness (Semrad, Scott-Parker, & Nagel, 2019; Dolgova, Kryzhanovskaya, Popova, Tul'kibaeva, & Shayakhmetova, 2016; Chevalier, 2015; Dreisbach & Fischer, 2015). Working people communicate with their directors, employees, and co-workers and planning cooperation with business partners. When engaged in such active communication, people often find themselves in situations of misunderstanding, which might result in disputes. If a dispute hinders the achievement of a set objective, it causes a conflict (Harreveld, Nohlen, & Schneider, 2015; Hirsh & Kang, 2016; Wood et al., 2016). Conflicts have a direct impact on the company`s profit by decreasing its employees` efficiency. Employees of an architectural firm are creative people. As a rule, they are more sensitive to criticism and other people`s assessment of their work and can be manipulated more easily in a conflict (Dolgova, Mamylina, Belousova, Melnik, & Arkayeva, 2016; Dolgova, Rozhkova, Bogachev, Vorozheykina, & Ivanova, 2017).

The analysis of literature showed that a conflict is a bipolar notion, meaning that it showcases a confrontation between two beginnings (Baynham-Herd, Redpath, Bunnefeld, Molony, & Keane, 2018; Yang & Li, 2018; Kotlyar, Karakowsky, & Ng, 2011; Russo & Hooft, 2011). Both sides, represented by an active subject or subjects, aim at overcoming the tension (Shipunova, Berezovskaya, Evseev, Evseeva, & Mureyko, 2018; Han & Ma, 2015; Kleiman, Stern, & Trope, 2016).

Proneness to conflicts is an integral personality trait that indicates the frequency of participating in interpersonal conflicts. It demonstrates a person`s willingness to come into conflicts with others and a degree of involvement in a conflict (Barker, Buzzell, & Fox, 2019; Wang, Jiang, & Pretorius, 2016; Kacmar, Bachrach, Harris, & Noble, 2012). Proneness to conflicts is associated with irascibility and irritability, a high degree of readiness to come into a conflict, and a behavioral pattern based on aggression and self-defense (Heerey, 2015; Tang, Posner, Rothbart, & Volkow, 2015; Rosen & Underwood, 2010).

2. Problem Statement

Conflicts in a company may have either adverse or positive consequences. It depends on the nature of a conflict, the behavioral patterns of participants and conflict resolution techniques (Anestis, Soberay, Gutierrez, Joiner, & Hernández, 2014; Dimitriev, Saperova, Karpenko, & Dimitriev, 2011).

Adverse consequences include products of behavior and consciousness manipulation, such as higher tension in the team, lower social well-being, a stronger formal nature of interactions, higher selfishness, fewer business contacts despite their functional necessity, decreased motivation and efficiency, and increased turnover.

Positive consequences are an adaptation, socialization, restructuring of the team, stabilization, detection of hidden flaws and errors, addressing urgent organizational and technological issues, seeking new creative solutions, faster information processes, closer relationships in the team, enhanced dignity, and more active cooperation in problem-solving.

3. Research Questions

Research questions considered the following statement: the employees` propensity for conflicts might be closely related to such emotional qualities, as high irascibility, average aggressiveness and sensitivity, stubbornness, vengefulness, intolerance to opinions of others, suspiciousness, a high level of dominance and a low level of amiability.

4. Purpose of the Study

Purpose of the study to determine the subjects' propensity for conflictual behavior and aggression, domination, and amiability.

5. Research Methods

We applied observation methods, Ilyin's technique of personal aggression and proneness to conflict, and the Interpersonal Behavior Circle technique by Lery (Zabrodin & Pakhalyan, 2015; Sidorenko, 2003; Zagvyazinskiy, 2008).

Ilyin's technique of personal aggression and proneness to a conflict was aimed at detecting the employees` propensity for conflictual behavior and aggression and determining their level of irascibility, aggressiveness, sensitivity, stubbornness, willingness to compromise, vengefulness, intolerance to opinions of others, and suspiciousness.

Leary's Interpersonal Behaviour Circle technique was used to estimate their level of dominance and amiability.

6. Findings

The subjects were male and female employees of an architectural firm aged between 27 and 45. All of them have a family and a university degree in their field of work. Their work experience is between 6 and 22 years. The method of participant observation showed that the overall atmosphere in the team is discrete and relaxed. Those employees working remotely are still obliged to participate in team project discussions. The office is organized in such an experimental way that the employees do not have to be present at their workspaces at all times. A lot of meetings are held outside of the office.

All employees must attend scheduled and unscheduled discussions of current projects.

All observed conflicts emerged due to differences in values, opinions, and ideas regarding a certain project.

Disputes were mostly highly emotional, with signs of verbal and non-verbal aggression, resentment and pressure.

However, after these meetings, even if the final decision had been forced upon by the director with no chance of further discussions, employees demonstrated friendly attitude towards each other, sometimes with gentle teasing and light humor.

The physical gap between the employees is rather narrow. Hugs, firm handshakes and pats on the shoulder are common. Figure 01 shows the findings of the analysis based on Ilyin's technique of personal aggression.

Figure 01 showcases that irascibility (62.5 %) and willingness to compromise (50%) are the most common features of personality among the subjects. All employees demonstrated an average level of vengefulness and intolerance.

Irascibility is associated with uncontrolled emotional expressions, intemperance, sarcastic remarks towards an opponent and abrupt refusal to help others. Excessive irascibility is caused by stressors or resentments, sleep deprivation, unhealthy habits, anxieties, exhaustion, uneasiness, vitamin deficiency, or personal issues.

Aggressiveness is a propensity to react with anger and rage to external factors. The study showed that 37.5% of the employees are prone to high aggressiveness that can be demonstrated through unintentional destruction of property, the breaking of crockery, and the tearing of project papers.
It was also revealed that the same number of the employees (37.5%) displayed high sensitivity as they can be easily offended by any comment or their assigned responsibility.
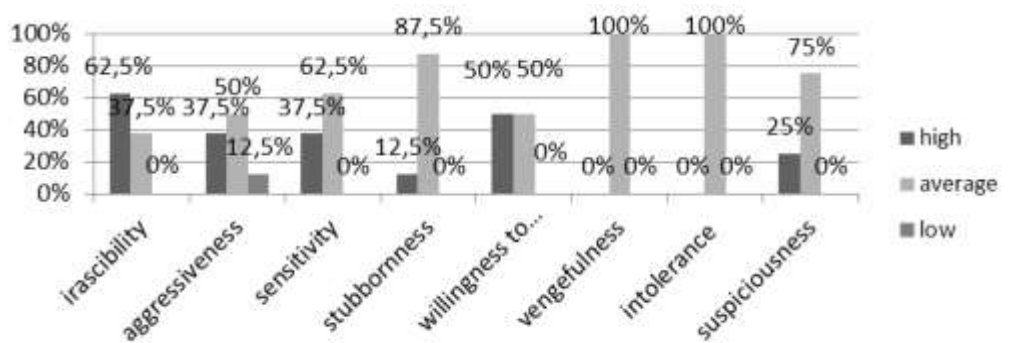

Figure 01. Proneness to conflicts found in the subjects based on Ilyin's technique of personal aggression

Stubbornness is expressed through a judgemental attitude towards others and unwillingness to appreciate their input. Among the employees, no one demonstrated low stubbornness. Average stubbornness was found in 87.5% of the subjects, while 12.5% showed high stubbornness.
Willingness to compromise is a propensity to make concessions in order to reach an agreement. Overall willingness to agree to mutual concessions was demonstrated by the majority of the employees as 50% of the subjects showed a high willingness to compromise and 50% - average.

Vengefulness is expressed through a reluctance to forgive and forget. All of the subjects (100%) had average vengefulness as sometimes they can be prone to bringing back old resentments while working together on a project.

Intolerance is a reluctance to treat all members of the team with respect and acceptance. High intolerance was found in all subjects (100%) as they often refuse to consider their co-workers' ideas and views when discussing a project.

Suspiciousness is a reluctance to trust other people and excessive cautiousness. High suspiciousness was demonstrated by 25% of the employees, while 75% showed average suspiciousness.

Figure 02 shows the summarized findings on the proneness to conflicts based on Ilyin's technique.
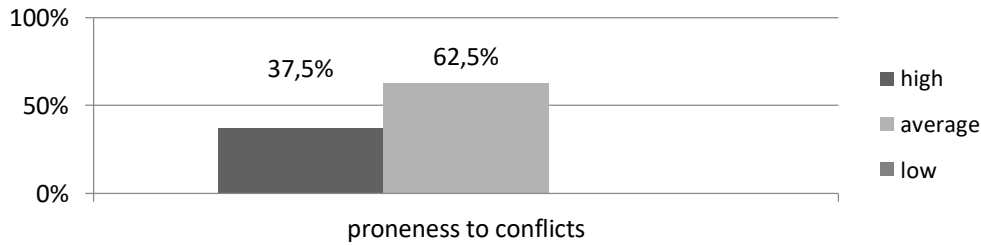

Figure 02. The summarized findings on the proneness to conflicts based on Ilyin's technique.

The study revealed that more than half of the employees have an average level of proneness to conflicts (62.5%). It is associated with an adequate approach to a conflict based on an analysis and assessment of the situation. Such people are able to take an objective look at the situation, decide whether it can be considered as a conflict or not, and choose an appropriate pattern of behavior in conflict situations. However, it does not apply to 37.5% of the employees.

People with an average level of proneness to conflicts tend to use resentments for manipulation and often showcase intolerance and irascibility (Grieve, March, & Doorn, 2019; McLarnon, DeLongchamp, Schneider, 2019; Jung & Yoon, 2018; Mast, Frauendorfer, Gatica-Perez, Nguyen, & Choudhury, 2015).

Figure 03 shows the findings of the analysis based on Leary's Interpersonal Behaviour Circle technique.
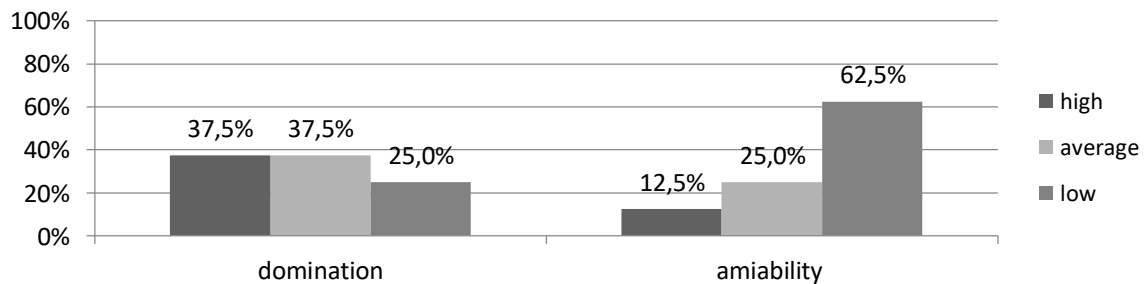

Figure 03. The findings of the analysis based on Leary's Interpersonal Behaviour Circle technique.

Based on Leary's technique, such parameters as a propensity for domination and amiability were studied and analyzed. The findings showed that 37.5% of the subjects display a pronounced high or average desire to lead a conversation and dominate. Only 25% demonstrated a low level of leadership. Moreover, they are more likely to submit to authority and refuse to bear responsibility, and less likely to take a leadership role.

A high level of amiability, or a desire to establish friendships and cooperate with other people, was found in only 12.5% of the subjects, while pronounced animosity was detected in 62.5% of the employees. 25% displayed average amiability. These findings show that the employees are eager to

manipulate and have a propensity for aggression and competition, which hinders successful cooperation between co-workers.

7. Conclusion

Leary's Interpersonal Behaviour Circle technique revealed a low level of amiability, which demonstrates the subjects` propensity for aggression and competition that may hinder successful cooperation between co-workers, while Ilyin's technique of personal aggression and proneness to conflict discovered an average level of conflict, high irascibility, average aggressiveness and sensitivity. . Average vengefulness and intolerance in all employees showed their reluctance to forgive and treat one another respectfully and friendliness. The subjects were middle-aged, family people with higher education, great skills and more than five years of professional experience. Although the observed personal traits regarding manipulation of others were not highly distinctive, it can be argued that their establishment and development were caused by conflicts and conflictual behavior patterns. This statement is confirmed by other studies conducted by us.

Therefore, the study proved that the employees` propensity for conflicts might be closely related to such emotional qualities, as high irascibility, average aggressiveness and sensitivity, stubbornness, vengefulness, intolerance to opinions of others, suspiciousness, a high level of dominance and a low level of amiability.

Acknowledgments

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