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The Effect of Organizational Communications System on Interpersonal Conflict in Physical Education Offices of Isfahan Province, IRAN

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***Abstract*—**The purpose of this study was to survey the effect of organizational communication system on the conflict in physical education offices of Isfahan province. The research methodology of this research was a descriptive study. All employees working in physical education offices of Isfahan province were included in the sample for this study (N= 236). Researcher made questionnaire and demographic questionnaire were used as investigation instruments. Based on the result of chi square test, there is significant difference between organizational communication system and interpersonal conflict. The most of participants evaluate communication in an informal way and pointed out that the communication channels were not open. Based on the result of binomial test, interpersonal conflict exists in physical education offices of Isfahan.

***Keywords*—**Communication, Employees, Interpersonal conflict.

I. Introduction

COMMUNICATION is a very crucial aspect inside any organization especially if it is used by managers. In the last decade, because of the information technology, the working environment has changed. In fact, almost everything has become more rapid and more sophisticated. The globalization, technology and quick rate of change resulted in changing employee's perceptions about their job and their working environment. This new atmosphere made the employees look for a stronger voice, a role in decision-making and meaningful responsibilities regarding organization' performance. These features cannot be established without communication.

Communication is an important aspect in the managers' hands to improve an organization' performance [1].

Because the purpose of organizations is to coordinate employees' tasks, communication to inform, persuade, seek information, coordinate and reward. However, misuse of communication by managers can lead to lying, cajoling, controlling, misinforming, distorting and misrepresenting [2].

Communication between the superior and subordinate is essential because it creates a better working environment. Communication is considered the glue that ties the employees with the organization to achieve its goal [3].

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In fact, communication facilitates employees' task; it enable them to know the organization's goal, how they can achieve it and what their role is in each task [4].

Communication is needed inside organizations, as well as outside the organization, to be aware of any problem, analyze the elements of the problem, come up with different options for solving the problems, specify the required actions and evaluate the results through feedback [5].

Reference [6] shows that human communication behavior is the product of at least two interacting factors: an individual's predispositions (traits) and situational constraints on his or her communication behavior at a given time (states).

On the other hand, conflict, by definition is the "disagreement between people or groups" [7].

Reference [8] define conflict as "communicative exchange between at least two interdependent parties who have different, opposite, or incompatible opinions and goals and who perceive that the other is interfering in the achievement of his or her goals" [231]. Dealing and handling conflict may differ based on the original environment of the culture.

The theoretical development of this study was limited to the concept of Interpersonal conflict. Interpersonal Conflict usually arises when one party feels another is trying to prevent his/her goals from being achieved [9]. Similarly, Ohbuchi and Reference [10] describe interpersonal conflict as an event in which an individual potentially jeopardizes another's goals, wishes, or expectations.

In organizations, interpersonal conflict is prevalent and troublesome for managers [11]. Reference [12] report that middle managers are spending 25 percent of their time handling conflict. When deciding the most effective method for managing conflict, the conflict itself needs to be evaluated. In order to increase individual, group, and system-wide effectiveness, organizational conflicts are often managed with a temporary or doable solution, instead of being resolved [13].

This paper attempts to achieve two goals: to investigate the effect of organizational communications system on the conflict in physical education offices of Isfahan province, and to identify the present dominant organizational communications system and interpersonal conflict in physical education offices of Isfahan province. The major question of this study is "does interpersonal conflict exist in physical education offices of Isfahan province or not?" In this study, organizational communications system is independent variable and interpersonal conflict is chosen as dependant variable.

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This is the first study dealing with communication strategies for interpersonal conflict in Isfahan. As such, the current study can be considered to break new ground in communication strategies in Isfahan province.

Organizational communication is a crucial aspect for the effectiveness of organizations and of individuals inside an organization. Ongoing patterns of interaction among people within organizations are characterized as planned, sequential and systematic. While communication is the connection among individuals, at the same time, it helps individuals in creating awareness [14]. Reference [5] stated those employees' reactions to conflict may take different styles, such as litigation, strike, poor moral or reduced productivity due to miscommunication. They believe that any type of conflict can be "avoidable" if the organization opens communication channels through dialogue [2]. Communication with employees should be ongoing and consistent; especially when organizations need guidance or when there is opposition to changes inside the organization [15].

Reference [5] suggested eight different ways to avoid conflict. They believe that there is no guaranteed way to resolve a conflict, however, these eight steps can aid organizations to confront and resolve any conflict, two ideas out of the eight that seem to be important are: 1) discovering the meaning of conflict and 2) establishing open channels of communication to resolve problems [2] By understanding the meaning of conflict an organization can increase the awareness, acceptance and resolution of conflicts. Like wise, through collaborative negotiations to create communication channels, the cause and solutions are more easily identified.

II. Literature Review

Reference [5] differentiated between the types of communication; as well they claim that some organizations communicate to settle a conflict, while others may communicate to resolve a conflict [12]. Thus, organizations that are just interested in pacifying their employees, most likely have little interest in feedback and conflict resolution. On the contrary, organizations that encourage their employees to grow and learn usually are serious about conflict resolution. Open communication channels assist upper management to avoid negative reactions by the employees.

Reference [16] defined conflict as "an overt struggle between two or more groups in an organization" [301]. Therefore, public relations have an important role in dealing with and solving conflicts that may arise between the upper management and employees to maintain an organization's effectiveness. High levels of cooperation inside an organization assist in reducing and resolving internal problems [16], [17]. Reference [18] explored how the public relations managers established power in organizations. In his study, Plowman outlines how conflict resolution can empower public relations managers in becoming more effective. The study was based on J.E. Grunig's model of symmetrical two-way practices for public relations [19]. Although communication is a method of interaction among employees; it may cause conflict. However, communication may be utilized as an effective way to resolve conflict. The public relations managers should have strong communication activities within and outside the organization to avoid any type of conflict.

The analyzed dynamic changes in communication sounds uttered during induced social interactions between a female and an unfamiliar male. Detailed video graphic and sound analyzes revealed that the arousal state predicted variations in communication sound structure reliably. Both, a decrease of distance and a male approaching the female led to an increase in fundamental frequency and repetition rate of syllables. These findings support comparable results in human and non-human primates and suggest that common coding rules in communication sounds govern acoustic conflict regulation in mammals [20]. The authors support these statements according to theory bases of study variables.

III. Methodology and Research Design

The research methodology of this study was descriptive. The sample for this study consisted of all employees of physical education offices located in Isfahan province. Of 277 employees who working in physical education offices, 236 persons responded.

Survey was administered by sending the questionnaires to physical education offices. Each employee was assured of the confidentiality of his or her anonymous responses. The questionnaires were self-administered and they were completed outside the presence of the researcher. The researcher collected the questionnaires immediately after completion. Data were collected between September 2008 and November 2008. Descriptive statistics (f-frequency distribution, percentage, mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Binomial test, chi square test, Spearman coefficient, and Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis tests) were performed with SPSS, version 13.0, and Microsoft office Excel software version 2007. The instrument consists of 32 questions with responses measured on a five point Likert scales, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), assessing communication (the five dimensions such as: freedom of act in communication, efficient inform, formal and informal communication, one-way communication, and open communication channels) and interpersonal conflict (the three dimensions such as: conflict with colleague, conflict with chief, and conflict with subordinate). A demographic questionnaire was developed for this study to obtain information concerning gender, age, education level, kind of employment, and years of service. Validity was checked by sending the instrument to fifteen physical education experts and university professors via the post to determine if any problems existed with the reading levels or interpretation of the questions. Content validity was confirmed by these experts.

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The main reason for performing a pilot test is to reduce the measurement error and to increase reliability and validity. This technique helps researchers test the questionnaire in order to make sure that the instrument is effective before the main study begins. Thirty employees in fifth physical education offices from ministry of education in Isfahan city participated in the pilot test. The pilot data collected from this test were analyzed using reliability and factor analysis with a computer software package for instrument validity.

The reliabilities of the communication sub-dimensions were .91, .87, .85, .88, .93, and for interpersonal conflict sub-dimensions were .95, .93, .92, respectively. The reliability of 8 dimensions was 0.87 by cronbach's alpha coefficient. The validity of this instrument was reconfirmed for the current sample.

IV. Discussion of Findings

The demographic data were obtained from the participants' responses. From 277 employees, who working in physical education offices in Isfahan province, 236 persons completed the survey. Of 236 participants, 142(60.17%) were males and 94(39.83%) were females. The current research participants ranged in age from 24 to 58 years old (M= 35.78, SD=2.24). The education levels of current research participants were diploma 116(49.15%), associate of sciences 57(24.15%), bachelor of sciences 43(18.22%), master of sciences 7(2.96%), and Ph.D 0(0%) with 13(5.52%) missing data. The current research participants ranged in years of services from 1 to 29 years (M= 14.71, SD= 2.58). The kind of employment of current research participants were official 184(77.95%), conventional 31(13.14%), service purchase 8(3.39%), with 13(5.52%) missing data. As shown in table 1 the significant prop of participants evaluate communication in a formal way and pointed out that the communication channels were not open. Also this study found that there is neither freedom of act in communication with upper managers nor efficient information in physical education offices of Isfahan province. Based on the result of binomial test, interpersonal conflict exists in physical education offices of Isfahan(table one). Figure one showed that the informal communication through the organizational communications system sub dimensions had the lowest level.

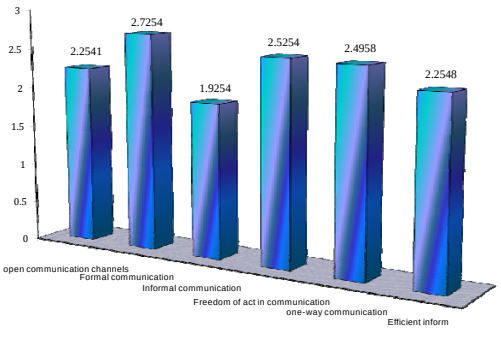


Fig. 1 organizational communications system mean

TABLE I
Result of Binomial Test About Study Variables

Variables	Category	N	Obs Prop	Test Prop	Asymp Sig
Open communication channels	Agree	65	0.44	0.50	0.047 [b]
	Disagree	83	0.56		
	Total	148	1.00		
Efficient inform	Agree	46	0.25	0.50	0.001 [a]
	Disagree	137	0.75		
	Total	183	1.00		
Formal communication	Agree	100	0.55	0.50	0.049 [b]
	Disagree	82	0.45		
	Total	182	1.00		
Informal communication	Agree	60	0.33	0.50	0.011 [b]
	Disagree	122	0.67		
	Total	182	1.00		
Freedom of act in communication	Agree	70	0.36	0.50	0.013 [b]
	Disagree	121	0.64		
	Total	191	1.00		
One-way communication	Agree	125	0.64	0.50	0.013 [b]
	Disagree	68	0.36		
	Total	193	1.00		
Conflict with chief	Agree	104	0.6	0.50	0.033 [b]
	Disagree	68	0.4		
	Total	172	1.00		
Conflict with subordinate	Agree	119	0.65	0.50	0.012 [b]
	Disagree	64	0.35		
	Total	183	1.00		
Conflict with colleague	Agree	110	0.57	0.50	0.043 [b]
	Disagree	83	0.43		
	Total	193	1.00		
Interpersonal conflict	Agree	111	0.61	0.50	0.037 [b]
	Disagree	71	0.39		
	Total	182	1.00		

[a]Binomial is significant at the 0.01 level.
[b]Binomial is significant at the 0.05 level.

TABLE II
Result of Chi Square About Study Variables

Variables	df	Asymp Sig	Chi square value
Organization communication Interpersonal conflict	494	P = 0.001 N = 236	X^2= 98.847[a]
Freedom of act in communication Interpersonal conflict	39	P = 0.004 N = 236	X^2= 54.377[a]
Open communication channels Interpersonal conflict	39	P = 0.028 N = 236	X^2= 26.021[b]
Formal communication Interpersonal conflict	78	P = 0.002 N = 236	X^2= 60.552[a]
Informal communication Interpersonal conflict	117	P = 0.008 N = 236	X^2= 38.911[a]
One-way communication Interpersonal conflict	65	P = 0.006 N = 236	X^2= 49.384[a]
Efficient inform Interpersonal conflict	65	P = 0.001 N = 236	X^2= 73.732[a]

[a]Difference is significant at the 0.01 level
[b]Difference is significant at the 0.05 level

As shown in table 2 interpersonal conflict affecting by other organizational communication elements.

TABLE III
RESULT OF SPEARMAN COEFFICIENT BETWEEN STUDY VARIABLES

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max	Correlation coefficient
Interpersonal conflict	2.5428	0.5698	2	4.66	r = 0.729[a] P= 0.001 N= 236
Organizational communication	2.4587	0.3254	1.58	2.95	
Interpersonal conflict	2.5428	0.5698	2	4.66	r = 0.267 P= 0.254 N= 236
Freedom of act in communication	2.5254	0.5245	1.33	3.33	
Interpersonal conflict	2.5428	0.5698	2	4.66	r = 0.405[b] P= 0.037 N= 236
Open communication channels	2.2541	0.2548	1.33	3	
Interpersonal conflict	2.5428	0.5698	2	4.66	r = 0.634[a] P= 0.001 N= 236
Formal communication	2.7254	0.6254	2	4	
Interpersonal conflict	2.5428	0.5698	2	4.66	r = -0.44[b] P= 0.023 N= 236
Informal communication	1.9254	0.6027	1	4	
Interpersonal conflict	2.5428	0.5698	2	4.66	r = 0.792[a] P= 0.001 N= 236
One-way communication	2.4958	0.5268	2	4.33	
Interpersonal conflict	2.5428	0.5698	2	4.66	r = -0.343[b] P= 0.035 N= 236
Efficient inform	2.2548	0.3658	1.75	3	

[a]Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level
[b]Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

TABLE IV
RESULT OF KRUSKAL-WALLIS TEST ABOUT STUDY VARIABLES

Variables	Kruskal-Wallis value
Employees' age Interpersonal conflict	H = 0.382 ; Asymp.Sig = 0.733 ; df = 3
Employees' age Organizational communication	H = 1.73 ; Asymp.Sig = 0.436 ; df = 3
Employees' records of service Interpersonal conflict	H = 4.847 ; Asymp.Sig = 0.482 ; df = 5
Employees' records of service Organizational communication	H = 4.273 ; Asymp.Sig = 0.562 ; df = 5
Employees' education levels Interpersonal conflict	H = 2.873 ; Asymp.Sig = 0.274 ; df = 3
Employees' education levels Organizational communication	H = 0.732 ; Asymp.Sig = 0.904 ; df = 3
Employees' type of employment Interpersonal conflict	H = 0.928 ; Asymp.Sig = 0.673 ; df = 2
Employees' type of employment Organizational communication	H = 0.827 ; Asymp.Sig = 0.637 ; df = 2

N = 223

As shown in table 3 there is significant relationship between interpersonal conflict and some of organizational communications' elements.In table 4 the calculated P value shows there are no significant differences between organizational communication, interpersonal conflict and demographic aspects such as employees' age, employees' records of service, employees' education levels and employees' type of employment.

TABLE V
RESULT OF MANN-WHITNEY U TEST ABOUT STUDY VARIABLES

Variables		N	Mean Rank	U value
Employees' Gender Interpersonal Conflict	Male	142	71.25	U = 726 Asymp.Sig= 0.389 N=236
	Female	94	63.68	
Employees' Gender Organizational communication	Male	142	69.87	U =563 Asymp.Sig= 0.749 N=236
	Female	94	58.65	

Also, table 5 showed that there were not any differences between male and female in the base of existing interpersonal conflict and organizational communications system.

V. CONCLUSION

The broad purpose of the study is to identify the effect of organizational communications system on interpersonal conflict in physical education offices of Isfahan province, IRAN. The study results were based on 236 questionnaires completed by employees working in physical education offices in Isfahan. The instrument used in this study examined the organizational communications system with five dimensions (freedom of act in communication, efficient inform, formal and informal communication, one-way communication, and open communication channels) and interpersonal conflict with three dimensions (conflict with colleague, conflict with chief, and conflict with subordinate). Identifying what is the dominant organizational communications system in Isfahan province physical education offices was the main focus of this study. The study also examined how interpersonal conflict is affected by organizational communications system. All physical education offices located in Isfahan province were surveyed for the purpose of this study.

This research confirmed finding regarding the negative impact of conflict on the working communications, particularly on employees. Previous studies claimed the importance of communication within organizations and public relations to reduce conflict [16], [18]. The results confirmed that communication was the key factor with an issue becoming an interpersonal conflict. This was supported by another study who believed that communication with detail such as sound may cause conflict [20]. The high percentage of interpersonal conflict could indicate that these three types of interpersonal conflict occurred because of a lack of proper organizational communications system. The explanation as to why this type of conflict occurs is that when an organization does not take a proactive approach to certain issues they usually developed into an interpersonal conflict. Reference [21] claimed that being proactive and giving proper attention to the surrounding environment as an approach to managing issues, is a preventive means before a conflict occurs. This is especially true when the relationship between employees in an organization is not based on strong communication. Lack of communication and information within an organization may

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lead to increased levels of uncertainty among employees. Results showed that there was a lack of proper communication between employees and upper management, and between the superior and subordinate in general, in physical education offices of Isfahan. The most employees express that there are neither freedom of act in communication with upper managers nor efficient inform in their offices, whereas the finding of the most of the previous researchers just reported the communication with employees should be ongoing and consistent and High levels of cooperation inside an organization assist in reducing and resolving internal problems [15], [17]. Certainly, employees are suffering from the lack of freedom of act in communication with upper managers to express their need and their concerns. Neglecting employees' needs could lead to interpersonal conflict. Organizational communications system recommends the use of freedom of act in communicate with upper managers as an effective communication strategy and as a mean of dealing with an interpersonal conflict. The data indicate that there aren't significant differences on interpersonal conflict affecting by age, gender, education and record of service. The most of participants evaluate communication in the image of informal and refused the communication channels are open. This study also found that present participants didn't agree with one-way organizational communication in their offices, whereas the finding of some researchers indicated the major way to resolve any interpersonal conflict is the establishing open channels of communication; and communication may cause conflict [5], [19]. Therefore, having open channels of communication could be a solution for reducing interpersonal conflict. The authors of this study believe that communication is the required method, which enables organizations to decrease the level of interpersonal conflict through activating the role of organizational communications system. Not using open communication channels at a time of interpersonal conflict by offices may be explained by the fact that open channels owned by the Isfahan province government and approval from officials to release information to the public must be obtained. The results of the responses to this question revealed that interpersonal conflict exists in physical education offices of Isfahan. Furthermore, the researchers identified that interpersonal conflict in physical education offices of Isfahan did differ according to the type of interpersonal conflict they faced (see table 1). Communication strategies, such as opens communication channels, freedom of act in communication, efficient inform, and multiple communications are the major ways, of responding to an interpersonal conflict. This supports the idea of the contingency theory that the organization should be flexible in dealing with any event; since there is no one right way to confront an interpersonal conflict. Applying the appropriate and strong communication helps the organization to: (1) identify the cause of a problem through feedback, (2) increase organizational stability, (3) and keep interpersonal conflict controllable. Therefore, according to these factors an organization will be able to design an appropriate response strategy. It seems the need for an organization to place high priority on reducing all types of interpersonal conflict with their employees because they are the real power and resource for the organization. There is an obvious need to begin thinking about interpersonal conflict management. Issue management should be one of the major areas that organizations should focus on because it is the first stage that helps organizations to detect the possibility of an interpersonal conflict. Departments need to focus on having a written strategy for dealing with important communication and practices in an interpersonal conflict. Academic researchers also need to conduct research to evaluate not only interpersonal conflict but other aspects of communication especially in the field of message construction and dissemination. Future studies could be geared towards establishing comparisons between organizational communications system for interpersonal conflict in Republic Islamic of IRAN and other country.

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