FACTORS INFLUENCING INTEGRATING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AMONG UNIVERSITY TEACHERS: AN EVIDENCE FROM SRI LANKA

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Abstract

Conflicts are unavoidable in any organizations since it is a natural, everyday phenomenon in each individual, each group or organization. It can be arised at anytime and anywhere in personal, academic and professional life. Though it is impossible to avoid, it is possible to manage. If it is not managed effectively it leads to increase the stress, reduce the organizational performance and negatively impacts on health and comfort of employees.There are five different conflict management strategies such as forcing, integrating, compromising, obliging and avoiding those are being mostly used in organizations or personal life when conflict arises. Among these five strategies, integrating is the effective strategy which increases the individual performanceand organizational performance. The objective of this study is to find out the factors influencing on integrating conflict management strategy among university teachers. For this study the primary data were collected from randomly selected 1197 permanent academic staff by using the structured questionnaire from all 15 state Universities in Sri Lanka. The collected data were analyzed by using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA). Results of this study revealed that there are four factors such as (1) Investigate an issue with others (2) Minimize the difference among others (3) Emotional support to others (4) Trust others are influencing to apply the integrating strategy when the academic staff falls in conflict. Further, researchers suggested that those who wish to reduce the stress and create the peaceful environment within the organization and their personal life need to investigate an issue with others, minimize the difference among others, provide emotional support and trust others.

Key words: Conflict, Integrating, Conflict management, Emotional support

1.0 Background of the Study

Conflicts are unavoidable in state Universities since it is inevitable in any organizations. Because it is a part of academic staff's life also. It can occur between students versus academic staff, academic staff versus academic staff, academic staff versus non- academic staff, and administrators versus academic staff. Because people in any organization are working based on interpersonal relationship which leads to the interpersonal conflict within the organization. If the relationship is bad between two individuals or two groups which leads to conflict. Sirajud Din, Khan, Rehman&ZainabBibi (2011) indicates sources of conflict in universities are lack of personality factors, lack of communication, structural issues, and limited resources. Meyer (2004) indicated that conflict should

be managed effectively otherwise it affects the level and frequency of future conflict and it create negative impact on productivity and work performance. Conflict management is the communication behavior a person employs based on his or her tends to exhibit while facing a conflict (Abigail & Chain 2011). People use various types of management strategies to deal with different conflict situations effectively (Fleetwood, 1987; Rahim,2002). Different strategies had different impact on performance of employees and organization. Integrating strategy had a positive impact on performance, increase organizational innovativeness, quality, build the strength of teamwork,increased the job satisfaction and create the cooperation among the employees. (Rahim, Antonioni &Pscnicka2001; Sukirno&Siengthai 2011; Henry,2009).

Further, Goodwin (2002) indicated that integrating is the only conflict management strategy that considers the interest of both parties, focuses on mutual gain and also it reduce the stress of the people. Moreover this strategy emphases on high concern for self and high concern for others when solving the conflict (Blake & Mouton (1964); Thomas (1976); Bonoma& Rahim (1979); andRahim (1985) whileBurke (1970)suggested that integrating strategy was related to the effective management of conflict, while forcing and avoiding strategies were related to the ineffective conflict management.King (2000) also found that the use of more integrative conflict management strategies have higher commitment than less integrative strategy in the team. And also it generates higher quality decisions making than other strategies (Thomas 1977; Filly 1978; and Brahnam, Margavio, Hignite, Barrier,& Chin, 2005).

Number of studies have investigated conflict in organizations. However, a very limited number have been devoted to educational organization. The current university context is clearly more challenging than in the past. Therefore, Conflicts in universities are growing in number, kind, and complexity in the state Universities in Sri Lanka.In this scenario, the researchers conducted a pilot survey through the unstructured interview with some academic staff of the state universities in Sri Lanka to identify the conflict management strategies which are using by them when they are in conflict. The finding revealed that, the academic staff using the conflict management strategies such as avoiding, compromising, competing, integrating, forcing, and obliging. Safeena&Velnampy (2015) found that the most of the academic uses integrating strategy to manage the conflict in the state Universities in Sri Lanka.The person should have some characteristics to use the integrating strategy since this strategy is focuses on high concern for self and others. From the above discussion the present study is initiated to find out the factors influencing integrating strategies of academic in Sri Lankan state Universities.

2.0 Literature Review

Conflict is an integral part of human life whether it can be personal life or organizational life or social life or national life. Kapur (1997) indicated that conflict is a process in which an effort is purposefully made by one person or a group to block another person's or group's achievement of goals or the furthering his or her interests.In order to manage the conflict effectively the people need to be develop strategic approach. Kunaviktikul, Nuntasupawat, Srisuphan, & Booth (2000) indicated that management of conflict is especially important for the effective functioning of any organization and for the personal, cultural and social

development of human beings. Rahim (1986) pointed out that effective conflict management encourages motivation, enhances morale and promotes individual and organizational growth.Ineffective conflict management, in contrast, generates more conflict and negatively affects the organization as a whole. Further he pointed out that there are various strategies for handling interpersonal conflict to deal with different conflict situations effectively in order to solve or minimize conflict in organizations. Adomi&Anie (2005) pointed out managers should develop appropriate strategies to resolve the conflict in their organizations or in the personal life. Rahim &Bonoma (1979) classified the conflict management strategies under five categories; competing, integrating, avoiding, obliging and compromising based on two basic dimensions: concern for self, and concern for others.

Some researchers indicated that Integrating strategy was an effective conflict management strategy(Thomas 1992; Gross & Guerrero 2000; Carten, Evers, Beersma, Ester, & Nauta,2001; Cetin&Hacıfazlıoglu, 2004; Ramani&Zhimin, 2010; Sirajud Din, Khan, Rashid Rehman, &ZainabBibi, 2011;Agenga&Enose, 2011; Zafar, 2011; Machingambi& Wadesango,2012). It is a win –win strategy to manage the conflict in an organization or personal life. In this strategy both parties can win in a conflict situation.Kessler (2013) defined in the encyclopedia of management theory that individual work collaboratively with other party in the difference of opinion to create solutions which enable both parties to get

morebenifits. Further he indicated that it is consistent with the idea that one person should treat others as they would like to be treated. More over this strategy involves openness, exchange of information, and examination of differences to reach an effective solution acceptable to both parties (Bonoma& Rahim, 1979; Blake &Mouton, 1964; and Thomas, 1976).

Further this strategy is a problem-solving orientation and a willingness to explore and work with the other person to find options which will be mutually acceptable by both parties in order to maximize their benefits (Rahim &Bonoma, 1979). Stephen (1998) viewed integrating strategy refers a situation where the parties in conflict each desire to satisfy fully by the concerns of all parties. In this strategy interested parties deal with the problem and cooperatively identify the issues, generate the alternative solution and select a solution. Further this strategy produces superior outcomes with open exchange of information and a higher level of satisfaction through the explanation of issue more comprehensively. The primary weakness of this style is consumes time (Goodwin, 2002).

Moreover,Egwunyenga (2009) found that encouraging effective communication was the effective strategy to solve the problems among the conflicting roommates in Nigerian universities and also Fatile, Adejuwon & Kehinde (2011) found that maintaining a good relationship between students and school administration,student's involvement in decision making process in school were effective strategies for resolving conflict. Further Agenge&Enose (2011)

found that arbitration, understanding, culture of trust, negotiation, relationship and effective communication strategies were the effective conflict management strategies in public secondary schools in Kenya.

Based on the literature review, various studies have been conducted to identify the conflict management strategies in an organization or personal life. But there is no studies to identify the key factors for integrating strategy in the Sri Lankan context. This research gap induced the authors to undertake the present study.

3.0 Objective

➢ To identify the factors which are influencing on integrating conflict management strategy of academic staff in state Universities in Sri Lanka.

4. Methodology

Sample selection

1197 Permanent Academic teaching staff were taken as a sampling unit based on the stratified proportionate sampling design from all 15 state universities in Sri Lanka. Appendix-1 shows the stratified proportionate sampling design based on the academic position from the population of permanent teaching staff of each University in Sri Lanka.

Data Collection

Structured questionnaire was adminis-trated among academic staff in all state Universities in Sri Lanka. The questionnaire was designed by the researchers a 5- point Lickerd scale from (1)strongly disagree to (5)strongly agree.

Data analysis

Collected data were analyzed using SPPS (version 20.0). In this study, Principle component varimax Roated factor analysis method was carried out. Generally, researchers' recommend as varimax (Ather&Nimalathasan, 2009; Hema &Anura,1993). It has been used to group the factors. Finally ranking of the factors has been made on the basis of mean scores of factors.For extraction of the factors, the following criteria(s) were used in this study.

1. The proportion of variance explained by 70% or above criterions is used to select the number of principal component ((Jolliffe's ,1972;Jahfer, 2015).

2. Items with a loading smaller than 0.5 (low factor loadings) on any factor were excluded. For parsimony, only factors with loadings above 0.5 were considered significant (Pal, 1986 and Pal &Bagi, 1987).

3. Items that demonstrated cross-loadings greater than 0.5 on more than one factor were dropped, assuming that no pure measures of a specific construct are provided (Olorunniwo, Hsu, &Udo, 2006).

4.0 Results and Discussion

Before applying factor analysis, testing of the reliability of the scale is very much important as its shows the extent to which a scale produces consistent result if measurements are made repeatedly. Cronbach's alpha is most widely used method to examine the reliability. (Hair, Celsi, Money,

Samouel, & Page 2011; Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black 2008).This value varies from 0 to 1 but, accepted value is required to be more than 0.5 and satisfactory value is more than 0.6 for the scale to be reliable (Malhotra, 2002; Cronbach, 1951). In the present study, the researchers therefore, used Cronbach's alpha scale as a measure of reliability.In this study integrating strategy is measured by 09 sub questions (Items). The Cronbach's coefficient alpha value estimated to be 0.799 which is more than 0.7 therefore the reliability of integrating strategy was assured and it is highly reliable for data analysis.

After checking the reliability of scale, the researchers tested whether the data so collected is appropriate for factor analysis or not. Further the appropriateness of factor analysis is dependent upon the sample size. Kaiser – Meyer- Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is a useful method to show the appropriateness of data for factor analysis. Statistically, it tests whether the partial correlations among variables are small and sampling adequacy measure of whether or not the distribution of value is adequate for conducting factor analysis. The

KMO statistics varies between 0 and 1.As a rule of thumb, a KMO value; Less than 0.5 is considered poor so the FA would be meaningless with an identity matrix, between 0.5 and 0.6 is considered mediocre, between 06 and 0.7 is considered acceptable, between 0.7 and 0.8 is considered good, between 0.8 and 0.9 is considered excellent and more than 0.9 is marvelous (Kasier, 1974; Field, 2000).

According to the table 1, the KMO value for integrating strategy was is 0.854 whichis indicating that the sample taken to process the factor analysis is excellent and statistically significant for integrating strategy since the KMO value is between 0.8 to 0.9 Therefore the composite validity of integrating strategy was assured. Further Bartlett's test of Sphericity is the third statistical test applied in the study for verifying its appropriateness(Barlett, 1950). According to the table -1 result of EFA analysis, Bartlett's test of Sphericity was significant since the significance value 0.000 which is less than 0.5 and test value of Chi-Square 2722.234 is significant which indicating that the data is appropriate for the factor analysis.

Table - 1: Result of KMO and Bartlett's Test of integrating strategy

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.854
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2722.234
	df	36
	Sig.	.000

Source: Survey Data

After examining the reliability of the scale and testing appropriateness of data the researchers carried out Principal Component Analysis (PCA) followed by the varimax rotation was carried out to identify the key factors for integrating conflict management strategy. For this Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software (version 20.0) was used. When the original nine

factors were analysed by the PCA. Four variables extracted from the analysis which explained 70.959 percent of the total variance. The first component explains the most and about 39.919 percent, second component explains 12.995 percent, third component explains9.558 percent and fourth component explains 8.487 percent(For details please see Table-2).

Table 2: Total variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.593	39.919	39.919	3.593	39.919	39.919
2	1.170	12.995	52.914	1.170	12.995	52.914
3	.860	9.558	62.472	.860	9.558	62.472
4	.764	8.487	70.959	.764	8.487	70.959
5	.658	7.311	78.270			
6	.538	5.981	84.251			
7	.522	5.799	90.050			
8	.475	5.280	95.329			
9	.420	4.671	100.000			

Source: survey data
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

According to the above table 2 the first four factors should be accepted based on the proportion of variance explained by 70% or above criterion (Jolliffe's ,1972;Jahfer, 2015). Within this solution, Factor 1 had three items,factor two also had three items, factor three had two items and facer 4 had only one item. The following graph 1 shows four factors should be extracted for integrating strategy.
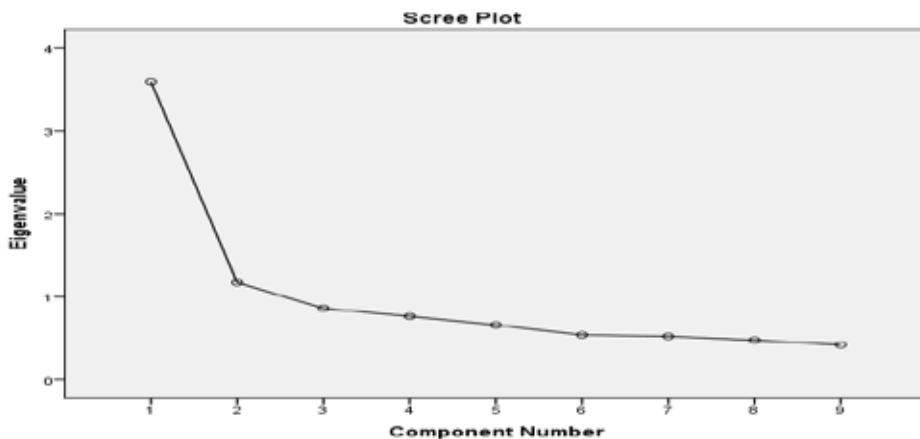

Figure 1: Scree plot of integrating strategy

In the above figure - 1, In the X axis,Eigen values are plotted against the factors arranged in descending order. The number of factors that correspond to the point at which appears to change slope, is deemed to be the number of useful factors extracted. Further it is clear that this data set lead to the conclusion that the first four components (factors) should be accepted.

The rotated (varimax) component loadings for the four factors are presented in table 3. Each of four factors for integrating strategy was labelled according to the name of the value that loaded most highly for those integrating strategy.

Table -3 Rotated component matrix for integrating strategy

Name of the Factors	Factors			
	1	2	3	4
Investigate an issue with others	.826			
Exchange accurate information	.819			
Bring all opinions openly	.643			
Minimize the differences among others		.687		
Achieve mutual gain(s)		.676		
Prefer participative decision making		.649		.512
Emotional support to others			.852	
Stand for own and other's goals and interest			.644	
Trust others				.889

Source: survey data

Factor 1: Investigate an issue with others: this factor was represented by three items with factor loadings ranging from 0.826 to 0.643. They are investigate an issue with others, exchange accurate information and bring all opinions openly. This factor accounted for 39.919 % of the rated variance

Factor 2: Minimize the difference among others: This factor was represented byrepresented by three measures with factor loadings ranging from 0.687 to 0.649. They are minimizing the differences among others,achieve mutual gain(s) and prefer participative decision making. Further, although the variable "prefer participative decision making" was loaded fairly highly on factor 4 as well, because of its higher loading and greater relevance it was also included in this factor 2. This factor explained 12.995% of the rated variance.

Factor 3 Emotional support to others: This factor is represented by two measures with factor loadings ranging from 0.852 to 0.644. They are emotional support to others and stand for own and other's goals and interest.This factor accounted for 9.558% of the rated variance.

Factor 3 Trust others: This factor is represented by only one variable, with factor loadings of 0.889 which is loaded highly. This variable is trust others which accounted for 8.487% of the rated variance.

Ranking of the above four factors in order to their importance, along with mean is shown in Table 4. The importance of these factors, as perceived by the respondents, has been ranked on the basis of their mean values.

Table -4: Ranking factors for integrating strategy according to their importance

Factors	No. of. Variables (Items)	Mean	Rank
Investigate an issue with others	03	4.22	1
Minimize the difference among others	03	4.12	2
Emotional support to others	02	4.04	3
Trust others	01	3.72	4

Source: Survey data

As depicted in table 4, the factors got the ranks of (1) Investigate an issue with others (2) minimize the difference among others (3) Emotional support to others (4) Trust others.

5. 0 Conclusion

According to the previous studies researchers found that integrating strategy was an effective conflict management strategy which increases the performance of individual and organizational performance. Through an empirical investigationof the present study, the researchers were identified four key factors influencing in the usage of integrating conflict management strategy of academic staff in the state Universities in Sri Lanka. The factors are (1) Investigate an issue with others (2) minimize the difference among others (3) Emotional support to othersand (4) Trust others.

Further previous researchers (Blake &Mouton, 1964;Thomas, 1976;Bonoma& Rahim, 1979; Egwunyenga, 2009and Fatile, Adejuwon&Kehinde, 2011)found that openness, exchange of information to other conflicting party, and examination of differences to reach an effective solution acceptable to both parties, maintaining a good relationship with others,effective communication, involvement in decision making, understanding others' expectation, culture of trust and negotiation were the effective strategies to solve the problems. Present study confirms the four factors such as investigate an issue with others, minimize the difference among others, emotional support to others and trust othersare the key factors for influencing on integrating conflict management strategy.

6. 0 Recommendation

According to the result, key factors for the usage of integrating strategy of academic staffsare investigate an issue with others, minimize the difference among others, Emotional support to others and Trust others. Since the academic staffs are the role model for others, those who wishes to use the integrating strategy when they involve in conflict, they should investigate an issue with others, should minimize the difference among others, should give the emotional support to others and should trust others in any organization or personal life.

Moreover, integrating strategy is the effective strategy and it has a positive impact on performance of employees and organization. Therefore the researchers suggested to give the training for individual to develop those four factors in the working place which will leads to create a peaceful environment within the organization and their personal life and also it will minimize further conflict, stress, increase the productivity and work performance.

7. Limitation and Further Research

In this study sample was the only the teaching academic staff from all state Universities in Sri Lanka.This can be extended to other administrative staff or non academic staff or students in Universities in Sri Lanka. And also in this study Principle component varimaxRoated factor analysis method was carried out to extract the factor. Further researcher(s) can incorporate the way of checking the common method bias recommend by by Podsakoff et al., 2003 to extract the factors.

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Appendix -1: Sample

Name of the University	Designation/ Academic Position	Number of Existing Academic Staff	Number of Respondent
University of Colombo	Senior Professor& Professor	89	22
	Associate Professor	19	05
	Senior Lecturer	243	61
	Lecturer / Lecturer (Prob)	176	44
Total		**527**	**132**
University of Peradeniya	Senior Professor& Professor	118	30
	Associate Professor	13	03
	Senior Lecturer	403	101
	Lecturer / Lecturer (Prob)	197	49
Total		**731**	**183**
University of Sri Jayawardenepura	Senior Professor& Professor	68	17
	Associate Professor	17	04
	Senior Lecturer	307	77
	Lecturer / Lecturer (Prob)	135	34
Total		**527**	**132**
University ofKeleniya	Senior Professor& Professor	110	27
	Associate Professor	14	04
	Senior Lecturer	262	65
	Lecturer / Lecturer (Prob)	163	41
Total		**549**	**137**
University ofMoratuwa	Senior Professor& Professor	38	10
	Associate Professor	05	01
	Senior Lecturer	173	43
	Lecturer / Lecturer (Prob)	88	22
Total		**304**	**76**
University ofJaffna	Senior Professor& Professor	17	04
	Associate Professor	10	03
	Senior Lecturer	184	46
	Lecturer / Lecturer (Prob)	156	39
Total		**367**	**92**
University ofRuhuna	Senior Professor& Professor	74	18
	Associate Professor	-	-
	Senior Lecturer	245	61
	Lecturer / Lecturer (Prob)	148	37
Total		**467**	**116**

Eastern University of Sri Lanka	Senior Professor& Professor	05	01
	Associate Professor	-	-
	Senior Lecturer	107	27
	Lecturer / Lecturer (Prob)	80	20
Total		**192**	**48**
South Eastern University of Sri Lanka	Senior Professor& Professor	-	-
	Associate Professor	-	-
	Senior Lecturer	71	18
	Lecturer / Lecturer (Prob)	53	13
Total		**124**	**31**
Rajarata University	Senior Professor&Professor	06	01
	Associate Professor	-	-
	Senior Lecturer	70	17
	Lecturer / Lecturer (Prob)	106	27
Total		**182**	**45**
Sabaragamuwa	Senior Professor&Professor	07	02
	Associate Professor	03	01
	Senior Lecturer	102	25
	Lecturer / Lecturer (Prob)	85	21
Total		**197**	**49**
Wayamba	Senior Professor&Professor	10	02
	Associate Professor	01	-
	Senior Lecturer	75	19
	Lecturer / Lecturer (Prob)	66	17
Total		**152**	**38**
UvaWellassa	Senior Professor&Professor	-	-
	Associate Professor	-	-
	Senior Lecturer	35	09
	Lecturer / Lecturer (Prob)	41	10
Total		**76**	**19**
Visual and Performing Arts	Senior Professor&Professor	06	01
	Associate Professor	06	02
	Senior Lecturer	52	13
	Lecturer / Lecturer (Prob)	43	11
Total		**107**	**27**
Open University	Senior Professor&Professor	21	05
	Associate Professor	01	-
	Senior Lecturer	130	33
	Lecturer / Lecturer (Prob)	136	34
Total		**288**	**72**

Source: (Annual report of Sri Lanka University Statistics, 2014).