

Understanding Conflict Management Styles Of Science Teachers

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ABSTRACT-: *The study focused on the assessment of conflict management styles of science teachers of one of the state universities in the Philippines. The researchers conducted a survey using the Dutch Test Questionnaire to determine and identify the responses based on the Conflict Management Style consisting of five (5) categories namely: Problem Solving, Avoiding, Forcing, Yielding, and Compromising. Results revealed that problem solving conflict management tactics is dominant among the conflict management styles of the respondents while forcing obtained the lowest scores. The most common causes of conflict among the faculty members in this institution are poor management, poor working conditions, incompetence of members/officers. In spite of a satisfactory rating, the respondents suggest that there is a need for an improvement in conflict resolution in the institution. Some of these suggestions are good communication among the faculty members, lessen the traditional culture of seniority and promoting equality in the institution. Through this form of analysis, one can gain a greater awareness of their dominant style of conflict management and an appreciation for the worth of alternative styles, which can help them become better equipped to manage different types of conflicts as necessary depending on the circumstances.*

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Project

Conflict resolution is an important topic that needs to be discussed in the workplace. Determining each employee's conflict style will help improve teamwork and increase productivity in an institution. Conflict may arise in a company or institution with employees belonging to diverse cultures and priorities working together. Insults, noncooperation, bullying, and fury are some examples of how conflict can be expressed. According to Anastasiou (2020), when employees are at odds, transformational leaders address the situation with a collaborative mindset, participating in flexible and creative problem solving that looks at established policies and procedures to improve performance.

Organizations can suffer from a great deal of stress and lost productivity as a result of workplace conflict. The development of strained relationships between coworkers is thought to be the source of 60-80 percent of the issues in a company. When this happens, it can be difficult for everyone in the company to work harmoniously. When conflicts are present, members of the team begin to struggle to work together, are unable to complete projects, set goals, and behave badly on the job which affects everyone around them. According to Abilene Christian University, bringing effective, productive conflict resolution training and mediation to an organization can save a company up to 80% on litigation expenditures. It also aids in the healing of coworker relationships and the re-establishment of optimal productivity (Abilene Christian University Blogs 2018).

Conflict is an unavoidable element of human existence and in the workplace. Conflict situations can be solved using some of the conflict resolutions and styles in several seminars and training given in the workplace. According to the study by Myatt (2012), conflict can originate from some sources and it can happen because of conflicting goals or priorities. The Dutch Test for Conflict

Handling (DUTCH) is a popular and validated assessment for conflict management styles. This assessment allows self-assessment and assessments of others' conflict management styles. Figure 1 shows the DUTCH matrix, which has five (5) conflict scales: avoiding, compromising, forcing, problem solving, and yielding (De Dreu et. al., 2001 and Van der Vliet E., 1997). This figure has two dimensions, which describe the concerns for others versus the self. As seen in the figure, problem solving has a higher regard for concerns for others and self while avoiding style has lower regard for concerns for others and self.

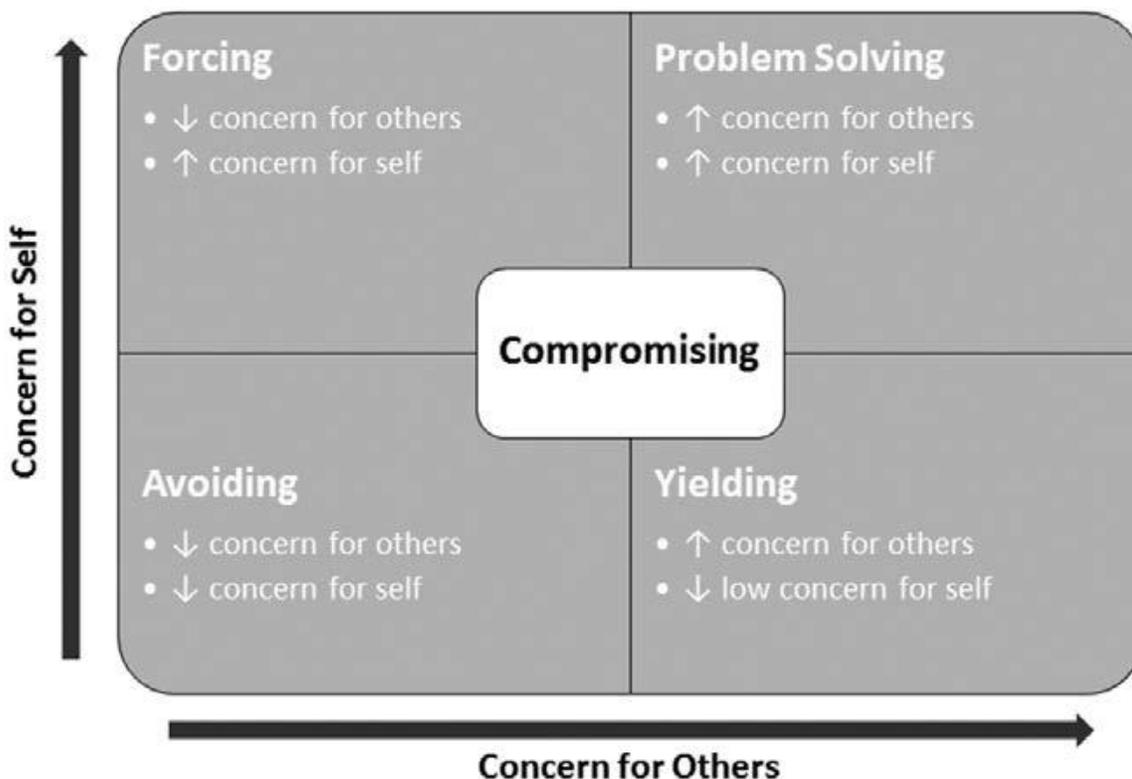


Figure 1: Dutch Test for Conflict Handling (DUTCH) Matrix. The 5 Conflict Styles are based on interactions between 2 dimensions: the **degree of concern for self** and **degree of concern for others** (De Dreu et. al.)

The study assessed the conflict resolution style of randomly selected faculty members in the College of Science (COS) of the Technological University of the Philippines-Manila (TUP-M). The result of the assessment will help the administration to provide proper interventions and also, the faculty to reflect and adjust their personality to gain and adapt positive attitudes in conflict resolution. The identified conflict styles will also increase the productivity of the team by working harmoniously and achieving similar goals in the institution.

Results from studies show that knowing how to handle conflict will create a positive outlook in the workplace (Paresashvili, 2022 and Wang and Wu, 2020). According to John-Eke and Akintokunbo (2020), conflict is not demonstrated by disagreements that do not always cast the organization in a negative light, but when handled properly, they can be beneficial. Conflict encourages healthy competition, improves team participation, and helps to close communication gaps. This serves as the basis for making conflict resolution policies in the workplace.

B. Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to assess the conflict resolution style of the faculty members of the COS of the TUP-M. This may consider as the basis of a proposal to tailor conflict resolution. The following are the specific objectives of this study:

- (1) Determine the preferred conflict management style of the faculty in the said institution.
- (2) Develop and proposed some suggestions based on the results of the gathered data using the DUTCH test.

C. Conceptual Paradigm

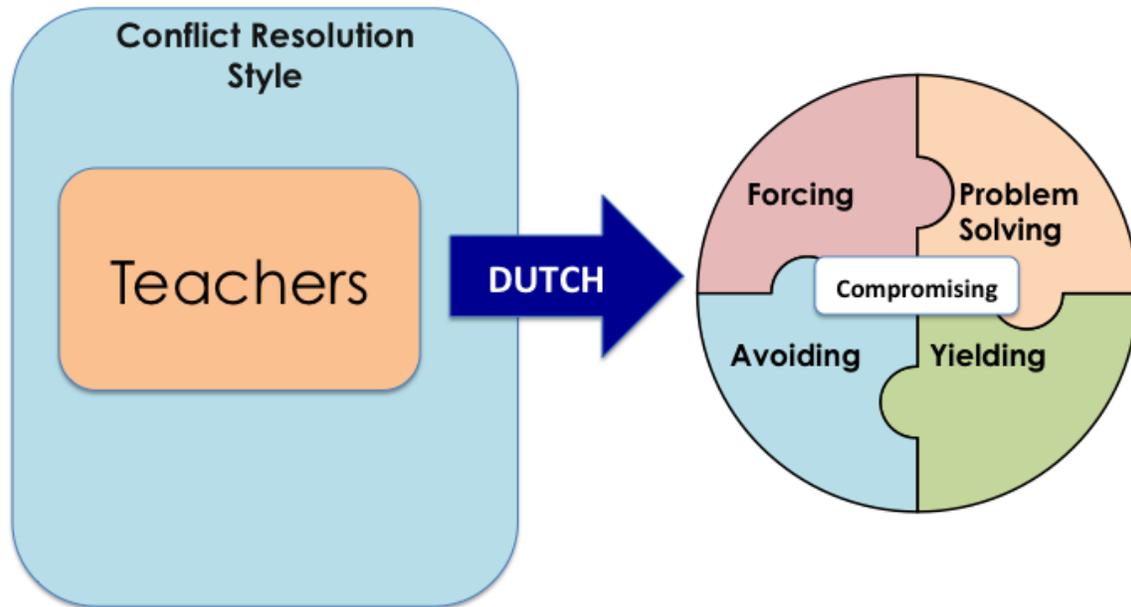


Figure 2: Conceptual Paradigm Using DUTCH test

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study is exploratory action research that is focused on the determination of the conflict resolution style of the randomly selected faculty members in the College of Science (COS) of the Technological University of the Philippines – Manila (TUP-M). This will also help the administration to tailor policies and solve conflicts in the workplace. A mixed method research design is selected as it is deemed suitable for explaining, interpreting, or contextualizing quantitative findings (Creswell, 2003). The mixed method design used in this study is the concurrent triangulation design. It is characterized by the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data in this study will come from the results of surveys from faculty that are involved in the said curriculum. On the other hand, the qualitative data will be gathered from the open-ended questions for teachers. Although priority is given to the quantitative results, qualitative findings will be used to corroborate the results.

B. Research Setting

This study is characterized as mixed method research based on quantitative and qualitative data collected from faculty members of COS of TUP-M. The quantitative data originated from a standardized survey of the respondents which consisted of 23 faculty members. Respondents were informed and signified consent to use their responses and allowed the researchers to use them in the research. This practice met the ethical principles implemented in the university. The qualitative data was collected from the open-ended questions of the questionnaire.

C. Research Instrument

The researchers used a mixed-method approach that includes a survey questionnaire to gather both qualitative and quantitative data about the preferred conflict management style of the faculty members of the COS. The study administered a 5-point Likert Scale

to determine and identify the responses based on the Conflict Management Style consisting of five (5) categories namely: Problem Solving, Avoiding, Forcing, Yielding, and Compromising. The survey instrument used was adapted from the study conducted by De Dreu (2001). This instrument used for determining the preferred Conflict Management Style of the employees served as the baseline for the other researchers (Rispen et. al., 2020, Bao et al., 2019, Sinskey et. al., 2019, Luo et. al., 2016). The addition of interview questions is intended to gain a better understanding of how they feel about Conflict Resolution in their workplace.

To identify and classify their preferred Conflict Management Style (CMS), the score in the following number will be added and interpreted using Table 1.

Table 1: Corresponding item for the Conflict Handling Dimensions (CHD)

Conflict Handling Dimensions (CHD)	Corresponding item in the Questionnaire
Yielding	1, 6, 11, 16
Compromising	2, 7, 12, 17
Forcing	3, 8, 13, 18
Problem Solving	4, 9, 14, 19
Avoiding	5, 10, 15, 20

The Five CHD are defined in Table 2 along with the ranges of scores for high, medium, and low levels (McShane and Young, 2000)

Table 2: Reference of Conflict Handling Dimensions (CHD) and Interpretation of Scores.

Conflict Handling Dimensions (CHD) and Definitions	Score Interpretation
<p>Yielding: Yielding involves giving in completely to the other side's wishes, or at least cooperating with little or no attention to your own interests. This style involves making unilateral concessions, unconditional promises, and offering help with no expectation of reciprocal help.</p>	<p>High: 14 – 20 Medium: 9 – 13 Low: 4 – 8</p>
<p>Compromising: Compromising involves looking for a position in which your losses are offset by equally valued gains. It involves matching the other party's concessions, making conditional promises or threats, and actively searching for a middle ground between the interests of the two parties.</p>	<p>High: 17 – 20 Medium: 11 – 16 Low: 4 – 10</p>
<p>Forcing: Forcing tries to win the conflict at the other's expense. It includes "hard" influence tactics, particularly assertiveness, to get one's own way</p>	<p>High: 15 – 20 Medium: 9 – 14 Low: 4 – 8</p>
<p>Problem Solving: Problem solving tries to find a mutually beneficial solution for both parties. Information sharing is an important feature of this style because both parties need to identify common ground and potential solutions that satisfy both (or all) of them.</p>	<p>High: 17 – 20 Medium: 11 – 16 Low: 4 – 10</p>
<p>Avoiding: Avoiding tries to smooth over or avoid conflict situations altogether. It represents a low concern for both self and the other party. In other</p>	<p>High: 13 – 20 Medium: 8 – 12 Low: 4 – 7</p>

words, avoiders try to suppress thinking about the conflict.

After carefully reviewing some existing literature, the researcher came up with a 20-item questionnaire to reveal the respondents' personal determination of CMS.

D. Procedure

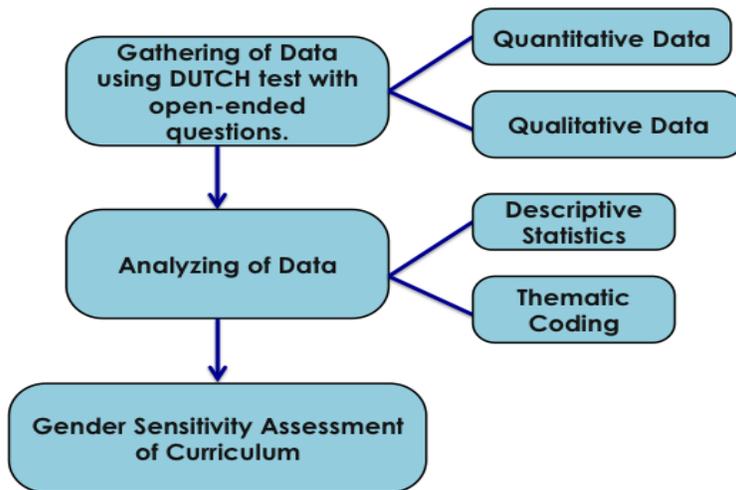


Figure 3: Research Framework

A permission letter to conduct a survey and semi-structured interviews were approved by the administrators of the TUP-M. The survey was sent through the link in an online platform to the respondents. The respondents were oriented regarding their role in the research process and explained that the study complied with data privacy and confidentiality.

The Conflict Resolution Management of the TUP-M was classified, presented, and interpreted based on the following rating:

Scale	Rating Ranges	Verbal Interpretation
5	4.51 – 5.00	Excellent (E)
4	3.51 – 4.50	Very Good (VG)
3	2.51 – 3.50	Good
2	1.51 – 2.50	Fair
1	1.00 – 1.50	Poor

E. Data Analysis

The quantitative data were collected from the responses of the faculty members. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each subscale to determine the extent of the common causes of conflict in the workplace of each respondent. The quantitative data will be graphed to compare results in different conflict handling styles. In addition, qualitative data were gathered from the survey questionnaire conducted for the faculty members. This was made to further explain and better understand their responses. The result of open-ended questions was transcribed and coded. The themes were identified from the codes to support the quantitative data on the overall conflict resolution style.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study investigated the preferred conflict resolution of twenty-three (23) faculty members of the COS of the TUP-M using the DUTCH Test Questionnaire. Figure 4 shows the frequency of the five Conflict Handling Dimensions (CHD). Problem Solving obtained the highest frequency among CHD. In this dimension, 20 out of 23 respondents scored high while the remaining scored medium.

This result can be explained by Koo (2008), problem solving skills of teachers who are seasoned are more likely to experience commitment based on internalization and identification, and to employ problem-solving conflict management tactics, compared to their younger counterparts. It is illustrated in the figure that forcing obtained the lowest score among CHD. This implied that respondents seldomly experienced conflict related to forcing which meant that individuals have freedom in expressing himself/herself ideas and opinions to the group.

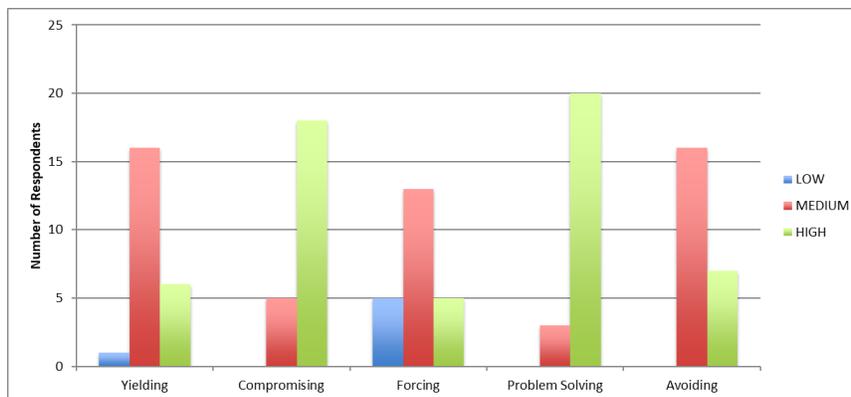


Figure 4: Frequency of Conflict Handling Style Dimensions (CHD)

Figure 5 illustrated the box plots of the DUTCH scale for the Five Conflict Handling Styles (5-CHS) scenario in this study. The result showed consistency from the previous result in which problem-solving got the highest ranking among the 5-CHS. The 75th percentile of the following handling styles demonstrated that Problem Solving (18) has a high value. The median values resulted to divide the 5-CHS into two groups. The first group with high ranges of values is Problem Solving and Compromising with the same mean of 16. The second group that obtained the low medians are yielding, avoiding, and forcing. Furthermore, most of the respondents (78.26%, 18/23) scored in the 75th percentile or higher in problem solving, while the lowest score was accounted for the forcing (60.68%, 14/23) dimension.

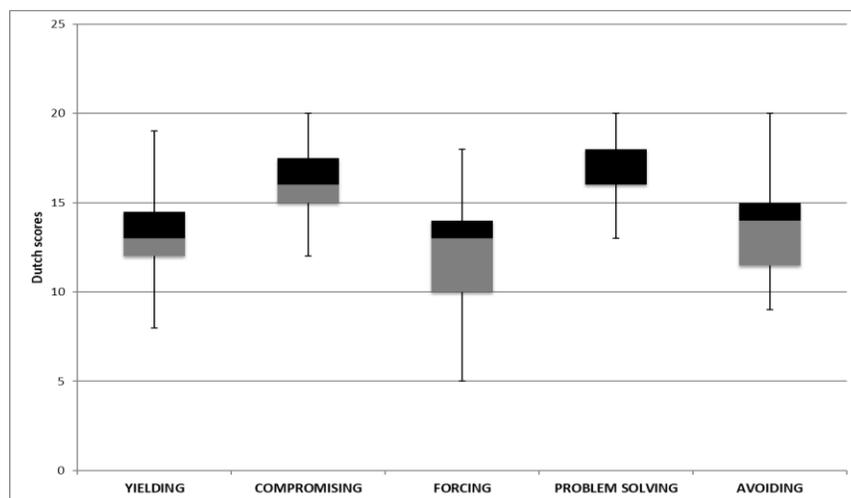


Figure 5: Box plots for each DUTCH conflict scale for the 5-handling styles scenario

Based on the data gathered, the following are the most common causes of conflict among the faculty members of the COS of the TUP-M. The highest frequency attained in this study is the poor management, poor working conditions, incompetence of the member/officer, and insufficient rules, regulations and policies governing the institution. This result is similar to Garcia et al. (2018), wherein the said components are also the causes of conflict in the workplace. According to research conducted by Agarwal and Garg (2012), an essential component of successful communication is the consistent verbal projection of ideas, which ensures that the listener understands what was intended. "Communication inside organization" plays an extremely important part in the organizational activities, goals, business rules, and strategies of companies where there is both formal and informal communication. In addition to this Omisore and Abiodun (2014), state that the incompetence of members may also result in conflict in the workplace as it resulted in low productivity and longer delivery of services or products.

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of the Common Causes of Conflict in Science Faculty in the Institution

Common causes of Conflict Encountered in the Institution	F	P	R
a. Poor management	19	82.61	1
b. Poor working conditions	17	73.91	2
c. Unfair labor practices of the institution	16	69.57	5
d. Insult/derogatory remarks from superiors, subordinates, or peers	16	69.57	5
e. Inefficiency in job performance	12	52.17	10
f. Competition/Professional jealousy	15	65.22	7
g. Incompetence of the member/officers	17	73.91	2
h. Individual differences (language, religion, politics, and beliefs)	13	56.52	9
i. Lack of time for rest and relaxation	12	52.17	10
j. Work stress related	15	65.22	7
h. Family concerns/problems	8	34.78	12
i. Insufficient rules, regulations and policies governing the institution	17	73.91	2
j. Others	0	0.00	13

Multiple Response

Most of the respondents rated the conflict management of the TUP-M in resolving conflict in the workplace as good (12). In spite of a satisfactory rating, the respondents suggest that there is a need for an improvement in conflict resolution in the institution. There are twenty-one respondents who agreed to have an improvement in conflict resolution in the workplace.

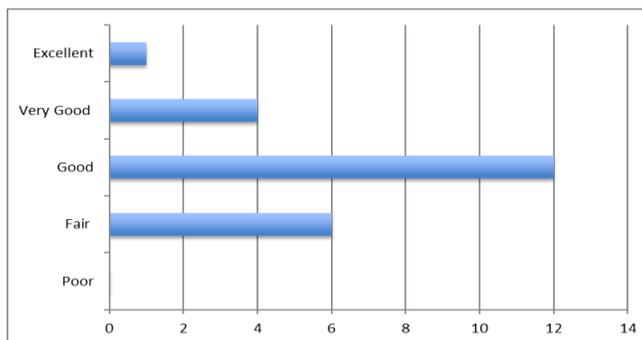


Figure 6: Ratings on Conflict Management Resolution of the TUP-M

The reason for the improvement in conflict resolution was asked in the survey questionnaire as the confirmation of the agreement in the previous number in the questionnaire. The analysis of the qualitative part of the study was obtained from the survey answered by the respondents. The major themes that emerged were good communication and sufficient rules, regulations, and policies governing the institution. Faculty No. 20 states that:

“Good communication is the key to a better workplace”

According to Adu-Oppong (2014), administrators should therefore create an environment in which work-related problems, plans, issues, opinions, thoughts, and ideas are discussed and handled in a professional and proficient manner through positive and effective communication. This environment should be created so that administrators can fulfill their responsibilities. Faculty No. 6 stated that:

“There is a need to promote equality and to lessen the traditional culture of seniority.”

According to Chen et al. (n.d.) that culture has a high influence on seniority in the workplace and this can affect conflict management in the institution.

Moreover, the researcher asked the respondents about the importance of training for conflict resolution. Most of them answered that such training is necessary important especially in addressing the conflicts properly. Some of them reason that having training can establish a healthy working environment. Faculty No. 20 states that:

“Yes. It is for our own benefit that we have to be knowledgeable to manage conflicts.”

Faculty No. 23 has an additional insight:

“Yes. Because a better output is not just solely a product of intelligence rather it also comes from a healthy working relationship of employer-employee and colleagues who cooperates to attain a common goal. That is why having knowledge in handling a conflict is a plus factor for anyone in order to stay focused and be goal-oriented.”

CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATION

Teamwork is absolutely necessary for the workplace, but arguments and disagreements are almost inevitable. It has been proven that ineffective management of conflict can have a negative influence on the relationship in the workplace. In order to effectively handle the inevitable conflicts that will arise in one's life, the first step in the training continuum is to gain an understanding of one's prevailing conflict management style. The results of this research indicated that the faculty members of the COS of the TUP-M often approach conflict resolution in a manner that is more collaborative and geared toward finding solutions. Through this form of analysis, one can gain a greater awareness of their dominant style of conflict management and an appreciation for the worth of alternative styles, which can help them become better equipped to manage different types of conflicts as necessary depending on the circumstances. In addition to this, the common causes of conflict are poor management, poor working conditions, incompetence of the member/officer, and insufficient rules, regulations and policies governing the institution.

Arising from the findings and conclusion of this study, the following are herewith recommended for the organization:

1. It is important to prioritize the well-being of employees in order to ensure smooth operations and high levels of productivity.
2. In order for organizations to promote good communication, they need to develop an effective system that can distribute information to each and every one.
3. It is recommended that the organization support a participatory style of management as opposed to an autocratic one;
4. the resolution of a conflict should involve an appropriate amount of interaction and communication;
5. It should not be the priority of the staff of organizations to compete for supremacy; rather, they should prioritize working together in harmony and unity to accomplish a single objective for the benefit of the organizations.
6. Workshops and training on the process of conflict resolution should be organized and provided for staff members working in organizations.

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