

Natalia Ivanova

Professor, National Research University Higher School of Economics
Faculty of Social Science
Department of Public Administration and Department of Psychology
Moscow Russia
E-mail: sinec@inbox.ru

Kamila Bikmetova

Business Psychologist, Pioneer Estate Company
Moscow, Russia
E-mail: kamila.bikmetova@mail.ru

IDENTITY AS A FACTOR OF CONFLICT BEHAVIOR IN ORGANIZATIONS

Original scientific paper

UDK:159.923-048.9:65.01

JEL classification: M12, M54

Abstract

The report addresses the issue of conflict management in business organizations. Conflicts accompany the business at all stages of its development. They are a way of overcoming hindering the development of contradictions in organizational, managerial, and interpersonal levels to reach a new level of relations. At the same time, the negative consequences of conflicts can lead to large losses of the organization's resources, especially if the conflict involves the people who make up the professional core of the organization. Our study examined personal factors of conflict behavior of employees in a business organization according with business psychology approach (S. Benton). Special attention is paid to the professionals, people with a high level of professional identity. They have greater engagement, productivity in the organization. Theoretical basis: theory: an approach to professional identity (E. P. Ermolaeva), the author's model of social identity (N.L. Ivanova), social identity theory (H. Tajfel, J.C. Turner), model of conflict behavior (T. Kilman), and model of conflict behavior (N.I. Leonov). The results showed that employees who have actualized professional identity in a conflict situation tend to choose the strategy of competition and cooperation. They almost do not resort to avoidance and adaptation. At the same time, employees with basic and complex identities choosing strategies of behavior in conflict: compromise and collaboration. Professionals show trends of defending

its position, a stiffer behavior in the conflict. We think that these results can be useful for business management, especially organizations that are involved in high-level professionals. The results allow us to see new aspects in conflict between employees, develop training programs and staff development, and improve internal communication. The data obtained can be considered as a pilot to build new hypotheses and further research on a broader sample and with the use of experimental procedures.

Keywords: professional identity, conflict behavior, conflict management, business psychology

1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of conflicts and conflict behavior of the person becomes more and more relevant in different aspects. First of all, it is connected with the continuing and even increasing conflicts between countries, peoples, ethnic groups, which are clearly observed recently in some regions of the world. In addition, it is associated with a competitive relationship between organizations. Conflicts are an inevitable way of resolving contradictions in any organization. For today's organizations is characterized by a wide variety of conflicts caused by different reasons, they become involved as separate individuals, and groups, driven by different interests and needs that conflict forms the vast space. And naturally this actualizes the issue of studying conflicts and their causes, resolution and management (Sherbakov, 2017).

The constructive side of a conflict is the ability to overcome hindering the development of contradictions in organizational, managerial, and interpersonal levels to reach a new level of relations. At the same time can take place and the negative consequences of the conflict, manifested in the destruction of well-established relationships, groups, values etc. furthermore, the conflict has economic consequences. For example, the cost of time for the resolution of conflicts, deterioration of health managers and staff, the leakage of sensitive information etc. Business conflicts can jeopardize economic and trade relationship of the partners, to promote the outflow of capital, the very existence of the business. It is important to understand that the development of the business scope of conflict is also relevant and in demand, because conflict resolution takes a lot of time working, which leads to huge financial losses.

In spite of the large number of research in this area there are many open issues related to understanding the conflict behavior in the organization. It is important to search new approaches to understanding the causes of conflict behavior and conflict resolution. The problem of conflict resolution is the important issue in business psychology research and practice (Benton, 2016).

In our work, we investigate this problem from business psychology approach, focused on causes of conflict of human behavior in business organizations.

1.1. Model and Data

A modern trend of study of conflicts is the search for interdisciplinary approaches to understanding the causes and manifestations of conflict behavior in an organization, such as interdisciplinary business psychology approach (Benton, 2016). This approach combine the psychological and managerial basics. Psychological aspects, are concerned with the nature of conflict behavior and factors of conflict resolution. Conflict is considered as a lack of agreement between two or more parties, individuals or groups, the clash of their opposing interests (Antsupov, Shipilov, 2000 Grishina, 2008). Managerial approach is focused on conflict resolution and conflict management in an organization: on politics as cases give rise to conflict of employee and group of employees (George, Jones, 2007), capabilities of successful organization in the conflict management mechanism for conflict resolution and improving performance (Hart, 2000) etc. That is why the business psychology pay attention on psychological mechanisms and factors of conflict and its importance for the conflict management.

What is the psychological nature and factors of conflict? N. Grishina write that the most important moment in the development of conflict behavior is the awareness or perception of a situation as a conflict. At the time when the participant of the conflict recognizes the situation as a conflict, he defines the strategy of behavior in conflict and eliminates those behaviors that do not correspond to this situation (Grishina, 2008). Other researches emphasize that personal factors of conflict behavior have a specific influence on the different stages of the flow conflict (Leonov, 2005, Platonov, 2009, etc.). That is why development of a typology of human behavior in a conflict situation helps to effectively solve problems of management, training, personnel development in organizations (Pugachev, 2002).

Our work develops a new approach to understanding the nature of the conflict of individual behavior, based on studying the characteristics of self-determination in a conflict situation and identifying the role of social identity in conflict behavior (Ivanova, 2015). Treatment to this problem, in our opinion, will help to advance the understanding of the psychological nature of conflict as a result of deep processes in personality as self-determination. In the same time, it will be useful for development of new methods of conflict management in organization.

Self-determination is seen as a conscious act of identifying and approval of their own positions in distressed situations (Petrovsky, Yaroshevsky, 1990). At the same time, this is a conscious process of analyzing, making, testing not only their own positions but also of the ideas about self in problem situations.

In the result of self-determination people make sense of their lives and identity (Erikson, 1996). Because every conflict situation is problematic, it is a factor for the development of the internal activity of participants of the conflict, aimed at identifying and approval of their positions. This activity leads to subjective interpretation of the conflict situation, the choice of strategy. At

the same time, self-determination acts as an internal activity, this gives certainty of the personality and through which are refracted external influences (Rubinstein, 2006). Therefore, conflict human behavior is determined not only by his personality characteristics, but also subjective interpretation of the situation of interaction that has developed in the organization.

Assessment of conflict situations and their place in it depends on the status and social roles of the employee in the organization, his position among the parties to the conflict, a sense of responsibility for the social and economic consequences of the conflict. All this allows saying that the emergence and development of the conflict is accompanied by a process of self-determination in relation to the characteristics of social interaction. A person determines their status and positions among the participants of the conflict on the basis of established identity. Studies have shown that the search of his own community, the subsequent division into friends and foes, the need for identity in a conflict situation can come to the fore (Brewer, Schneider, 1990). The group will, for example, to join in the fight for new resources, tend to occupy a different position in society, to subjugate the others, and etc. In this regard, there are many questions about the conditions that lead to increased needs for identity and subsequent conflict.

According to the theory of social identity group membership is supported by a system of intra-group and intergroup attitudes and actions, therefore, social identity may be a factor contributing to intergroup discrimination and intergroup conflicts (Taifel, 1982, Tajfel, Turner, 1986). In this approach considered as the most important psychological structure, through which is refracted the perception of the social world and following behavior (Augoustinos, Walker, 2012.).

A promising development of this approach is the study of the structure of social identity and the subsequent analysis of the role of the various components of this structure in intergroup behavior (Rocca S., Brewer, 2003, Weinreich, Sanderson, 2003.).

In our approach, we consider in the structure of social identity cognitive, motivational and value component, which creates identity types (Ivanova, 2004):

- a) “basic”, narrowly localized, primarily due to the situation given to man from birth, which is associated with the motivation of self-defense and the desire to strengthen its position at the level of national, regional and family unity;
- a) “individual reflexive”, which is manifested in the motivation of self-esteem and focus on mastering the demands of culture both narrow and broader community;
- a) “professional”, which is manifested in the motivation of self-realization and the desire to expand the subjective space, in the analysis of changes taking place in society.

According with this model there are at least two different types

of identity, which are relevant for understanding of professional activity of personnel in organization: basic and professional.

Important question is: How people with different type of identity will behave in conflict situation? In business, there are many professional people, which corrected by the recruiting and professional training system in organization. E. Ermolaeva showed that people with higher level of professional identity has expressed attitudes to efficiency, organizational development and innovations. On the contrary, people without professional identity have the attitudes to work in a slipshod manner, stagnation, and detachment from organizational problems (Ermoleva, 2004). Given this approach, we can assume that the behavior in the conflict of people with different types of identity will vary.

To describe the behavior of people in a conflict situation, we used the known model of conflict behavior of Thomas-Kilman. According with this model there are five types (strategies) of conflict resolution: competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance and adaptation (Kilmann, Thomas, 1977). This model based on the concept of defining motivation of a leader who is focused on solving its own tasks, such as manufacturing, or its employees. The strategy of this model was classified according to two criteria of management behavior in the conflict: the desire to take into account the interests of employees (cooperatives) and the desire to defend their point of view (assertiveness). People don't use the same strategy in all conflict situations. There is one dominant strategy that the person uses most frequently in the resolution of conflict situations. The choice of a particular strategy depends on various factors.

We assume that the actualized type of identity is a cognitive basis for the understanding the specific of the conflict situation and choosing a certain strategy of behavior in conflict. In other words, in conflict situation people choose the strategy of behavior in accordance with its type identity, actualized at the time of the conflict. In addition, conflict behavior can depend on the roles of employee in the organization and his place in the conflict situation.

Our suggestion is that people with higher professional identity will chose strategy of co-operation compare with strategy of confrontation in conflict situations.

1.1.1. Model and Data

The aim of the empirical study was to identify characteristics of conflict behavior of people with different types of identity. We proceeded from the general assumption that conflict behavior of individuals related to their social identity. But in business organizations there are other manifestations of conflict behavior by the reasons of status-role and competitive relations. That is why it is important to compare conflict behavior people in different samples. The general sample of our research ($N=258$) included: simple probability sample ($N=179$), sample of personnel in business organizations ($N=79$).

The study was conducted in two stages. The first stage identified the relationship between type of identity and strategy in conflict behavior (simple probability sample). The next stage was studied conflict strategies of personnel with different types of identity (sample of personnel in business organizations).

Methods:

For the identification strategy of behavior in conflict:

The questionnaire of K. Thomas and R. Killman in adaptation of N. Crushina (Minaeva, 2007). The questionnaire consists of 30 pairs of statements in which the participant is encouraged to choose the most appropriate style of behavior. Positives the number of points on each of the five strategies of behavior in conflict (0-12). At the maximum amount is determined by the dominant strategy of the subject.

For the identification of identity:

Test the “Twenty-statements” by M. Kuhn and T. McPartland (adaptation Ivanova, Rumyantsev, 2009) to identify key cognitive components of identity. Subjects had 20 times to answer the question “Who am I?” Processing responses includes quantitative and qualitative analysis. On the basis of the content analysis is counting the number of responses by categories (points): reflexive, family, local, gender, status, civil, ethnic, and professional. Through a content analysis was conducted by counting the words in each category.

The Mast test (A. Ellis). The method proposed by A. Ellis and tested by P. N. Ivanov and E. F. Kolobova used to identify value-motivational characteristics of the individual (Ivanova, 2004). The subject is proposed to continue at six times the wording of the phrases: “I must...”; “Awful if...”; “I can’t stand...”. Counted the number of respondents ‘ answers to the following leading themes: professional growth; concern about health; communication; material well-being, comfort; maintaining moral principles; the state of the environment; public benefits; family; autonomy. Through a content analysis was conducted by counting the answers in each themes.

Was conducted correlation analysis of the obtained data as well as frequency analysis of the strategies of behavior in conflict, in individuals with certain indicators of identity that are most sensitive to the factors of social interaction. In current research we identified followin identity types: basic (family, local, ethnic, gender, cultural, reflexive), mixed, professional (professional and social role, development, competence). Respondents were distributed according to these groups on the relative severity of actualized identity.

Expert analysis. Type of identity was determined by the coordination of opinions of experts (professional psychologists with experience in this topic). Agreed characteristics allowed determining the basic or professional type of identity. The discrepancy between the results of methods qualified as a mixed identity.

2. FORMAT GUIDELINES

Strategies of conflict behavior of people with different types of identity (on general sample)

Correlation analysis of the severity indicators of the identity and preferences of strategies of conflict behavior revealed no statistically significant Association between the variables. Frequency analysis showed that individuals with different types of actualized identity chose different strategies in conflict situations (table 1).

Table 1
Strategies of the conflict behavior and types of identity (in % from general sample, N=179)

Identity/ Strategies	Competiton	Cooperation	Compromise	Avoidance	Adaptation
Basic (N=49)	6,7	4,5	5,6	6,1	4,5
Mixed (N=71)	6,7	14	12,3	3,9	2,7
Professional (N=59)	7,8	12,8	6,7	3,9	1,8

The data obtained on the general sample show that a statistically significant correlation between the studied parameters was not detected. But we can say about tendency of greater preference to the strategy of cooperation and compromise among persons with professional type of identity. People with basic identity have slightly higher performance of strategies competition and avoidance.

Strategies of conflict behavior of personnel in the organization

The following series of studies was conducted on a sample of professionals working in the organization on different positions (N=81). This series included: analysis conflict behavior, types of identity, distribution of types of identity and strategies of behavior in conflict. Differences in conflict behavior of people in organizations with different types of identity are presented below (table 2).

Table 2
Strategies of the conflict behavior and types of identity (in % from sample of personnel, N=79)

Identity/ Strategies	Competiton	Cooperation	Compromise	Avoidance	Adaptation
Basic (N=24)	1,3	7,5	13,9	3,8	3,8
Mixed (N=26)	3,8	7,5	11,4	5,1	5,1
Professional (N=29)	16,4	12,7	5,1	1,3	1,3

From these data we can say that there is similarity in conflict behavior of people with basic and mixed type of identity. They dominated strategies are: compromise and cooperation. Personnel with professional type of identity have

higher performance of competition and collaboration strategies. Among this people less percent of those who chose strategies of avoidance and adaptation in conflict situation.

This study allows saying, that there is an association of a choice of strategy of conflict behavior and updated the type of social identity. In particular, personnel with basic and complex identities the dominant strategies of conflict behavior are: compromise and cooperation. People with a professional identity are the most frequently chosen strategy of competition and cooperation. They almost do not resort to avoidance and adaptation.

This suggests that people with professional identity in organizations aimed at the achievement of their goals, thus to the detriment of the other party. Probably they more focused on victory is required if the person with power, to strive to restore order for the greater good. The predominance of the strategy of competition can show that they involved in the struggle for resources, development and competitive advantage.

We compared the strategies of behavior in conflict, persons in a pronounced professional identity for the total sample and the sample of employees of organizations. Results show big differences in 2 samples (figure 1).

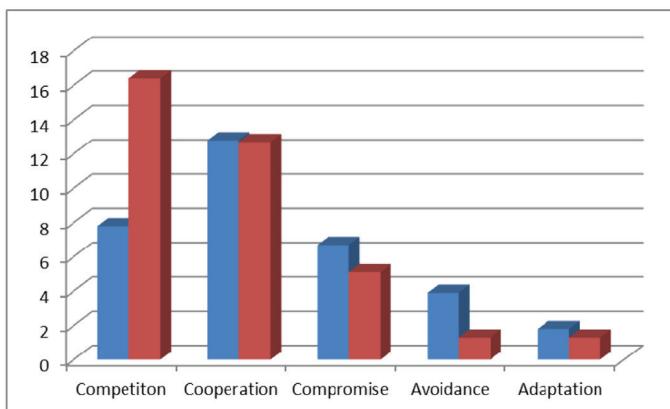


Figure 1 Strategies of conflict behavior of people with professional identity type in two samples

Blue Colom – general sample (N=179)

Red Colom – sample of personnel in business organization (N=79)

Results show that the major differences concern the strategy of competition. Personnel with professional identity demonstrate much higher level of competition strategy compare with general sample. We assume that it can be with the characteristics of the sample. Sampling personnel were younger. It is also possible that it shows features of a method of identifying the strategy which is in the nature of a situation. But at the same time, the results raise important questions: Why in the total sample of people with a professional identity,

there is a trend of preference of strategy of cooperation and compromise, and organization of people with a professional identity for these strategies added to the rivalry? Maybe the organizational status and role of a person affect his behavior in the conflict?

3. CONCLUSIONS

We emphasize again that the research was pilot in nature. But the results of this study maybe useful development of approach to the problem of conflict behavior and show the importance of social cognition, self-identity for understanding of conflict behavior. Its show that the choice of the type of behavior in the conflict can be associated with a situation in which there are people. On the its show thetre there is the difference in conflict behavior of personnel with different types of identity. We also observed that within the organizational context of people with a professional identity, demonstrate a high level strategy competition and cooperation. This is maybe important for the conflict managemet and for the human resource managemtn as well.

We think that these results allow a new understanding conflict interaction and open new research opportunities in the field of conflict resolution and social identity. Identity and social position have a significant impact on a person's reactions in a conflict situation.

The results allow us to say that the analysis of conflict to consider the stage of self-determination. A party to the conflict perceives the conflict situation from the position which he has formed ideas about itself, its social and professional roles and adequate interaction. Therefore, the analysis of the identity of the parties to the conflict can be an important resource for managing conflicts in the organization. Because identity is formed in the course inform and interact, new opportunities for the development of the corporate culture of the organization.

We emphasize again that the developed approach allows us to outline an empirical research program aimed at identifying characteristics of conflict behavior in the organization in persons with different types of identity. This is important for anticipation of the behavior of the employees of the organization in conflict situations. In the same time they can be considered as pilot for the construction of new hypotheses and further research on a broader sample and with the use of experimental procedures.

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