Indian Institute of Management Calcutta

Working Paper Series

WPS No 824 /March, 2019

TEACHING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: AN INNOVATION

Rajiv Kumar (Organizational Behavior Group), IIM Calcutta*

Archita Dutta, Trainee Teaching Associate, IIM Calcutta

Sujata Raychaudhuri, Trainee Teaching Associate, IIM Calcutta

Indian Institute of Management Calcutta

DH Road, Joka

Kolkata – 700104 (INDIA)

rajiv@iimcal.ac.in

(* Corresponding Author)

Indian Institute of Management Calcutta

Joka, D.H. Road

Kolkata 700104

URL: http://facultylive.iimcal.ac.in/workingpapers

TEACHING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: AN INNOVATION

Rajiv Kumar (Organizational Behavior Group), IIM Calcutta

Archita Dutta, Trainee Teaching Associate, IIM Calcutta

Sujata Raychaudhuri, Trainee Teaching Associate, IIM Calcutta

Abstract: Researchers (e.g., Harinck, Kouzakova, Ellemers, & Scheepers, 2018; Kouzakova, Harinck, Ellemers, & Scheepers, 2014) suggest that two broad types of conflicts occur in organizations. One type of conflict emerges when two or more parties compete over scarce resources. The second type of conflict stems from stark differences in values, ideologies, and norms. Researchers (e.g., Kouzakova, Harinck, Ellemers, & Scheepers, 2014) also suggest that handling conflicts over scarce resources is less troublesome than handling conflicts over values and ideologies. When in conflict over values, people feel threatened. But when in conflict over resources, people may feel challenged and strive to find win-win solutions. But presence of value-based conflicts induce people to attempt to attack others and defend themselves (Harinck et al., 2018).

Our aim in this paper is to describe a novel way of teaching the above-mentioned theory of conflict. We have combined—with slight modifications to the original—two existing teaching exercises to create powerful experiences in the classrooms resembling the above-mentioned theory of conflict. We have implemented this novel tool with a variety of students ranging from MBA students with very little work experience to executive education participants with decades of experience. Our data suggests that the tool brings out the theory of conflict—and its management as well—in an engaging way. Students vividly experience the two types of conflict within classrooms, and they also learn how to handle such conflicts in future.

In this paper, we describe the tool and how we have applied it with several categories of students. We describe our application in a step-by-step fashion. We also report how we debrief students. We have developed a few important messages over the years that we want student to realize towards the end of a teaching session. We believe that this novel way of teaching students about conflict and its management is going to be quite useful in today's polarized world.

KEYWORDS: Values, Values Clarification, Value Conflict, Experiential Exercises, Classroom Exercises

TEACHING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: AN INNOVATION

INTRODUCTION

Past research (e.g., Guetzkow & Gyr, 1954; Kabanoff, 1991) has often identified two types of conflict. An emerging stream of research (e.g., Harinck & Kleef, 2012; Harinck et al., 2018; Jehn, 1994) similarly classifies interpersonal conflict into two types: resource conflict and value conflict. Resource conflicts are about the division of scarce resources, such as time, money, territory, or natural resources such as water, oil, and gas. Value conflicts emerge due to disagreement about norms and values, personal identity, and such subjective notions people hold. Therefore, parties in value conflict debate intangible—yet very important to them personally—issues such as norms about appropriate behaviour, political ideas, or issues of ethics and morality (Harnick-et-al., 2018). Value-based conflicts often get emotional and may create deep dissatisfaction and frustration amongst the group members. (Ross,1989). Even though many organizational conflicts could be mixed—in that both resources and values are involved—it is possible to consider them as separate types of conflict and to identify their specific implications (Harinck, Kouzakova, Ellemers, & Scheepers, 2018).

Although researchers have often mentioned these two types of conflict, the pedagogical tools to illustrate this theory in classrooms is missing. We believe that such tools could help instructors create impactful experiences in classrooms that mirror the above-mentioned theory of interpersonal conflict. We contend that in the era of heightened differences and polarized opinions, the necessity of teaching deeper sources of interpersonal conflicts to MBA students and executives could be obvious.

Organizational conflict theorists have pointed out the adverse effects of conflict amongst groups. Low group consensus creates hindrance in effective group performance and tends to increase individual dissatisfaction (Evan, 1965; Gladstein, 1984; Schwenk & Cosier, 1993). Organizations often provide strong enough contexts (Lewin, 1936) which subdue the differences in individual value systems and elicit the desired in-role or extra-role behaviors from employees (Williams & Anderson, 1991). But sometimes these differences come to overt conflicts. To illustrate, such conflicts may occur when two employees differ regarding how moral or immoral it is to bribe to get more business or hide minor safety issues. When multicultural teams work together, members may judge others' behaviors vis-à-vis age or gender differences by invoking their own personal value systems. Sometimes religion plays a crucial role in creating conflicts (Lund Dean, Safranski, & Lee, 2015). Researchers have pointed out that similarity in values tend to give way to easier interaction processes within groups (Watson, Kumar, & Michaelsen, 1993).

Value-based conflicts are even more likely outside organizations because the context becomes weaker there. Differences often propel violent behaviors towards those who do not hold similar attitudes or display behaviors contrary to the commonly held values of one group. Considering these challenges, we contend that teaching the management of this type of conflict is essential.

There are multiple definitions and classifications of values (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998), and hence for instructional purposes we have adopted a simpler specification provided in a popular textbook (Robbins & Judge, 2013): values are individual judgments as to what is right, good, or desirable. They further describe value system as the ranking of an individual's

values as per the intensity and importance these values have for that person (Robbins & Judge, 2013, p. 144). Borrowing one element of more formal definition put forth by these authors, we can state that values are not isolated individual judgments, but are embedded in a social context. As according to Jehn (1994), if dignified treatment of an individual is of importance to someone, it means two interrelated things for that individual. Firstly, the person strives hard to adhere to this value in one's own conduct, and secondly, this person also expects others to abide by this value. In case someone else's behavior falls short of this standard, the holder of the value senses a negative emotion. It is difficult for a person to witness the violation of one's values, and the difficulty increases with the importance of that value for her or him.

Values could be useful aides for a person to make a variety of decisions. In a world full of ideological confusion, people are forced to take decisions at every step. Most of the choices that we make may stem out of the ideals or principles that we consider important to us. These principles may include values that we deeply care about and if violated may create dissatisfaction or tension. According to Simon, Howe and Kirschenbaum (1995), Values are formed through three methods. Firstly, the process of inculcation includes values that have been passed on to us from one generation to the other. These may be learnt through methods such as direct teaching or through other indirect methods as avoidance of punishment. They are passed on from one generation to another as they tend to serve the purpose of maintaining social order and decorum. Next process is labeled modelling. The rationale here is that the person tries to embody a certain set of values. He or she hopes that others who come in contact with her or him would be impressed by the demonstration of these values. The person may also expect others to adopt and emulate their values. And lastly, people may clarify the values that they actually hold by engaging with dialogues around their moral dilemmas. This approach tries to help people answer some of the questions that are left unanswered by the other two methods. This method has an important advantage of helping individuals to form their own value systems by trying to answer questions pertaining to social and moral dilemma. It has been used from centuries before, where "asking", "listening", "answering" and "trusting the seeker's ability to find answers" from an important part. In this paper, we have borrowed an exercise used for values clarification.

Therefore, in this paper, we aim to offer a pedagogical tool that would help instructors achieve the following interrelated objectives while teaching the management of interpersonal conflicts. Firstly, it will help instructors illustrate the above-mentioned theory of conflict management. And secondly, it will help instructors demonstrate ways of managing both these types of conflict.

This paper advances the teaching of conflict management theory by offering a novel way of teaching the management of interpersonal conflict. We, therefore, believe that this paper may change the way conflict management is taught, and the way people resolve such conflicts in their professional and personal lives. We aim to help instructors create powerful experiences that can make students more aware of self and others, as our experience and collated evidence shows.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, we briefly describe the literature around managing interpersonal conflicts of both types that we mentioned above. The literature offers more precise description as well as prescription of handling conflict of the first type, i.e., resource-based conflict. Around the second issue, the literature seems a bit askance in addressing the nature and resolution techniques. We describe these two strands of literature next.

Managing Conflicts around Resources

Two precise features of this type of conflict can be seen in literature. One stream of literature seems to contend that these conflicts could be of three types, namely, task, process and relationship (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; de Wit, Greer, & Jehn, 2012; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999). One can argue that the relationship conflict has the hue of value-based conflict, but theoretically finding an exact overlap between the research on dichotomous conflict (e.g., Harinck et al., 2018) and the research on task and/or process vs. relationship conflict (e.g., de Wit et al., 2012; Jehn et al., 1999) has not been very fruitful. Keeping this lack of overlap for further research, we find that researchers have talked about the positive and/or negative outcomes of these three types of conflict (e.g., de Wit et al., 2012). Although there are some contradictory findings, it seems almost obvious that relationship conflict is dysfunctional for groups and organizations (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; de Wit et al., 2012).

The other enduring feature of this strand of literature is the discovery of conflict management styles (Phillips & Cheston, 1979; Rahim, 1983; Thomas, 1992). Without going into the history of its development, we note that researchers have suggested what style to use and when and with what result (Phillips & Cheston, 1979). These two strands of literature offer a fairly comprehensive basis to teach conflict management in classes.

Value-Based Conflict

Rokeach (1973) defined a value as an enduring belief, a specific mode of conduct or end state of existence which is personally or socially preferable. Thus, we might infer that values play an important role in our goal achievement. Values might act as a catalyst to the choices we make to achieve a particular goal. Rokeach's theory of values affecting our life pattern has been seen in a number of studies. For example, (Harinck & Kleef, 2012; Harinck et al., 2018; Jehn, 1994; Kouzakova et al., 2014) show that people not only behaviorally react differently to the two types of conflict but such conflicts also create an impact perceptually, emotionally, and physically. Human beings, in an argument usually tend to reach more win-win agreement, but when it comes to a tug-of-war based on values, we are more prone to force our own viewpoint on others perceiving the conflict "a threat." The first reaction to a "threat" is either flight or fight, which are usually accompanied by a series of physiological effects including cardiovascular. Cardiovascular indicators suggest that resource conflicts are more easily experienced as challenge and not as threat; and writing down a disagreement as a conflict over resources (instead of values) increases people's credence to find a mutually acceptable solution. But in comparison, the cardiovascular responses to value-based conflict show that human beings perpetually perceive the conflict as threatening rather than challenging (Kouzakova et al., 2014) and individuals who find themselves in such a conflict tend to find themselves not on the same boat with their opponent.

Numerous studies conclude that emotion is one of the major factors that acts as a puppeteer to human cognitive processes, including attention (Vuilleumier, 2005), learning and memory (Phelps, 2004, Um et al., 2011) , reasoning (Jung, Wranke, Hamburger, & Knauff, 2014), and problem-solving (Isen et al., 1987). Most importantly, it appears that emotional stimuli gorge more on attentional resources rather than a non-emotional stimulus (Schupp et al., 2007). Pekrun (1992)linked an increased ability in learning and retention to attentional and motivational components of emotion. The rendition of the same was given by Seli and colleagues (Seli, Wammes, Risko, & Smilek, 2016). These pieces of evidence go on to show that people may find the emotions stemming from differences in values particularly troublesome to handle.

According to Schneider (1983), the similarity of values among members will influence attraction and therefore decrease interpersonal tension. In a strong culture, defined as the intense sharing of values (O'Reilly, 1989), members develop emotional attachment and understanding which decreases emotional conflict. When low group value consensus exists, members core values and beliefs about their everyday work are challenged, causing interpersonal tension and emotional upset (Bar-Tal, 1989; Schein, 1986).

TEACHING OBJECTIVES & EXERCISES

In this section, we describe the learning objectives that we set, the tools that we borrowed, modified, and combined in our classes, the implementation of the exercises in classroom, and debrief details. The following sections unfold in this order.

Teaching Objectives

As mentioned earlier, we drew our theoretical framework from the work of researchers who have consistently found two different types of interpersonal conflict (e.g., Kouzakova et al., 2014). Accordingly, we set the following objectives for the classroom demonstration:

1. Illustration of the two types of conflicts through classroom experiences
2. Highlighting the key differences between these two types of interpersonal conflicts
3. Illustration of conflict management styles
4. Making students experience the effective and not-so-effective ways of handling these two categories of conflicts.

Tools Used for Combination

We chose two published tools to combine in the classroom. As mentioned earlier, our overarching purpose was to illustrate the two types—resource based and value based—of interpersonal conflicts and to highlight how to manage them. To illustrate the conflicts on resources, we chose a published exercise which consisted of four scenarios of conflicts over issues such as productivity of operators, reporting mechanisms, safety of machines and people and sharing of human resources across two departments (Simpson, 2007). Each scenario of conflict had five options to resolve them, which the students ranked in their order of preference. In order to make Indian audience comfortable with the wordings of the exercise, the first author had slightly modified the original version. To illustrate the modifications made, the first author often found that people interpreted the word “confront” in the original version as approaching someone with aggression. Hence the word “confront was changed and the word “approach” was inserted.

For creating value-based conflict, we chose the case of alligator river story (Simon et al., 1995). This exercise contains a story involving five characters. Each of these characters engages in behaviors which people find objectionable. Students rank these characters from the most reprehensible to the least reprehensible. In the section below, we present our rationale for choosing these tools.

Apart from containing multiple—four to be precise—scenarios of conflicts over resources in organizations, we believed that the options contained in each scenario mapped onto the conflict management styles (Rahim, 1983; Thomas, 1992). We tested our assumption by asking some faculty members to rate the options on these styles, and we could indeed see that many of the styles were actually present in the options for each exercise. Hence we believed that the exercise offered by Simpson (2007) presented an excellent tool to make students experience resource-based conflicts in a classroom situation.

The second tool—alligator river story (Simon et al., 1995)—reveals some of the values by the way one ranks the characters in the story. As per organizational development theorists, there are strong linkages between organizational structures, core values and personalized interpretations of those (Denison & Spreitzer, 1991). Simon et al. (1995) in their

research concluded that there are three ways in which values can be formed and changed, as mentioned earlier. The Alligator-River story employs the "values clarification" approach which in turn is based upon Raths' focus on process of valuing (Raths, Sidney and Merrill, 1996). This case was selected in order to see the impact and importance of value conflict in a classroom setting. It was selected so that students can learn about the conflicts that emerge when one's value system is challenged while working with others in a corporate setting. We believed that this classroom exercise would be helpful in better understanding and handling of such conflicts in future managerial settings.

Classroom Implementation

After raising the issue of conflict and its management for 10-15 minutes, we gave these two cases on conflict to students. These students were already part of a group working on a common topic related to organizational behavior (the age of these groups was 7-8 weeks), and hence we instructed students to sit together with their group members. The instructor asked the students to first work individually on these two exercises. The time given for individual completion was approximately 25-30 minutes. The instructor told students to first complete the conflict cases around resources—without telling the students about these distinctions—and then the instructor told students to work on the exercise meant for value-based conflict. The second exercise also had the space for students to write down their rationale for their rankings of different characters. The instructor provided clarification to students as and when they faced any difficulty. We wish to highlight here that students received two separate exercises on handling interpersonal conflict. As mentioned previously, the exercise supposed to elicit resource-based conflict had four separate scenarios that students resolved by ranking five options given for each scenario. The second exercise had just one conflict problem in the form of a small story, which students understood and then ranked five characters in the story.

After students completed the individual parts, the instructor told them to discuss their individual choices in groups and find a group consensus on both the problems. The instructors told the students to avoid voting or exchange as techniques to derive consensus. The instructor explicitly told the students that they first had to explain their rationale behind their individual choices, and then discuss with their group members to explore if a collectively agreed upon solution for each conflict problem could be found. They were also told to first work on the conflict scenarios around resources and then come to alligator river story (which contained conflict around values). They were given 30-40 minutes to complete this part. Typically, the student groups displayed considerable energy and conflict while attempting to drive consensus. The instructor kept visiting each group to provide any clarification students needed.

Some groups began their work by first tabulating the responses of each member so that they could quickly detect any consensus already present due to their prior individual rankings. Some other groups adopted a more free-flowing approach of discussion and consensus construction. Such patterns are symptomatic of what the instructor had observed in many other classes over several years. In case some groups felt the need for more time, the instructor told them to derive consensus on just the best and worst solution according to the group. It should be noted that each case was followed by five options, and hence the groups were expected to complete their ranking of all the five options. But if time shortage became apparent, the best and worst solutions were conveyed as the minimum expectation from the group. However, the instructor also told all the students that if they continued to experience considerable conflict and hence could not achieve even the best and the worst solution, it would be an acceptable outcome of their group's work. Hence although the instructor expected students to derive consensus, students also knew that it was not a mandatory

demand. All the groups ultimately completed the ranking, which again is similar to the results obtained in many other classes.

Debrief Plan

The debrief started with the instructor telling the students that the conflict exercises they completed represented two broad types of interpersonal conflicts, without naming them or telling any other details. Following this, the instructor posed the following questions to the class:

- Did you find one type more difficult than the other?
- What, according to you, makes it more difficult?
- What can be done if you encounter such conflicts?

These three questions were used to illuminate the nature of value-based conflict and its management. After this phase, the instructor briefly highlighted the five styles of conflict management (Rahim, 1983; Thomas & Kilmann, 1978). The purpose here was to sensitize students to the conceptual material so that they could relate their experience of handling resource-based conflicts with the underlying theory of conflict management style. Having finished the elaboration of conflict management styles, the instructor turned to the other type of conflict—which students experienced while discussing the conflict scenarios posed by Simpson (2007)—and tabulated their group responses. After tabulation, the instructor posed the following questions:

- Do you find any particular pattern in class-wide data? Here it should be noted that in the experience of the first author over years, typically a pattern emerges.
- How do the patterns map onto the conflict handling styles? Again, over the years, the first author has seen that the emerging pattern of class-wide consensus maps almost perfectly onto 2-3 styles of conflict management. This is illustrated in the section below.
- Do you find the same behavior outside classrooms as well?

Having described the debrief contours, now we turn to an illustration of the effectiveness of this plan with the help of data we collected recently. Firstly, we describe the context and sample, and then the evidence which illustrates how the novel combination of these two exercises provides an effective tool to teach interpersonal conflict management.

Context and Sample: In the month of August 2018, we implemented this plan with two sections of MBA students in a reputed MBA college in India. We present our analysis based on data collected from 159 students spread across two sections. All the students were native Indians. About 27% of them were females. Average work experience of these students was approximately 16 months, and there were 16% students without any work experience. The above-mentioned plan was implemented in both the sections. Students first solved the problems individually, and then they attempted to solve the same problems in groups. The groups in which they discussed these problems were already formed, and students were instructed to sit together with their group members. Now we describe the results we obtained.

Elicitation of Resource-based vs. Values-based Conflict

Students in both the sections were able to spot that one conflict they experienced—based on Simpson (2007)—was different from the other one which they experienced while working on Alligator river story. Students also quickly and unanimously reported that the latter conflict—value-based conflict—was more difficult. When the instructor probed further to find out why students found it more difficult, their answers had several keywords resembling the nature of value-based conflict reported in literature. Apart from words like values, ethics, and morality, students mentioned that they felt more connected to themselves while discussing value-based conflict. Many of them mentioned that they became more emotional while experiencing value-based conflict. Many students reported that they felt

personally involved while working on value-based conflict and trying to resolve differences with their group members.

Students further reported the fact that when faced with value conflict, it was more difficult to make a unanimous decision. Personally also, when faced with a value conflict, reaching a decision was more difficult. During the discussion that followed the exercise, one student stated:

> *"I had no idea that for such an apparently simple exercise, there will be such varied responses".*

Few female students reported that working in a group with more males made it even tougher to reach a decision when working on a value based conflict. A female student after the class had stated:

> *"I thought ... was the worst character, but because all other members in my group were males, I had to choose [someone else]…They were all thinking of …as a victim. But I don't think so!*

Students also thought that they needed more time to solve the problem which was value based. Even when students went with the majority decision to save time, they felt uneasy while conforming to their group's opinion in case of value conflict. Initially, it seemed that it was difficult for the groups to reach a consensus about the rankings. There was a lot of chaos and arguments within group members while working.

One student approached one of the authors after the class exercise and stated that the exercise was such an "eye-opener". She could not believe that the others could think so differently. When one of the co-authors asked a student recently (almost after 3 months), it seemed she could promptly tell the case in very great details. She mentioned that the conflict reminded her of the "experience". Another student still seemed to be agitated—even after more than three months—as to how people could not see align with her personal value system. She could only remember the value conflict exercise as the only exercise on conflict. When prompted about the other exercise on conflict (which was resource-based), she could not recall. One student stated (after three months):

> *"we could relate and remember conflict through these exercises than by what we read in textbook".*

These data points suggest that the exercise was able to achieve the first two objectives. It helped illustrate (a) the difference between resource-based and value-based conflict, and (b) the more difficult nature of value-based conflict. In order to achieve the third objective—how to handle such conflicts—the instructor raised discussion around three issues. Firstly, based on Simon et al., (1995), the instructor asked students to think about their listening skills displayed during value-based conflict. Students could readily see that they listened almost totally with the intention to judge and prove the other person wrong while discussing the value-based conflict. They also agreed that listening with empathy was almost absent. Hence, they saw merit in the idea that better listening could be helpful in resolving such conflicts. Next, the instructor asked for students' opinions around a different strategy to resolve such conflicts. To illustrate, the instructor wanted students to think as to what would happen to society if every service provider were to demand what Sinbad demanded? Or, what would happen to society if friend behaved the way Ivan behaved? Here the purpose was to illustrate that if students could ask a different question to jointly explore possibilities, as opposed to question to prove others wrong, a more peaceful discussion was possible.

Students could see this strategy as well. And lastly, the instructor wanted students to opine regarding the possibility that if nothing succeeds, what they should do. Students could see that value-based conflicts are so powerful that sometimes the best resolution could be to agree to disagree. Thus, the third objective—how to handle value-based conflict—was also achieved.

Illustration of Conflict Handling Styles

For this purpose, the instructor tabulated the consensus ranking of each student group on the four conflict scenarios mentioned in Simpson (2007). As mentioned earlier, Simpson (2007) provides five options to resolve each of the four conflict scenarios. 80% of the student groups could reach consensus on all the five rankings for each resource conflict scenario. For the remaining groups, due to time constraints, the instructor asked them to rank only the best and the worst option.

Having tabulated the responses, the instructor asked students to see if there was a pattern in the consensus ranking of all the groups in the class. Students could quickly detect that there was an almost unanimous decision by all the groups in class on certain options of handling these four conflicts over resources. More specifically, 88% of the groups ranked integrating or collaborative style (Rahim, 1983; Thomas & Kilmann, 1978) as the best style. The other obvious pattern was in the ranking of options which mapped onto avoiding style (Rahim, 1983; Thomas & Kilmann, 1978). 90% of the groups ranked avoiding as the least preferred style of handling interpersonal conflict over resources. It should be noted here that the identification of options given in the exercise of Simpson (2007) as integrating or avoiding was not done by the instructor. Instructor merely probed if the options having identical ranking by the majority of the groups reflected any conflict handling styles as discussed in the class at the beginning of debrief. And in response, students themselves ascribed the labels of integrating or avoiding. Based on this illustrative evidence—which resembles considerably the experience of first author in a number of other classes—we believe that the exercise was successful in illustrating the different styles of handling interpersonal conflicts. Moreover, as suggested by theorists of interpersonal conflicts (Harinck & Kleef, 2012; Harinck et al., 2018; Kouzakova et al., 2014), students could also see that when in resource-based interpersonal conflicts, people typically strive to find win-win solutions.

The instructor further challenged students to compare their preference for win-win solutions and aversion to avoiding expressed inside classroom with their actual behaviors outside. Many students quickly reported that their behaviors outside often did not match their own solutions in the classroom. Some hastened to add that it is quite difficult to listen to everyone's demands or concerns and meet them. When a crisis is there, they believed that adopting an integrating approach would be time consuming. However, this last question and the ensuing discussion also posed a constructive dilemma for a number of students. They realized the discrepancy between what they prefer and what they actually choose to do or end up doing. And hence they felt motivated to figure out how could they become more effective while handling interpersonal conflict over resources in future. However, when we contacted some students after more than three months of the session, we sensed that students had negligible recollection of resource-based conflict. But they could vividly recall the conflict on values. This is a discovery we discuss in the next section.

In conclusion, we believe that the combined application of these exercises achieved the pedagogical objectives we set. We now turn to a general discussion and implications of our work.

DISCUSSION

As mentioned earlier, the combination of exercises was quite successful in bringing out the two different types of interpersonal conflicts. As repeatedly pointed out by researchers (e.g., Harinck et al., 2018; Kouzakova et al., 2014) students could see from their own classroom experiences that conflicts stemming from scarcity of resources were quite different in nature and intensity from the conflicts that they experienced due to differences in their values. They could also experience, as previous research has pointed out, that resolving value-based conflicts is much more difficult than the resolution of resource-based conflicts. When faced with a value conflict, it is more difficult to make a unanimous decision. Personally also, when faced with a value conflict, the difficulty of reaching a decision is more difficult. This can probably be explained by the fact that value systems are deeply ingrained in our personality systems and thus are difficult to change. According to Simon et al., (1995), people's values are based on their feelings. People not only develop values but become passionate about them. These values become an intrinsic part of their personality system. Individuals thus tend to have an inherent urge to express these values, however, they tend to weigh the appropriateness and strength of the context. Despite such inhibitions, many students found it difficult to reach a consensus. And even if they did, they were not comfortable if the group consensus differed from their personal opinion in case of value-based conflict. This discomfort was noticeably absent in the conflict emanating from scarcity of resources, as suggested by researchers (e.g., Kouzakova et al., 2014). This can be elaborated by the theory of cognitive dissonance Festinger (1957). According to him any two related cognitive elements will be dissonant if they do not fit together because it violates general logic or more importantly the concerned person's expectation, provided the concerned cognition (in this case values) is important to them in that particular situation.

Therefore, as we described earlier, the underlying reasons that make value-based conflicts more troublesome came out from students' own descriptions of their classroom experience. They described how differences in values and value systems, and the task that demanded them to jettison their values even temporarily was quite threatening for them. Hence the novel combination of the existing exercises neatly served the pedagogical purpose.

Students could also see what are some feasible ways to handle value-based conflicts. As suggested by Simon et al., (1995), they noticed that they displayed poor listening skills while resolving value-based conflicts. They could also see, at least cognitively, the advantage of better probing skills while resolving value-based conflicts. And they also realized that value-based conflicts can lead to irreconcilable differences, and hence they identified with the merit of learning to live and work together despite such differences. Put differently, students could experience the necessity of agreeing to disagree—on contentious issues such as differences in values—when all other attempts to resolve conflicts do not succeed. Students could also appreciate the fact that values are such personal matters which may render a personal helpless when others demand such changes.

While debriefing the exercise on resource-based conflicts, students could easily see that a large majority of them preferred win-win or integrating solutions for such conflicts. This is again in line with the findings (Harinck et al., 2018; Kouzakova et al., 2014) that people typically feel constructively challenged to explore win-win solutions when they

experience resource-based conflicts. An integrative style may accommodate all types of results in a conflict management process (Rognes & Schei, 2010). Students could also witness how avoiding conflicts is the least preferred option. And many students realized the challenges involved in implementing these solutions outside classrooms.

As mentioned earlier, anecdotal evidence suggests that students tend to recall value-based conflict more. We surmise that this can happen due to several reasons. It can be due to the fact that students found Alligator-River exercise more interesting and challenging and hence paid better attention to it. Other reason could be that students found value conflict exercise to be more difficult cognitively and therefore it required more processing time, which further led to better retention. The cognitive load required to solve value-based conflict was greater and was emotionally laden. Emotional events are often remembered with greater accuracy and vividness (though these two characteristics do not always go together) than events lacking an emotional component (Reisberg & Hertel, 2005). Values and meanings encountered in the processes of education affect people consciously as well subconsciously (Sankey, 2006). Therefore, the impact value-based conflict could be stronger compared to the resource-based conflict which did not involve much of emotions.

Limitations

We are aware of certain limitations of our claims. Although the combination of exercises has worked in numerous settings—as illustrated in the results section above—we believe that future instructors would benefit by being aware of certain limitations under which these exercises seem to work.

Firstly, our claim of success is based on data emerging in a collective situation. Students had to discuss their conflict handling choices in the presence of other students, either in small groups or in the class. This could have imposed certain deficiencies in data. A milder problem could be that some introvert people would keep their views to themselves, and hence group consensus data would not reflect the views of such introverts. But two more severe limitations could come due to the tendencies of conformity in groups (Asch, 1956) and social desirability (Zerbe & Paulhus, 1987). We cannot rule out that some students, particularly during the less intense discussion on resource-based conflict, might have conformed to the opinions of majority in the group. Such a case would render the consensus data somewhat compromised. Additionally, while discussing the conflict on values, students may argue in a socially desirable way in order to manage the impression on others (Zerbe & Paulhus, 1987). It is more appealing to others if one comes across as having certain moral standards and possessing higher values. And such a situation may introduce some degree of artificiality in the conflict on values; people may argue vociferously not because they want to uphold their deeply held values, but because they want to signal their virtuosity.

We also have some anecdotal evidence to believe that probably the intensity of conflict on values overrides the learning about conflict management style and resolution techniques for conflicts over scarce resources. Although we do not have large-scale systematic evidence to confirm or disconfirm this notion, future instructors may want to keep this in mind.

REFERENCES

Asch, S. E. (1956). Studies of independence and conformity: I. A minority of one against a unanimous majority. *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied*, *70*(9), 1–70. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0093718

Bar-Tal, D. (1989). *Group beliefs: A conception for analyzing group structure, processes, and behavior.* New York: Springer-Verlag.

De Dreu, C. K. W., & Weingart, L. R. (2003). Task versus relationship conflict, team performance, and team member satisfaction: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *88*(4), 741–749. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.4.741

Denison, D.R. & Spreitzer, G.M. (1991) Organizational culture and organizational development: A competing value approach. *Research in organizational change and development* 5: 1-21.

de Wit, F. R. C., Greer, L. L., & Jehn, K. A. (2012). The paradox of intragroup conflict: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *97*(2), 360–390. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024844

Evan, W. (1965). Conflict and performance in R&D organizations. *Industrial Management Review, 7,* 37-46.

Festinger, L. (1957). *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance.* Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson

Gladstein, D. (1984). A model of task group effectiveness. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 29,* 499-517.

Guetzkow, H., & Gyr, J. (1954). An analysis of conflict in decision-making groups. *Human Relations, 7,* 367-381.

Harinck, F., & Kleef, G. A. V. (2012). Be hard on the interests and soft on the values: Conflict issue moderates the effects of anger in negotiations. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *51*(4), 741–752. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.2011.02089.x

Harinck, F., Kouzakova, M., Ellemers, N., & Scheepers, D. (2018). Coping with Conflict: Testosterone and Cortisol Changes in Men Dealing with Disagreement about Values versus Resources. *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research*, *11*(4), 265–277. https://doi.org/10.1111/ncmr.12139

Isen A. M., Daubman K. A., Nowicki G. P. (1987). Positive affect facilitates creative problem solving. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 52 1122–1131. 10.1037/0022-3514.52.6.1122.

Jehn, K. A. (1994). Enhancing effectiveness: An investigation of advantages and disadvantages of value-based intragroup conflict. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, *5*(3), 223–238. https://doi.org/10.1108/eb022744

Jehn, K. A., Northcraft, G. B., & Neale, M. A. (1999). Why Differences Make a Difference: A Field Study of Diversity, Conflict, and Performance in Workgroups. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *44*(4), 741. https://doi.org/10.2307/2667054

Jung, N., Wranke, C., Hamburger, K., & Knauff, M. (2014). How emotions affect logical reasoning: evidence from experiments with mood-manipulated participants, spider phobics, and people with exam anxiety. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *5*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00570

Kabanoff, B. (1991). Equity, equality, power, and conflict. *Academy of Management Review, 16,* 416-441.

Kouzakova, M., Harinck, F., Ellemers, N., & Scheepers, D. (2014). At the Heart of a Conflict: Cardiovascular and Self-Regulation Responses to Value Versus Resource Conflicts. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, *5*(1), 35–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550613486673

Lund Dean, K., Safranski, S. R., & Lee, E. S. (2015). Bad apples, behaving badly? Workplace religious discrimination disputes and resolution behaviors. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, *12*(3), 227–256. https://doi.org/10.1080/14766086.2014.992356

O'Reilly, C. A. (1989). Corporations, culture, and commitment: Motivation and social control in organizations. *California Management Review, 31,* 9-25.

Pekrun, R. (1992). The Impact of Emotions on Learning and Achievement: Towards a Theory of Cognitive/Motivational Mediators. *Applied Psychology*, *41*(4), 359–376. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1992.tb00712.x

Phelps, E. A. (2004). Human emotion and memory: interactions of the amygdala and hippocampal complex. *Current Opinion in Neurobiology*, *14*(2), 198–202. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.conb.2004.03.015

Phillips, E., & Cheston, R. (1979). Conflict Resolution: What Works? *California Management Review*, *21*(4), 76–83. https://doi.org/10.2307/41164837

Rahim, M. A. (1983). A measure of styles of handling interpersonal conflict. *Academy of Management Journal*, *26*(2), 368–376. https://doi.org/10.2307/255985

Raths, E.L., Simon, S.B., Merrill, H. (1966). *Values and Teaching.* Columbus, OH: Charles Merrill Publishing Co.

Reisberg D, Hertel P. (2005). Memory and emotion. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rognes, J. K., & Schei, V. (2010). Understanding the integrative approach to conflict management. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *25*(1), 82–97. https://doi.org/10.1108/02683941011013885

Rokeach, M. (1973). The nature of human values. Free Press, New York, USA.

Ross, R. (1989). Conflict. In R. Ross & J. Ross (Eds.), *Small groups in organizational settings.* (*pp.* 139-178). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Sankey, D. (2006). The neuronal synaptic self: having values and making choices. *Journal of Moral education*, 35(2)163-178.

Schein, E. H. (1986). What you need to know about organizational culture. *Training and Development Journal, 8* (1), 30-33.

Schneider, B. (1983). An interactionist perspective on organizational effectiveness. In L. L. Cummings & B. M. Staw (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior* (pp. 1-31). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Schupp, H. T., Stockburger, J., Codispoti, M., Junghofer, M., Weike, A. I., & Hamm, A. O. (2007). Selective Visual Attention to Emotion. *Journal of Neuroscience*, *27*(5), 1082–1089. https://doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.3223-06.2007

Schwenk, C, & Cosier, R. (1993). Effects of consensus and devil's advocacy on strategic decision-making. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 23,* 126-139.

Seli, P., Wammes, J. D., Risko, E. F., & Smilek, D. (2016). On the relation between motivation and retention in educational contexts: The role of intentional and unintentional mind wandering. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, *23*(4), 1280–1287. https://doi.org/10.3758/s13423-015-0979-0

Simon, S.B., Howe, L.W. & Kirschbenbaum, H. (1995). *Values clarification.* Warner Books, Inc., 1271 Avenue of the Americas, New York. pp. 5-15.

Simpson, D. T. (2007). Conflict Styles: Organizational decision making In J. Gordon (Ed.) The Pfeiffer book of successful conflict management tools. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Thomas, K. W. (1992). Conflict and Conflict Management: Reflections and Update. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *13*(3,), 265–274.

Thomas, K. W., & Kilmann, R. H. (1978). Comparison of Four Instruments Measuring Conflict Behavior. *Psychological Reports*, *42*(3_suppl), 1139–1145. https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1978.42.3c.1139

Vuilleumier, P. (2005). How brains beware: neural mechanisms of emotional attention. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *9*(12), 585–594. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2005.10.011

Watson, W. E., Kumar, K., & Michaelsen, L. K. (1993). Cultural diversity's impact on interaction process and performance: Comparing homogeneous and diverse task groups. *Academy of Management Journal, 36,* 590-602.

Zerbe, W. J., & Paulhus, D. L. (1987). Socially Desirable Responding in Organizational Behavior: A Reconception. *The Academy of Management Review*, *12*(2), 250–264. https://doi.org/10.2307/258533