

The Effects Of Constructive Conflict On Team Emotions

Yuan Lin, Anmin Wang

Xidian University, Shaanxi, China

Abstract: Based on the data which were collected from 40 team leaders and 324 team members , this study investigated what team emotions impacted the constructive conflict and leader emotional intelligence. Using the methods including SPSS hierarchical regression and factor analysis , the study counted and tested the data via theoretical and empirical tests, this study found : constructive conflict has a positive effect on the team emotions ; emotional intelligence of leaders had a positive impact on the team emotions ; high leader emotional intelligence would strengthen ties between constructive conflict and team emotions . When leader emotional intelligence is high, the relationship between constructive conflict and team emotions will be stronger. The results show that constructive conflict and emotional intelligence of leaders are of great significance to improve the performance of team innovation.

Keywords constructive conflict; leader emotional intelligence ;team emotions; derating effects

INTRODUCTION

Appropriate conflict can stimulate vitality and innovation of tissue or team , promote organization change and maintain a strong positive force of vitality and innovation to improve team performance . Prior research on team conflict used dichotomy view of concept of modern conflict to consider the role of conflict . There are two types of conflicts --- constructive and destructive conflict . In the modern organization theory , it has been proved that constructive conflict is crucial for team performance . People are fully aware of its positive role and the irrational suppression of conflicts . Team conflicts have seemed to be inevitable in the team process . As one form of positive conflict , constructive conflict is possible to improve organization efficiency. If there is no conflict or less, it may lead to organization stagnation , poor decision-making efficiency , invalid management.

Many previous researches have emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence of leaders, Emotional intelligence plays an important role in the process of leadership. With the deepening study of team performance, both the effect of emotional intelligence of leaders and team emotions on team performance are of great importance [George, 2000]. Some scholars have already investigated antecedents of team emotions , and confirmed that conflict is beneficial to create team emotion atmosphere. Conflict is working closely with team emotions. However, as mentioned above, fewer studies have been done to explore the collaborative research on constructive conflict , team emotions and team emotional intelligence of leaders in China . Emotional management and conflict management both are major parts of team management. Based on the previous reviews , the conflict of organizational behavior will be combined with the emotion of psychology in this

paper , we will explore mechanism between constructive conflict and team emotions to provide a theoretical basis for team management .

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Constructive Conflict Theory

Constructive conflict of team work is an open discussion of different positions and views for the team common benefits to improve team innovation performance , It belongs to a common form of active conflict . Tjosvold used the student teams as research subjects to make an empirical research on the effect of constructive conflict on team innovation . He noted that the team members have more power to understand the views and ideas of other members via arguments , which contributed to the team members to accept different views and opinions . In the team , constructive conflict that was based on the cooperation of the goal will help members to express their standpoints in public . It will also make members discuss the questions and deepen understand to propose better identified solutions , [Huo Jian Xie al., 2003].

Team Emotions Theory

Team emotions is an emotional state which is integrated with emotional nature of the individual in teams and organization's emotional environment . Team emotions is a feeling emotional state composed of two factors , one of the factors is the effective component . Some people tend to have positive emotions , while others show a negative emotions , so each member of a team has its own unique feeling and emotion. [Kelly & Barsade, 2001]. Based on the emotional potency , team emotions is divided into two types --- positive emotions and negative emotions. They will produce different effects on members

individual emotions, relations between members and the effectiveness of the team work [McColl-Keenedy & Anderson, 2002]. Positive emotions make people feel a lot of things are full of hope and good, and therefore people tend to take a positive attitude and actions after evaluating the event. Ren Jun Qu [Ren, 2006] see team emotions as a subjective concept. He thinks the team emotions is not only an important part of a team working environment, but also reflects common psychological experience of the team members on the team characteristics. It expresses directly or indirectly team views of members on the specific team work environment.

Internal conflict in scientific research team has a potential positive role which is summarized as the role of internal integration, activation function, excitation function and balance mechanisms. A certain degree of conflict will have a positive impact on the ability of team innovation [Tjosvold & Wong, 2004]. Therefore, team conflict is an important variable in the process of team. It is closely related to team emotions, team performance, member satisfaction.

Building on the above analysis, we put forward the hypothesis 1:

H1: Constructive conflict will be positively related to the team emotions.

Team Emotions Theory

Emotional intelligence was defined as a person's capacity of understanding, processing and utilizing emotions [Salovey & Mayer, 1990]. Leadership is a social influential process and team leader affects the feelings of subordinates through this process. Emotional intelligence of leaders can affect mood and emotion regulation of subordinates [Zampetakis & Moustakis, 2011]. It was pointed out that leadership with high emotional intelligence can use positive emotions to mobilize tissue's viability, accurately understand employees' sentiment, and inspire employees' emotion [George, 2000]. In addition, it is pointed out in Weiss and Cropanzano's famous emotional events theory that as one source of emotional events in the workplace, leader is able to influence the attitudes and behaviors of subordinates through this process [Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996]. These theories all support the important role of emotional intelligence of leaders on subordinates' attitudes and behaviors.

The emotion of leader with high emotional intelligence will be more mature. Because they are more sensitive to their own emotions and subordinates' emotions, are more inclined to support and encourage subordinates with the supportive behavior, moderate subordinates' negative emotions, ease the negative emotions of the staffs caused by such factors as undefined targets, lack of information, etc. They will make employees maintain a positive emotional state, eventually form a good team

emotions. According to the social exchange theory [Hollander, 1979], if the leaders have agreed to subordinate in aspects of caring, respect and other psychological, subordinates will return a higher degree of commitment and satisfaction, thereby forming a relatively harmonious whole team emotional atmosphere. The impact of positive emotions of leader on emotion of members of the organization is more significant. Emotional intelligence, the same as team members' emotions, emotional traits, emotional intelligence, etc., affects the team emotions via the explicit and implicit sharing processes [Ren Jun, 2004].

Based on the above analysis, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Emotional intelligence of leaders will be positively related to the team emotions.

Constructive Conflict, Leader Emotional Intelligence and Team Emotions

Leader with high emotional intelligence can be a very good guide to constructive conflict via influencing the behavior and attitudes of subordinates. High emotional intelligence is one of the important qualities of effective leadership, emotional interaction is essential for leading process [Wong & Law, 2002]. When constructive conflict occurs, team leader with a certain emotional intelligence affects team emotions via giving team members appropriate guidance in aspects of emotions, emotional intelligence and other individual emotional state.

Constructive conflict can create a good competitive environment to enable the development of enterprises and individuals to produce competitive awareness and progressive motivation and then improve the vitality of the entire organization. pointed out that Leaders with high emotional intelligence can effectively provide employees with the necessary social support which can meet the emotional needs of employees to make employees feel respected and cared [Hooijberg al., 1998]. It can further promote understanding and cooperation between each members to form a good team emotions. Therefore, constructive conflict with the form of positive conflict affects team emotions, high leader emotional intelligence will play an important role.

Based on the above lines of reasoning, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Leader emotion intelligence regulation ability moderates the relationship between constructive conflicts and team emotions such that the relationship is positive and stronger when leaders have high level of emotion intelligence

Basic Model and Methods

In short, the basic model of this study is that leader emotional intelligence, constructive conflict and team emotions are all collectivism variables (see Figure 1).

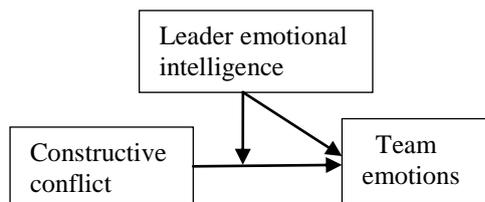


Figure 1. Theoretical model

To test our hypothesis, we used survey methods and recruited 400 career professionals from 40 different organization teams including manufacturing companies, banks, and other research teams, etc. To avoid homologous error as possible as I can, the variables were divided into two different parts. Leader emotional intelligence were reported by leaders, while constructive conflict and team emotions were reported by subordinates. All participants returned their questionnaire in 364 of the 400 (92.05%). In those 40 teams, the mean size of the team is one leader and 8.1 subordinates. The team size: the smallest team has 3 team members, the largest team have 15 team members. The age structure: the average age of the team members is 32.77 years old accounting for 82.3% of total subordinates, team leaders with 29-37 years of age account for 77.5% of total leaders. The gender structure: male 58.13% and female 41.87%. The education structure: following undergraduate education 5%, undergraduate education 47.5%, master's degree 40%, master's degree higher 7.5%. The tenure structure: formation of the team 12.5%, shock of the team 32.5%, specification of the team 25%, stable of team 30%.

All constructs included in this study are operationalized with published scales that have demonstrated good psychometric properties in earlier studies. The items are Likert-type 7 point scales with 1 indicating total disagreement and 7 indicating complete agreement with the statements. The measures were aggregated by team.

Leader emotional intelligence: It is the team members who use the 16 questions [Wong & Law, 2002]. Some examples of an item representing leadership emotional intelligence are, "I can rationally control my emotions and deal with difficulties", "I always do my best to encourage myself." The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient (α) for this measure is 0.93 for leader emotional intelligence.

(2) Constructive conflict: It is the employees who use a scale from Tjosvold's development scale in 2002. An examples of an item representing constructive conflict is, "Team members have tried to stand in each other's position to think questions and tried to adopt the views of others." The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient (α) for this measure is 0.81 for constructive conflict.

(3) Team emotions: It is the team members who use a scale from [Renjun Qu, 2007]. The scale consists of 4 dimensions: pleasure of team, a sense of team belonging, a sense of team confidence and a sense of team fairness. Respondents are asked to make choices according to their actual work experience in work team. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient (α) for this measure is 0.88 for team emotions.

Due to the researches were done in the team level, it is very necessary to aggregate some variables, which are reported by individuals (i.e. constructive conflict, team emotions). However, it is essential to examine whether the data is empirically justifiable for aggregation. Three common but important indexes: mean Rwg, ICC(1) and ICC(2) are chosen in the study. According to Lance et al (2006), the most acceptably adequate cutoff value of Rwg is considered as 0.70. The results show Rwg is high ratio 0.7, so the data of team emotion with individuals level can be aggregated into team levels.

(4) Control variables: In the study, in order to avoid the effects of other variables on the team emotions, some common variables are chosen: member gender, team size, team tenure, mean education level, education diversity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 summarizes the main research variables of average, standard deviation, coefficient of correlation and coefficient of internal consistency. Hierarchical Regression modeling (Hierarchical Regression Modeling, HRM) is the main method to do hypothesis test, the results are shown in table 2. First of all, regression was first conducted with the control variables (time size, gender diversity, education diversity, mean education level and team tenure). The second regression was done with the independent variable (constructive conflict and leader emotional intelligence) to test for main effects (see Table 2). Thirdly, We answered the call to better understand the antecedents of team emotion by examining how leader emotional intelligence and constructive conflict jointly influence a team's emotions. Results show that when we enter the control variable, constructive conflict has a positive influence team emotions ($\gamma = 0.49, p < 0.01$), providing full support for H1. Leader emotional intelligence has a positive influence on team emotions ($\gamma = 0.39, p < 0.01$), providing full support for H2. The interactive effect of constructive conflict and leader emotional intelligence on team emotions is remarkable ($\gamma = 0.50, p < 0.05$), providing full support for H3. The influence of the interaction pattern about constructive conflict and leader emotional intelligence is shown in table 2. From the table 2, in the high emotional intelligence of leaders, the constructive conflict has more significant effect on team emotions, but in the low

leader emotional intelligence, the effects is not significant .

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	M	SD	1	2	3
Constructive Conflict	40	6.17	0.21	(0.81)		
Leader Emotional Intelligence	40	5.79	0.64	0.38*	(0.93)	
Team Emotions	40	4.15	0.20	0.66**	0.53**	(0.88)

Note: the brackets for the internal consistency reliability coefficient of each variable; * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; n=40.

Table 2 Regression Analysis

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Control variables			
The gender of member	0.12	0.04	-0.00
The age of member	0.00	-0.01	-0.01
The education level of member	-0.01	0.00	-0.03
Team size	-0.02	-0.02	-0.00
Team phase	-0.08	-0.14	-0.13
Explanatory variables			
Constructive conflict		0.44**	0.47**
leader emotional intelligence		0.39**	0.67**
Interactive items			
Constructive conflict × leader emotional intelligence			0.51**
R²	0.04	0.51	0.67
F	0.16	5.64	6.54
ΔR²	0.02	0.53	0.07
ΔF	0.18	18.71	5.69

Note : * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; n=40.

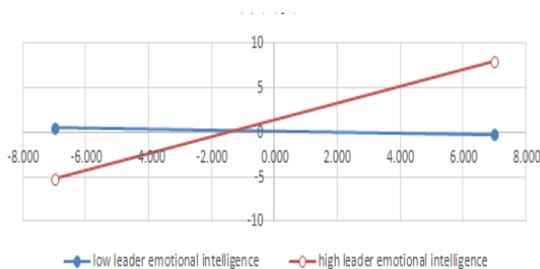


Figure 2 Interaction of constructive conflict and leader emotional intelligence on team emotions

CONCLUSION

Using theoretical arguments based on the past theories in the literatures, the study expands research on constructive conflict and team emotions considering the regulation of leader emotional intelligence. Rooted in the survey study and quantitative analysis, I got some findings in this study.

First , Constructive conflict will be positively related to the team emotions .

Second , Leader emotional intelligence will be positively related to the team emotions .

Third , Leader emotion intelligence regulation ability moderates the relationship between constructive conflict and team emotions such that the relationship is positive and stronger when leaders have high levels of emotion intelligence .

Our results suggest that team managers should consider promoting their emotional intelligence to moderate relation between constructive conflict and

team emotions . Our study has a number of limitations. The study uses cross-sectional data and hence causality of the relationships between predictor and criterion variables should not be implied from results of this study . Future research should conduct a two-wave survey study . However, all of the limitations mentioned above are thought to be not so serious in our study. The findings are viewed as creditable and beneficial to both theoretical research and practical management of team emotions and conflict management.

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