APPLICATION OF THE RAHIM ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT INVENTORY ON NURSES AND OFFICE WORKERS IN JAPAN

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People who work in organizations always find themselves confronted with a mixture of competition and collaboration. Therefore, the organizational conflict has been treated as a general social phenomenon. The organizational conflicts are classified into three basic types: (1) bargaining conflict (2) bureaucratic conflict (3) systems conflict. Bargaining conflict deals with conflict among interest groups in competition for scarce resources. Bureaucratic conflict along the vertical dimension of a hierarchy, is shown when superiors are attempting to decrease their subordinates autonomy. Systems conflict arises from different set of active goals, or different preference orderings for the same set of goals. These organizational conflicts may be both functional and dysfunctional (Pondy, 1967). The conflict, if appropriately deal with, can produce functional effect beneficial to the organizations.

When two or more persons contact one another and have an opportunity to express their opinions and attitudes, they will notice individual differences. If they then fail to make mutual concessions, disputes could arise and lead to conflicts.

For handling interpersonal conflict in organizations, Blake and Mouton (1964) classified them into five styles along two dimensions: problem solving, smoothing, forcing, withdrawal, and sharing. Their five styles were subsequently reinterpreted by Thomas (1976). On the other hand, Rahim’s theory has predicted different five styles along similar two basic dimensions (integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising). The first dimension explains the degree (high or low) to which a person attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns. The second dimension explains the degree (high or low) to which a person wants to satisfy the concerns of others.

Covered in this thesis are the following two study results. The first research was conducted to test Rahim’s theory (1983) on interpersonal conflict styles and do ascertain whether The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II could be applied to Japanese. Five styles of handling interpersonal conflict (integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising) with superiors, subordinates, and peers.

Firstly, I translated The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II into Japanese. The nurses (N = 148) and the office workers (N = 131) filled out the responses to the 28 items were analyzed, using principal factor method. The factor analysis extracted four factors after three items had been eliminated. The three factors presented avoiding, obliging, dominating styles, respectively. But integrating and compromising were found out as one factor. I named this factor as the problem solving style. Internal consistency reliability estimates were satisfactory. Coefficient alphas were .90 (problem solving), .87 (avoiding), .80 (obliging), and .79 (dominating), respectively. The discriminant analysis resulted in two significant canonical discriminant functions that were discriminable among the three parties (superiors, subordinates, and peers) in each of four conflict styles.

In the second research, a comparison between nurses and office workers as to above four styles. Two-way mixed ANOVA were carried out on the four styles. In these mixed ANOVA designs, the two occupation types (nurses and office workers) formed a between-subjects variable, and the organizational parties (superiors, subordinates and peers) were treated as a within-subject variable. The results showed significant interaction effects between occupations and organizational parties on the conflict styles of problem solving, avoiding, and obliging. In the problem-solving style against superordinates and peers the mean values of the nurses were higher than that of the workers. In the avoiding style, the respective mean values against superiors, peers and subordinates came out in the descending order as to both of the nurses and office workers. In the obliging style, the nurses revealed a higher mean value against all parties than the office workers did. In the dominating style, the main effect of the organizational parties was significant, since a higher mean value was detected against subordinates than against superiors.

The first research has revealed that compromise, when combined with integration, works for the purpose of solving problems. Probably this may be because, generally when a problem is to be solved in Japan, people first tend to seek a compromise, and will get to integration only as the result. Compromise is a process necessary for realizing integration.
The second research has clarified the following tendencies: The nurses made ample use of the problem-solving style toward their peers and subordinates, which shows that they are more inclined to seek integration while making compromises than the office workers are.

The nurses more often relied on the obliging style toward their superiors, peers and subordinates respectively than the office workers did, which probably can be considered as an evidence that those in nursing profession attach importance to the duty positions and ranks more than those with clerical jobs do.

In conclusion the present study made it evident that the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory is applicable to those who work in Japanese organizations although it did not provide sufficient grounds to support the five-factor model.