

The Role of Ethics on Conflict Handling Styles: A Scenario Based Study*

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Abstract: All organizations face interpersonal conflicts due to a variety of reasons. Ethical problems are one of the most important reasons of such conflicts. It is observed that the management of conflicts which are caused by ethical dilemmas is generally neglected in the literature. Hence, this study aims to analyze people's responses to conflict situations involving ethical dilemmas in an academic setting. 373 academicians form the sample to collect responses to a scenario which reflects a dilemma in publication ethics. Rahim's Organizational Conflict Inventory – II (ROCI-II) and Multidimensional Ethics Scale (MES) are used to measure interpersonal conflict handling styles and ethical orientations. A statistically meaningful relationship is observed between the ethical approaches and interpersonal conflict handling styles.

Key Words: Ethics, Ethical Approaches, Interpersonal Conflict Handling Styles, Scenario Method.

Interpersonal conflict is a natural consequence of human interaction in any organizational setting. It is inevitable to face conflict owing to the characteristics of organizational life such as working together, being interdependent and having divergent ideas and interests (Bell & Song, 2005; Lewicki, Saunders, Barry, & Minton, 2003). Furthermore, as managers give their attention and spend noteworthy amount of their time (Baron, 1989; Thomas & Schmidt, 1976), conflict should also be recognized as one of the basic processes that must be managed within organizations (Thomas, 1992).

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Particularly, human resource managers are expected to be aware of this situation in order to provide a cohesive work environment. This quotidian nature of conflict makes it one of the major complex issues in the organizational behavior field. Thus, the conflict issue and handling conflict need further studies and a deeper understanding of related processes.

Conflict handling styles have been analyzed by considering different organizational phenomena such as emotions (Bell & Song, 2005; Desivilya & Yagil, 2005; Shih & Susanto, 2010); cultural traits (Kozan & Ergin, 1999; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991), personality (Antonioni, 1998; Barbuto, Phipps, & Xu, 2010) or even religions (Croucher, 2011). Recently there has been an increasing interest for deeper examination of the impact of culture on conflict handling styles (Boonsathorn, 2007; Komarraju, Dollinger, & Lovell, 2008; Ma, Erkuş, & Tabak, 2010; Onishi & Bliss, 2006).

Apart from the previous studies, this study has a descriptive intent in understanding the role of ethics on the conflict handling styles. Even though ethical orientation is one of the major motives for decision-making and action, it was not associated with the conflict handling styles in the conflict literature, so we aim to examine this effect. Hence, the research question of the study is related to determine the interpersonal conflict handling styles that are used when people encounter with an ethical dilemma in an organizational context. Whilst the study aims to provide an explanatory framework for the research question, it has two main contributions; (1) ethical approaches are taken into consideration in the context of interpersonal conflict handling, and (2) a scenario based approach is employed which is not widespread in the conflict management literature.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

In general terms, conflict is defined as “a process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party” (Wall & Callister, 1995, p. 517). Conflict is an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (i.e. individual, group, organization, etc.) (Rahim, 1992, p. 16). Accordingly, conflict occurs when a (two) social entity(ies) (1) is required to engage in an activity that is incongruent with his or her needs or interests; (2) hold behavioral preferences, the satisfaction of which is incompatible with another person’s implementation of his or her preferences; (3) wants some mutually desirable resource that is in such a

short supply, that the needs of everyone may not be satisfied fully;(4) possesses attitudes, values, skills, and goals that are salient in directing one's behavior but are perceived to be exclusive of the attitudes, values, skills, and goals held by the other(s); (5) has partially exclusive behavioral preferences regarding joint actions; (6) is interdependent in the performance of functions or activities.

These reasons and sources of conflict demonstrate how a conflict may emerge easily in the organizational setting. On the other hand, conflict may be also related to individuals' ethical position. An ethical approach is a perspective to ethical motivation or ethicality on which an individual bases his/her ethical decisions (Carlson & Kacmar, 1997). Hence, ethical approach of the individual is one of the drivers of intentions and behaviors that it determines the tendency of individuals to specific actions. As long as there are differences in terms of ethical approaches, there will be different decisions, intentions or actions regarding the same issue. As ethical approaches are part of the value system of the individuals, they may cause engaging activities that are incongruent with the other person's value system, needs and different behavioral preferences. Furthermore, differences in approaches may also cause conflict, because the satisfaction of one may cause the dissatisfaction of the other. The differences in ethical values may produce diverse goals for individuals. In particular, individuals having different ethical approaches may make distinctive judgments on ethical dilemmas in conflict situations that may lead different behaviors (Van de Poel & Royackers, 2007). Hence, interpersonal conflicts are likely to grow because of ethical approaches that might drive the intentions of individual behaviors (Alakavuklar, 2007).

Interpersonal conflict is defined as "a dynamic process that occurs between interdependent parties as they experience negative emotional reactions to perceived disagreements and interference with the attainment of their goals" (Barki & Hartwick, 2004, p. 234). Regarding this definition it can easily be assumed that ethical issues are among the major sources of interpersonal conflict. Barki and Hartwick presented a conflict typology which can facilitate an understanding how and when ethical issues can cause interpersonal conflict (Table 1).

Table 1.

A Typology for Conceptualizing and Assessing Interpersonal Conflict in Organizations

Interpersonal Conflict's Properties	Interpersonal Conflict's Focus	
	Task Content or Task Process	Interpersonal Relationship
Cognition / Disagreement	Disagreement with the other about what should be done in a task or how a task should be done	Disagreement with the other's personal values, views, preferences, etc.
Behavior / Interference	Preventing the other from doing what they think should be done in a task or how a task should be done	Preventing the other from doing things unrelated to task
Affect / Negative Emotion	Anger and frustration directed to the other about what should be done in a task or how a task should be done	Anger and frustration directed to the other as a person

Source: Barki and Hartwick, 2004, p. 236.

In the typology, there are three properties of conflict related to cognitive, behavioral and affective states of individuals. These three aspects are the most common characteristics associated with the conflict definitions in the literature (Barki & Hartwick, 2004). Cognitive component is related with the mental process of the individual. It represents disagreement, exists when parties think a divergence of values, needs, interests, opinions, goals, or objectives. Behavioral component is about the action in the conflict process. The interference implies the existence of conflict because it reflects opposition of another party's attainment of its own interests, objectives or goals. Finally, affective component is based on negative emotions such as fear, jealousy, anger, anxiety, and frustration which have been used to characterize interpersonal conflict (Barki & Hartwick, p. 221). In order to understand and analyze interpersonal conflict (that is based on either task or relationship) disagreement, interference and negative emotion are supposed to be observed.

In terms of morality, it can be stated that ethical approaches also have role in the process of interpersonal conflict. Either be it task conflict or relationship conflict, individuals make decisions depending upon their ethical approaches in addition to contingent factors (i.e. conjuncture, economical), importance of the ethical concept related to the decision alternatives, quali-

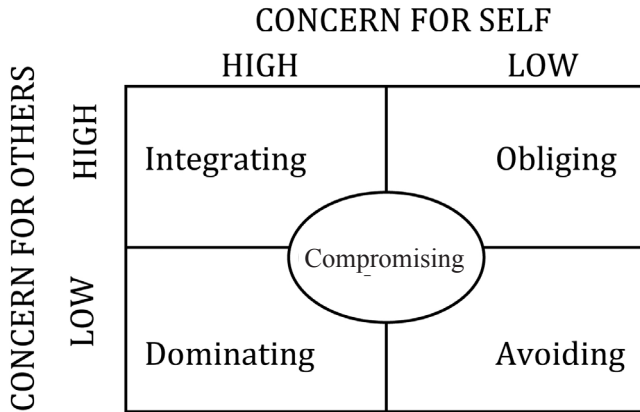
tative factors (i.e. closeness to decision-maker), moral development level, individual factors (i.e. personality) (Çakar & Arbak, 2008). On the basis of dissimilar approaches one may prefer to achieve a task whilst the other may reject to get into action for that task. Furthermore, as one tries to insist as a part of interference, the other would continue rejecting to do the action depending upon his/her ethical values. That would cause negative feelings so that anger and frustration would be directed to the other about what should be done in a task or how a task should be done. In the relationship conflict, differences in ethical approaches might cause stronger conflicts since ethical approaches are directly related with personal values and relationship conflict is precisely about personal values, views and preferences. Again, the partners might come to the end with anger and frustration due to differences in ethical approaches. People might be affected more due to relationship conflict as the values are the core structures of the personality and sources of the action. Briefly, ethical approaches might first cause disagreements, second be source of seeking opportunities to interfere and finally become motives of negative emotions due to incompatible nature of the conflict (Alakavuklar, 2007).

Interpersonal Conflict Handling Styles

There have been many studies on handling interpersonal conflict styles since the development of Managerial Grid by Blake and Mouton (1964). Among them Rahim and Bonoma (1979) and Rahim (1983) use the similar dual concern model of Thomas (1976; 1992) in order to identify interpersonal conflict handling styles with respect to individuals' concerns for self and others (Figure 1). This model is frequently used in the field in order to understand the dynamics of interpersonal conflict handling styles. The first dimension explains the degree to which a person attempts to satisfy his/her own concern. The other dimension explains the degree to which a person wants to satisfy the concern of others (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979).

Figure 1.

The Dual Concern Model of the Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict



Source: Rahim, 1983, p. 369.

These dimensions are also supported by the studies of Ruble and Thomas (1976) and Van de Vliert and Kabanoff (1990). On the basis of these two dimensions, five different styles are observed. Integrating is known as “problem solving” and involves collaboration between the parties. Openness, exchange of information, examination of differences to reach a solution applicable for both parties are important aspects related to integrating style. Obliging style is known as “accommodating” and associated with attempts to play down the differences and emphasizing commonalities to satisfy the concern of the other party. Obliging may take the form of selfless generosity, charity, or obedience to another party’s order. Dominating style is also considered as “competing”. It has win-lose orientation and may mean forcing behavior to win one’s position. This style ignores the needs and expectations of the other party. Avoiding is also known as “suppression”. This style is associated with withdrawal, buck-passing, sidestepping and may take the form of postponing until a better time or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation. Compromising is in the middle of both concern for other and concern for self. It involves give-and-take or sharing whereby both parties give up something to make a mutual acceptable decision. Splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking

a quick middle-ground position may be considered as examples of compromising (Rahim, 1992, p. 42-45).

Furthermore, Rahim (2002) argues that this model is flexible in terms of situations or factors to be considered in selecting and making use of a conflict style. Therefore, styles have a situational view and even though it is stated that there is “a most appropriate” style, one style may be more appropriate than another depending upon the situation (Rahim, 1992; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979; Thomas, 1977). Integrating style and to some degree compromising styles may be important for strategic issues, whereas the other styles are used to deal with tactical or day-to-day problems (Rahim, 2002). People who face interpersonal conflicts on the basis of task or relationship due to ethical approaches may prefer one of these styles according to the specific cases they experience.

Personal values, organizational variables, issue-specific variables and cultural values are considered as antecedents determining the chosen conflict handling style/styles. Especially personal values have importance regarding the selection of appropriate conflict handling style. If one person has a value of assertiveness, the most likely s/he will choose dominating style whereas if one person believes in harmony as a value s/he will prefer compromising style. Since an ethical approach interacts with value system of an individual related to their ethical judgment, this study puts forward that, ethical approaches also have effect on conflict handling styles.

Ethical Approaches

Individuals make decisions for different situations in business life involving various ethical dilemmas. Each time either consciously or unconsciously individuals may follow some ethical approaches as a part of their personal value systems. Therefore, ethical approaches are essential parts of value systems that have impact in determining preferred conflict handling style. Accordingly, dissimilar ethical approaches create diverse set of values that causes different conflict handling styles to be followed (Alakavuklar, 2007). In this study we focus on three ethical approaches that have distinguishing characteristics compared to each other. Each approach is a source of different set of values that may direct the intentions / behaviors of the individuals experiencing conflict.

Deontological Approach

According to deontological approach, actions are based on obligations; they are intrinsically good or bad in themselves and they are assessed regardless of the consequences. A person with deontological perspective should act and live consistently and in conformity with the moral principles, which are based on universal rule principle (Hudson & Miller, 2005, p. 385). Kant summarizes this deontological universal rule as “one should act in a manner that it should be an example for others” (Kant, 1984, pp. 172-173). Such a person is expected to act in a manner that the action becomes an example to others, the actions are based on universal rules, may be applicable to any kind of situation and circumstance, and the results do not have importance. The action should be taken as a guide for the past, present and future conditions. Therefore, one’s duty is to do what is morally right and to avoid what is morally wrong.

A deontologically oriented person has his/her duty consistency, universal principles, and rules. Such an individual is expected to be much more task-oriented since the task is defined by organizations as a part of work. Organizational member focuses on obeying these definitions and may act on the basis of task requirements as a duty. Therefore, obliging may not be an option for such a person. Thus,

H1: There is a negative relationship between deontologically oriented individual and tendency to choose obliging style.

A deontologically oriented individual standing on universal principles and duty consistency with a task orientation does not compromise, because in compromising style parties need to give up something and should negotiate. Therefore,

H2: There is a negative relationship between deontologically oriented individual and tendency to choose compromising style.

In a conflict process, a deontologically oriented individual also does not avoid the situation since avoiding means low “concern for other”, low “concern for self” and standing away from the situation. A deontologically oriented individual may have high concern for self regarding universal principles (e. g. ethics in scientific rules), duty consistency with a task orientation, and s/he cannot avoid the conflict situation. Hence,

H3: There is negative relationship between deontologically oriented individual and tendency to choose avoiding style in a conflict situation.

As a deontological oriented person obeys the universal rules and acts on that basis, s/he will have higher sensitivity for rules and higher “concern for self”. Such a position might lead the individual to dominate the other side in a conflict process regarding one’s duty, universal rules and principles regardless of the consequences. Therefore,

H4: There is a positive relationship between deontologically oriented individual and tendency to choose dominating style.

Ethical Egoism Approach

In terms of ethical egoism approach, with enlightened self-interest view, actions are based on focusing on welfare of others where other actors are not likely to be unjustly harmed (White & Taft, 2004). In terms of enlightened self-interest, an individual may act in a way that others are not likely to be unjustly harmed (Rallapalli, Vitell, & Barnes, 1998). Egoism oriented individual, with enlightened self-interest view, tries to maximize the interests of the relevant actors by focusing on consequences. As long as the conflict situation suits the definition, all the styles may be followed. Thus,

H5: There is a positive relationship between egoism oriented individual and tendency to choose obliging handling style.

An egoism oriented individual with an enlightened self-interest view seeks for maximizing the interest of all actors. With such a purpose, it is also possible that such a person may have higher concerns for self and higher concerns for other. Thus,

H6: There is a positive relationship between egoism oriented individual and tendency to prefer integrating style.

Relativism Approach

According to relativism approach, there are no universal ethical rules or norms, so moral actions depend on the nature of the situations and circumstances that can be affected by personal, cultural or religious differences. Relativism defends the idea that all normative beliefs are functions of a culture or an individual, and therefore, none of the existing universal ethical rule can be applied to everyone (Beekun, Westerman, & Barghouti, 2005). For a relativist oriented individual, the situation is important and on the basis of the situation or circumstances, standards of what is right and

wrong may vary. Such a person acts on the basis of his/her perception of the event, which can be influenced by his/her background that was shaped by culture, education, family, traditions and environmental variables.

For relativism oriented individual there are no universal ethical norms or principles, so that such an individual decides just on the basis of situation regarding his/her cultural background and personal beliefs. Hence,

H7: There is a positive relationship between relativism oriented individual and tendency to choose obliging style.

A relativism oriented individual will be flexible in terms of any kind of applicable propositions in a given situation. So,

H8: There is a positive relationship between relativism oriented individual and tendency to prefer integrating style

Method

Sample

Data for the study was gathered through a web survey. The instrument was sent to selected subjects using cluster sampling with an invitation and attached password for entering data. The study population included every academic personnel working in public universities in Turkey where academic units were defined as clusters. The Higher Education Institution's (YÖK) web site was used as a sampling framework to reach the official web sites of the public universities. There were 60 public universities in the web site of YÖK at the time of the study and from the official web site of each university one academic unit was chosen randomly as a cluster. Personal invitation e-mails were sent to the faculties working for the chosen academic unit. Totally 3861 e-mails were sent. The return number of questionnaires was 426, as a response rate of 11%. In the analysis of the data, subjects who did not perceive conflict (n=47) and subjects who did not provide any answer to "perception of conflict" question (n=6) were omitted. Thus, the sample was reduced to 373 subjects. The percentage of females and males in the sample were 34.9% and 64.9%, respectively (unanswered 1 person 0.3%). The participants were from different levels of academy including graduate assistants (39.7%), instructors (4%), assistant professors (25.7%), associate professors (9.7%) and professors (15.8%) (unanswered 5.6%). The majority was from natural sciences (53.4%).

Data Collection Methods

Scenario

Scenarios or vignettes are employed frequently in ethics studies since they allow researchers to provide a concrete decision-making situation resembling real-life situations (Alexander & Becker, 1978; Weber, 1992). In a review analyzing the literature on empirical ethical decision making between the years 1996 – 2003 demonstrates that of the 95 (55%) studies out of 174 used scenarios or variations. Such scenarios help in evaluating ethical judgments and the ethicality of the situation as well as assessing behavioral intentions. Scenarios also allow researchers to manipulate the variables of interest and control the environmental factors (Carlson & Kacmar, 1997; O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005). In order to benefit from the strengths of this method, this study also employed scenario-based approach and scales are adapted to this scenario in order to gather data.

The scenario is about two assistant professors (Ayla and Murat) and their roles in the process of making a common publication. In the scenario the problem emerges since one of them, Ayla, needs additional time due to illness of her mother. However, Murat, the other assistant professor, wishes to hurry due to expectation of a promotion with the help of that publication. In addition, Murat would like to finalize the study but with himself as the only author (believing Ayla has not contributed enough to be the co-author) and acknowledging Ayla in the study. Ayla believes this is not acceptable because both of them showed valuable effort until that moment.

Following the scenario, a question is asked to determine whether the given situation is perceived as a conflict involving situation. The respondents who did not perceive a conflict in the given scenario were eliminated from the study.

Scales

Ethical orientation scale was adapted from Multidimensional Ethics Scale (MES) (Cohen, Pant, & Sharp, 1993, 1996, 1998; Reidenbach & Robin, 1988, 1990) with eight questions measuring deontology (two items), egoism (two items), relativism (two items) and social desirability (two items). MES is adapted for the given scenario and each item determined the positions for an ethical approach. Rahim's Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) (Rahim, 1983) is also adapted for the scenario consisting of seven

items for integrating, six items for avoiding, five items for dominating, six items for obliging and four items for compromising (total of 28 questions). For both of the scales five-point Likert scale is used (1-Strongly disagree, 5-Strongly agree).

ROCI-II is a comprehensive model for diagnosing and intervening organizational conflicts, and its psychometric properties are relatively strong (Weider-Hatfield, 1988, p. 362; Womack, 1988). It is also mentioned that the instrument has satisfactory test-retest and internal consistency reliabilities in addition to convergent and discriminant validities for the style subscales (Rahim, 1983). The consistency of the construct interrelationship is also mentioned (van de Vliert & Kabanoff, 1990).

ROCI-II was translated to Turkish and applied by Kozan and Ergin (1999). The translated scale was also used in other studies conducted in Turkey and demonstrated high reliability for measuring dimensions of interpersonal conflict handling styles (Eruzun, 2004; Ma et al., 2010; Özkalp, Sungur, & Özdemir, 2009). For their use in the study, the items are adapted for the specific scenario including both an ethical dilemma and a conflict situation. Demographic variables (gender, age, academic title, working experience, field of study) are also asked.

Cronbach alpha values of adapted MES scale are 0.85, 0.80 and 0.81 for deontology, egoism and for relativism, respectively. For the ROCI-II scale, as a result of reliability analysis, one question measuring avoiding was omitted from the study, because the results showed that the item did not demonstrate high inter consistency with the rest of the dimension. Reliability scores for the adapted ROCI-II were found as 0.80 for integrating; 0.64 for avoiding; 0.63 for dominating; 0.84 for obliging and 0.58 for compromising. The problem regarding the divergence of “compromising” and “integrating” dimensions is also mentioned in the literature. In some studies compromising could not be assessed as a distinct style due to inadequate working experience (Rahim, 1992) or similar to half-hearted integrating style (Pruitt, 1983). Even though the subjects in the study have working experience there seems to be such a similar problem of distinguishing integrating and compromising due to possible confusion between questions of integrating dimension and compromising dimension.

Analysis

In order to measure the relationship between orientations of individuals to ethical approaches and their tendency to choose interpersonal conflict handling styles, partial correlation analysis and stepwise regression analysis are used. With stepwise regression analysis, ethical approaches are treated as independent variables whereas each conflict handling style was treated as a separate dependent variable. In the analysis “social desirability” is taken as a control variable to observe if there is an effect of social desirability on the relationship between the variables.

Findings

Findings indicate that subjects in the sample have a relatively higher orientation to deontological approach compared with other approaches (deontology $x=3.97$). Regarding conflict handling styles, it can be said that subjects prefer integrating handling style ($x=4.15$) in order to manage conflict with a collaboration perspective rather than other approaches. The least preferred style is seen as obliging style ($x=1.93$) meaning that the subjects did not prefer to demonstrate obedience to other party or admit to satisfy other party’s concerns. The analyses demonstrated that social desirability as a control variable does not have a significant impact on dependent and independent variables.

The Relationship between Ethical Approaches and Conflict Handling Styles

The result of the correlation analysis demonstrates that there is a significant relationship between ethical orientations of subjects to the mentioned approaches and three conflict handling styles (Table 2). Accordingly, deontology has a negative relationship with avoiding ($r=-.150$; $p\leq.001$), obliging ($r=-.368$; $p\leq.001$), and compromising ($r=-.216$; $p\leq.001$) styles. Egoism has a positive relationship with avoiding ($r=.225$; $p\leq.001$), obliging ($r=.381$; $p\leq.001$), and compromising ($r=.187$; $p\leq.001$) styles. Also relativism, similar to egoism, has a positive relationship with avoiding ($r=.247$; $p\leq.001$), obliging ($r=.347$; $p\leq.001$), and compromising ($r=.111$; $p\leq.005$) styles. Results also indicated that a significant relation cannot be assessed for integrating and dominating styles.

Table 2.

Correlation between Ethical Approaches and Interpersonal Conflict Handling Styles

N=373	Deontology	Egoism	Relativism
Integrating	-.015	.063	.023
Avoiding	-.150**	.225**	.247**
Dominating	.096	-.076	-.012
Obliging	-.368**	.381**	.347**
Compromising	-.216**	.187**	.111*

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

In order to analyze the relationship between ethical approaches and conflict handling styles in details, approaches are regressed with each of the handling styles so that it is possible to observe which approach has greater effect on explaining the preference about handling style.

The Obliging Style

Results of the analysis indicate that orientations of subjects to three approaches have a significant effect on preferences in using an obliging style (table 3). The three variables regressed in total explain .191 percent of the changes for preferring the obliging style. While orientations to deontology approach ($\beta=-.166$; $t=-3.477$; $p=.0001$) has a negative effect on tendency to choose obliging style, egoism ($\beta=.115$; $t=2,316$; $p=.021$) and relativism ($\beta=.108$; $t=2,621$; $p=.009$) orientations have positive effects. Among all orientations to three approaches the deontology is the one that has the strongest effect on determining the tendency to use an obliging style.

Table 3.

The Relationship between Ethical Approaches and Obliging Style (Stepwise regression analysis)

Variables	β	T	P	AdsR ²	F	p
Social Desirability	.012	.447	.655	.191	22.890	.0001
Deontology	-.166***	-3.477	.0001			
Egoism	.115*	2.316	.021			
Relativism	.108**	2.621	.009			

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p \leq 0.0001$

H1 hypothesis stating that there is a negative relationship between deontologically oriented individual and tendency to employ obliging style is supported. Such a result was expected since a deontologically oriented person depends upon universal principles and rules with a higher “concern for

self”. However, obliging means to give up such universal principles or rules in order to satisfy other’s concerns, which is not acceptable by deontological approach.

H5 hypothesis claiming that there is a positive relationship between orientation to egoism approach and tendency to choose obliging handling style is also supported. An egoism oriented person seeks maximizing interests of relevant actors where consequences are important. In the scenario given, the consequences for Murat are very important since he may lose his job where Ayla will just have another study with two authors. Since Ayla puts Murat into an inconvenient situation due to the illness of her mother, she may feel guilty. Regarding this situation, Ayla will employ obliging style in order to satisfy other’s concern.

On the basis of results, H7 hypothesis stating that there is a positive relationship between relativism oriented individual and tendency to prefer obliging style is supported. Similar to egoism oriented person, relativism oriented person assumes such a situation given in the scenario is very probable in the academic environment in a given country and it is appropriate to prefer obliging style in order to satisfy other’s (Murat’s) concerns.

The Compromising Style

Results given at table 4 indicated that orientation to deontology approach has significant negative effect in using compromising style ($\beta=-.158$; $t=-4.256$; $p=.0001$). The two variables regressed in total explain .044 percent of the changes for employing the compromising style. The F value for the regression equation is 9.553 and it is significant at the level of .0001.

Table 4.

The Relationship between Ethical Approaches and Compromising Style (Stepwise regression analysis)

Variables	β	T	P	AdsR ²	F	<i>p</i>
Social Desirability	.004	.155	.877	.044	9.553	.0001
Deontology	-.158***	-4.256	.0001			
Egoism	.090	1.409	.160			
Relativism	.023	.398	.691			

*** $p < 0.0001$

On the basis of such an effect, H2 hypothesis, stating that there is a negative relationship between deontologically oriented individual and employ-

ing compromising style, is supported. It is reasonable that a deontologically oriented person does not negotiate on universal principles or rules, meaning that s/he does not admit propositions or agreements asking for flexibility on universal principles or rules, or giving up some of his/her basic beliefs in order to satisfy other’s concern.

The Avoiding Style

Results given at table 5 indicate that those who have a greater tendency to use arguments of the egoism approach in evaluating the current situation have greater potentials to use the avoiding style ($\beta=.162$; $t=4.907$; $p=.0001$). The computed R2 value demonstrates that the effect of egoism on explaining the change in avoiding style with .072. The F value for the regression equation is 15.349 and it is significant at the level of .0001.

Table 5.

The Relationship between Ethical Approaches and Avoiding Style (Stepwise regression analysis)

Variables	β	T	p	AdsR ²	F	p
Social Desirability	.043	1.709	.088	.072	15.349	.0001
Deontology	-.003	-.044	.965			
Egoism	.162***	4.907	.0001			
Relativism	.114	1.769	.078			

*** $p < 0.0001$

Such a relationship was not hypothesized. This finding may be reasonable since an egoism oriented person with enlightened self-interest view maximizes the interests of the relevant actors when s/he prefers avoiding style in respect to the scenario given. (Ayla prefers avoiding style since she does not get into conflict situation because of her responsibility to her mother, and at the same time she may try to ignore the situation until a better moment to evaluate the proposition).

H3 hypothesis stating that there is a negative relationship between the orientation of individual to deontology approach and tendency to choose avoiding style is not supported. Regarding the scenario given deontology approach has no role to explain avoiding style.

The Dominating Style and the Integrating Style

According to stepwise regression analysis, it is seen that there is no significant relationship between orientations of subjects to ethical approaches

and their tendency to choose dominating style. Results also indicate that none of the ethical approaches are related to preference of the integrating style for the given conflict situation.

In regard to scenario given, H4 hypothesis stating positive relationship between deontologically oriented individual and tendency to choose dominating style is not supported. Furthermore, H6 hypothesis stating a positive relationship between orientations to ethical egoism and integrating style is not supported. Additionally, H8 hypothesis mentioning that there is a positive relationship between orientations to relativism approach and integrating style is also not supported. The general outlook of the hypotheses and the results are given at table 6.

Table 6.

Supported and Not Supported Hypotheses of the Study

Hypotheses		Result
H1	There is a negative relationship between deontology oriented individual and tendency to choose obliging style	Supported
H2	There is a negative relationship between deontology oriented individual and tendency to choose compromising style	Supported
H3	There is negative relationship between deontology oriented individual and tendency to choose avoiding style in a conflict situation	Not Supported
H4	There is a positive relationship between deontology oriented individual and tendency to choose dominating style	Not Supported
H5	There is a positive relationship between egoism oriented individual and tendency to choose obliging handling style	Supported
H6	There is a positive relationship between egoism oriented individual and tendency to prefer integrating style.	Not Supported
H7	There is a positive relationship between relativism oriented individual and tendency to choose obliging style	Supported
H8	There is a positive relationship between relativism oriented individual and tendency to prefer integrating style.	Not Supported

In addition to these results, a finding that was not hypothesized is observed. Accordingly, it is seen that there is a relationship between orientation of individual to egoism approach and tendency to choose avoiding style. A comment on this will be made in the following discussion.

Discussion

Results have proven that ethical orientations of individuals affect preferred conflict handling styles supporting the basic argument of the study. Approaches have relationship with obliging, compromising and avoiding styles, but not with integrating and dominating styles considering the scenario. More specifically, in the existence of a conflict, as the orientation of an individual towards deontology approach increases, the individual's preference of using obliging style, compromising style and avoiding style decreases respectively. Compared to negative relationship of deontology approach with obliging and compromising styles, ethical egoism have positive relationship with the preference of these handling styles. Relativism intention has also positive relationship with obliging style.

With a closer focus on the relationship, with respect to the scenario given, mainly higher “concern for other” and lower “concern for self” -meaning obliging style- interact with ethical approaches. This intensity of the relationship can be demonstrated on Rahim’s (1983) two dimensional “dual concern” model (Figure 2).

The relationship between ethical approaches and handling styles is intensified in the area of obliging style where the individuals demonstrate their tendency with higher “concern for others” and lower “concern for self” in the conflict process. It is observed that higher “concern for self” does not have any kind of interaction, however higher and lower “concern for other” has significant relationship with ethical approaches. Such a situation means that the scenario given simulates the individuals to focus on “concern for others”. Thus, it is possible to state that result of the study led to a distinction and differentiation between “concern for self” and “concern for others” on the basis of the ethical approaches (either with a positive or a negative relationship).

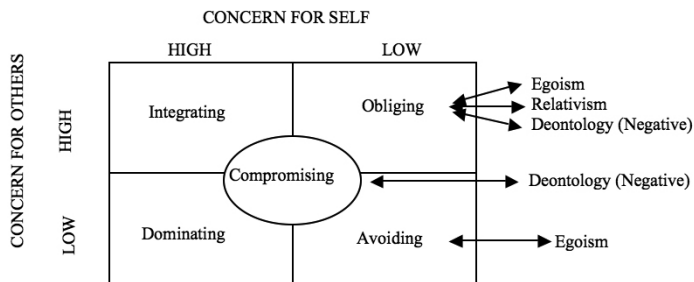


Figure 2.
The Intensity of the Relationship on Dual Concerns Model

Deontology and Interpersonal Conflict Handling Styles

Deontologically oriented individual does not oblige or compromise in a conflict situation. Even though it is expected that orientation to deontology may have effect on higher “concern for self”, especially on dominating style, it is observed that deontology orientation has negative effects on explaining obliging and compromising styles. As a deontologically oriented individual acts on the basis of “duty consistency” and universal principles with a task orientation, it is not expected that such an individual to admit other’s expectations or obey the other’s wishes as long as they do not fit to universal principles. In the obliging action it is expected to fully comply with the other’s expectation and in compromising style it is expected to give up from basic beliefs of self. For a deontological person these conditions are not acceptable.

In addition to these relationships, lack of relationship between this ethical orientation and other handling style requires attention. A deontologically oriented person may integrate as long as there are possibilities of collaborating. In the scenario regarding the conflict situation and considering the two-dimension as “concern for self” and “concern for other”, it is expected deontologically oriented person does not have higher “concern for other”, but have higher “concern for self” standing on basic principles and values (considering the research ethics). It is seen that individuals do not have higher “concern for other” and higher “concern for self” at the same time since there is no possible way to integrate with respect to the scenario given. Even though the tendency of individuals in general is towards integrating style, there is no relationship with deontology approach. Such a result means that perception of the given conflict situation does not provide tools for individuals to integrate.

Regarding the scenario, it should be also stated that a deontologically oriented individual may employ dominating style with higher “concern for self” and lower “concern for other”. Similarly, regarding the scenario mentioning Ayla and Murat are two peers (having two parties almost with equivalent power tools to dominate each other); the situation does not give acceptable support for dominating the other actor and force him/her. In order to create domination tool, Ayla is mentioned as an experienced and very successful academician in the given scenario, but the results indicate that such a domination tool is not perceived. If the actors might be given in different positions as superior-subordinate, it is assumed that there will

be enough tools and practices for employing dominating style. Besides, it was expected that since a deontologically oriented individual has higher concern for self (particularly concern for scientific rules owned), s/he does not avoid the conflict situation - having lower "concern for other" and lower "concern for self". But, even though there is a negative directed relationship between avoiding and deontology approach, it is observed that, there is no perception of such a relationship explaining the avoiding style as a preference since the scenario given is perceived on the basis of higher "concern for other".

Egoism and Interpersonal Conflict Handling Styles

An egoism oriented person with enlightened self-interest view seeks maximizing the interest of the actors involved to a conflict situation meaning higher "concern for other". Accordingly, in order to maximize the interests of the actors on the basis of consequences, individuals may employ obliging style. Particularly, regarding the scenario given, if the total benefits of the self are less than other party, where the other party has much more important gains and if there is a better maximization of interest in a conflict situation, an individual will demonstrate high concern for other and low concern for self with obliging style.

Avoiding style may have a different explanation. An individual oriented to egoism approach may prefer avoiding style in order to ignore the situation so that in time there will be better circumstances for both of the actors in order to maximize their interests. Since the scenario is limited with given information, it is unclear what might be the probable actions, but results indicate that an ethical egoist with an enlightened self-interest view may ignore or postpone the situation in order to have a possibility of finding an optimum solution for all the actors. Besides, with an egoism approach an individual also prefers a different style where there is higher maximization for relevant actors, but egoism oriented individual does not prefer compromising style since the actors do not have any alternative to negotiate. Especially, Ayla has nothing to offer with compromising style in the given scenario. Additionally, since higher "concern for other" is perceived as much more significant than higher "concern for self" in the scenario, it is noticed that integration style is not preferred. It can be stated that for integration there should be collaboration between the actors but Murat is perceived as not being in a position of collaboration since he is waiting for

a promotion in a limited time. Moreover, similar to previous explanation of deontology approach and dominating style relationship, since the actors are at the same level of hierarchy, the tools mentioned in the scenario are not perceived enough for preferring dominating style.

Relativism and Interpersonal Conflict Handling Styles

On the basis of relativism approach in general all styles are applicable, since relativism rejects universal rules and principles on moral issues. Accordingly, a style is employed without assessing its morality. With respect to the scenario given, a relativism oriented individual has tendency to choose obliging style since such propositions in a given country are acceptable, assumed as normal and does not create any problem for the actors involved into the conflict. Accordingly, a relativism oriented person may oblige any kind of proposition made by the other actor by having higher concern for other. It was also expected that there is a relationship between relativism approach and employing integrating style, but, since the scenario is perceived on the basis of “concern for other” while giving less importance to “concern for self”, integrating style is not preferred. The situation given in the scenario does not provide a possible way of collaboration with Murat. With different situations and circumstances, the other three styles may be employed by the relativism oriented individual. However, in the given scenario depending upon the situation it is not reasonable for relativism oriented person to employ (a) dominating style because of being colleagues and having insufficient tools, (b) avoiding style since there is no need to ignore the situation, and (c) compromising style since there is nothing that Ayla can offer in the negotiation. Furthermore, as long as the relativism oriented individual admits the situation, there is no need to seek for alternative styles. Another reflection of the study might be on cultural dimension. Having concern for other may be much important than having concern for self in Turkey, particularly considering Turkish culture has a collectivist dimension. With a collectivist approach, an individual may give up his/her concerns and mostly take others’ concerns into consideration because of cultural norms in Turkey in order to satisfy others’ concerns.

Conclusion

In the study, departing from the conceptualization of interpersonal conflict based on three properties (Barki & Hartwick, 2004), two-dimensional view

is given with a situationalist perspective that suggests five conflict handling styles as integrating, obliging, compromising, dominating and avoiding (Rahim, 1983). As attitudes and judgments linked to personal values have role for determining the appropriate behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), we aimed to find out how ethical approaches (as a part of value system) of an individual have impact on conflict handling behavior.

This study indicated that ethical approaches have a role in determining the preference of interpersonal conflict handling style with the given scenario. It is obvious that on the basis of different scenarios there are possible ways of demonstrating different positions of ethical approaches on determining conflict handling styles. Regarding the relationship indicated, the taken role by ethical approaches does not distinctively explain each of the handling style; however, as an important finding, their role performs discrimination and differentiation between two dimensions of interpersonal conflict handling styles as “concern for other” and “concern for self”. Since there is a lack of empirical study on this relationship, this study provides a set of evidence based on empirical research that can be used for further studies on the field.

The findings are also valuable considering the diversified nature of the workplaces. Ethical approaches as a part of value systems of the employees should be considered by the managers as organizational life is full of different ethical dilemmas. In order to understand the dynamics of conflicts caused by ethical dilemmas and the reactions of the employees to deal with such conflict situations, this study may help to the relevant stakeholders.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

In the study just three of the ethical approaches are considered, rather than involving all of the ethical theories. Hence, it is aimed to figure out whether the contradictive nature of the approaches may provide a differentiating understanding of the relationship between ethical approaches and conflict handling styles. Considering other approaches will contribute to the understanding of how ethical approaches might influence the chosen conflict handling style. Findings are limited with the ethical conflict situation described in the scenario. Ethical dilemmas with differing moral intensity levels might yield different results.

Even though it was aimed to find out any kind of relationship between ethical approaches and conflict handling styles with a scenario given, the given

situation in the scenario is mostly perceived with the perspective of “concern for other” (high – low). While forming the scenario, it is essential to provide possibilities, practices and tools related to the styles. The scenario used in this study indicates that measurement of higher “concern for self” is problematic. With different scenarios, with possible variations for styles there may be a better measurement of higher “concern for self”.

For further research, different positions among the conflict experiencing actors such as superior-subordinate are recommended in order to observe whether there is a change in the styles and variance with the relationship given in this study. Especially considering the cultural dimensions (e.g. power distance, uncertainty avoidance) in terms of specific cultures findings may vary.

Çatışma Yönetimi Biçimleri Üzerinde Ahlakın Rolü: Senaryo Temelli Bir Çalışma*

Ozan Nadir Alakavuklar**, Ulaş Çakar***

Öz: Bütün örgütler çeşitli sebeplere dayalı olarak kişilerarası çatışmalarla karşılaşmaktadır. Ahlaki problemler bu çatışma sebepleri arasında en önemlilerinden birini oluşturmaktadır. Yazında ahlaki ikilemlerden kaynaklanan çatışmaların yönetimine ilişkin araştırmaların genellikle ihmal edildiği görülmektedir. Bu çalışma, ahlaki ikilemler içeren çatışma durumuna akademik bir ortamda insanların ne şekilde yanıt verdiğini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Akademik yayın ahlakı ile ilgili çelişkiyi yansıtan bir senaryoya verilen yanıtlar çerçevesinde 373 akademisyenden oluşan bir örneklem kullanılmıştır. Kişilerarası çatışma yönetim biçimlerini ve ahlaki eğilimleri ölçmek amacıyla Rahim'in Örgütsel Çatışma Envanteri – II ve çok boyutlu etik ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Ahlaki yaklaşımlar (deontoloji, bencillik ve görecelilik) ile çatışmayı ele alış biçimlerinin üçü (kaçınma, uyma ve uzlaşma) arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir ilişkinin olduğu görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ahlak, Ahlaki Yaklaşımlar, Kişilerarası Çatışma Yönetim Biçimleri, Senaryo Yöntemi.

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