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Abstract

The paper is on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Conflict Management in the Work Place. It is an opinion paper. The introduction comprises a review of the meaning of artificial intelligence. This means the technology that enables computers to perform a variety of advanced functions. The paper did a conceptual review of Conflict Management, which was simply defined as a set of techniques utilized to identify and resolve or manage conflict in the work place. Tips for managing conflict were also elucidated and they include to; acknowledge the problem, gather enough necessary information, set guidelines, keep emotions out of it, which is best actualized using AI. The also discussed the several reasons of conflict in the work place. The paper concludes that AI can be effective for conflict management in the workplace in conjunction with the human element, as machines cannot replace humans. The machine is the products of human creation. The paper suggests that there should be the development of essential workplace skills, like giving and receiving feedback, and conducting regular meeting.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Conflict Management and Workplace

Introduction

Workplace environment is usually intertwined with several types of behaviour, it is imperative that staff must conduct themselves in a professional way, work in harmony, cordially to achieve organisational and institutional goals. When they act contrary, it is referred to as workplace conflict. Workplace conflict refers to disagreement or disputes that arise between individuals or group within a work-environment as they discharge their duties. This has the capacity to effectively affect productivity of employees. It is absolutely important to minimize and manage conflict in the work place without bias and one of the best ways to actualize this is through the use of artificial intelligence. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly becoming a pivotal tool in modern conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts. Omar (2023) asserts that AI is very essential in modern day peace keeping and security operation. However AI is not only useful in peacekeeping operations and conflict resolutions but essential in resolving conflict at the workplace. AI is gradually gaining acceptance into our everyday workplace activities. AI refers to technology that perform task that require human intelligence. Artificial intelligence refers to technology that enables computers to perform a variety of advanced functions.

AI is the branch of computer science that makes the computers to mimic the human behaviour, it assists humans for greater and better performance in the field of science and technology. Artificial Intelligence is sometimes called machine intelligence; this is because it is an intelligence demonstrated by machines as opposed to natural intelligence displayed by man or animals (Ziyad, 2019). Resolving conflict is vital for fostering a productive and enjoyable workplace, whether in school, company or government establishments. Artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to bring about revolutionary positive and remarkable changes in conflict resolution by introducing new method that is capable of producing and enhancing efficiency, fairness and dynamic nature in team work.

Artificial Intelligence is a term coined by John McCarthy in 1955, and as defined is the "

science and engineering of making intelligent machines” AI refers to the development of computer systems that can perform tasks that typically requires humans intelligence such as the following: learning, problem-solving, reasoning , perception and language understanding. AI in the workplace is fundamentally transforming operations through automations advanced data analysis and optimization of physical and digital environment.

Why then is the use of AI in the work environment when there are several individuals working as staff to meets the need of the organisation? When people from different background interact in social or economic settings there is bound to be conflict. Why use machine instead of humans? What is the effectiveness of AI and how can it be adopted to ensure that conflict is managed in the workplace.

The main goal of AI is to create machines that that can act like humans or even surpass humans capabilities in specific domains. AI involves various techniques which include the following: Machine learning (ML): this is the type of learning which enables machines to learn, using data to facilitate the learning. Natural Language Processing (NLP) is another way in which AI uses to function. AI uses human language to carry out its functions.

Robotic Integrating: AI integrates its activities with physical systems.

Conflict Management

Conflict management is the set of techniques required to identify and resolve conflict in the workplace. Since conflict is a normal part of any work environment, conflict management's goal is to detect and minimize the negative effects of conflict rather than eliminating it completely.

Conflict management is used to handle conflicts with fairness and efficiency. In doing so, you can avoid poor communication between colleagues, decrease workplace tension to improve productivity, and also keep the morale of employees high.

Conflict management entails identifying the root causes of the dispute which if left unresolved and addressed will degenerate to conflict. There are many reasons people disagree, this implies that conflict may arise as a result of the following:

Perceptions: This depends on personal values which may either be real or perceived. Different individuals have different perceptions of a given issue. Their perception can either have positive or negative implication, which if not properly managed can lead to conflict.

Conflicting goals: Individuals, organisations and institutions have different goals, the zeal, passion and determination to place personal, organisational and institutional goals above others can lead to conflict. This can also be regarded as a rat race, especially if these goals require scarce resources for their accomplishment.

Power dynamics: Power is the ability to accomplish to compel others to do your

biddings without compromising your core interest; it is getting people to do what they would not otherwise have done. Power is not displayed in a vacuum. This means it takes a minimum of two persons for the display of power. The one who displays power is the power holder, while the person on which power is displayed is the victim of power.

Communication Style: Absence of communication, which here means inability to convey important information, withholding information or information displayed in an improper manner, through arrogance, pride, disrespect or ill manner.

Conflict Management Approaches

Individuals deal with conflict differently. According to University of Pittsburgh professors of management Ken Thomas and Ralph Kilmann, most people take one of two approaches to conflict management, assertiveness or cooperativeness [1]. From these approaches come five modes or styles of conflict management:

1. Accommodating

An accommodating mode of conflict management tends to focus on cooperation but low in assertiveness. When you use this style, you resolve the disagreement by sacrificing your own needs and desires for those of the other party. This management style is beneficial when conflicts are trivial and you need to move on quickly. At home, this style works when your relationship with your roommate, partner, or child is more important than being right. You can also use this type of conflict management style when you use empathy and put yourself in the person's situation.

For example, a customer is demanding a refund even though they do not have a warranty. You know that you are in the right, but because you want to retain the customer and the product in question is not very expensive, you decide to give in. Although accommodation might be optimal for some conflicts, others require a more assertive style.

2. Avoiding

When avoiding, you try to dodge or bypass a conflict. This style of managing conflicts is not assertive and cooperative. Avoidance is unproductive for handling most disputes because it may leave the other party feeling negligent. Also, if left unresolved, some conflicts become much more troublesome. However, the avoiding management style works in situations where: You need time to think through a disagreement, you have more pressing problems to deal with first, the risks of confronting a problem outweigh the benefits. You can also benefit from using the avoiding style if you are not sure how to respond or have not formed a proper opinion yet. An example of this type of conflict management is when your colleagues are arguing for a more comfortable dress code, but you are too busy working on end-of-year financial submissions to get involved.

3. Collaborating

A collaborating conflict management style demands a high level of cooperation from all parties involved. This occurs when individuals in a dispute come together to find a respectful

resolution that benefits everyone. Collaborating works best if there is plenty of time and the parties involved are on the same power level, if not, it may be better to choose another style. This conflict management style gives you the opportunity to find a middle-ground solution for everyone involved. Use the compromising style when finding a solution is more important to everyone than having people win the argument. For example, you could distribute duties evenly so that you can finish a project before the deadline.

4. Competing

The competitive conflict management style is sometimes called 'forcing', this occurs when one puts his own needs and desires over those of others. This style is high in assertiveness and low in cooperation. In other words, it's the opposite of accommodating. Use the collaborating style when the relationship between those involved is more important than the conflict. One example is finding a solution between shareholders to keep the relationship strong. Some think this style may not be acceptable, it's however needed when the person is in a higher position of power than other parties and need to resolve a dispute quickly.

5. Compromising

Compromising demands moderate assertiveness and cooperation from all parties involved. With this type of resolution, everyone gets something they want or need. This style of managing conflict works well when time is limited. Because of time constraints, compromising isn't always as creative as collaborating and some parties may come away less satisfied than others.

How to choose a conflict management style

The key to successfully managing conflict is choosing the right style for each situation. For instance, it might make sense to use avoidance or accommodation to deal with minor issues, while critical disputes may call for a more assertive approach, like a competitive conflict management style. When you're wondering which method of conflict management to choose, it is pertinent to ask the following questions:

How much do you value the other person/people involved? How much value do you place on the issue involved? Have you thought through the consequences of using differing styles? Do you have the time and energy to address the situation right now?

The answers to these questions can help in deciding which style to pick in a particular situation based on what has been learnt about the various conflict management styles.

Skills Needed for Conflict Management

Possessing the right skills is key to effective conflict management. The following are the most important skills you'll likely need to resolve or manage conflict in the workplace:

Communication: Communication is key in every relationship irrespective of whether it is personal or official. It is the ability to speak in a polite manner but still be convincing in your argument.

Discussion: The ability to be open to discussing matters instead of only sharing your opinion

with those who agree with you will go a long way to mitigate conflict. it is important to clarify the issue causing the conflict, because misunderstanding only escalate the issues, hence the need for discussion.

Positivity: This involves the ability to avoid using the blame game and realize that everyone makes mistakes so as to avoid creating more conflict. it is important to note that conflict is natural and happens in every ongoing relationship.

Listening: The ability to actively listen to the other person without jumping to conclusions or making assumptions is a process which helps to clarify information to ensure understanding.

Impartiality: Impartiality means you do not favour one party above another, or have any stake in the outcome of the conflict. It is the ability to separate the conflict from the person to get to a solution. Impartiality is important in conflict management assessment because it helps to avoid biases, assumptions, judgments or stereotypes that can cloud your perception and analysis of the situation.

Patience: Remaining patient and maintaining a calm behaviour and character is important during conflict especially when other have heightened emotions, Patience assist a person in maintaining emotional stability, which will in turn give others time needed to calm down and think through the issue logically. The ability to be patient and not be provoked is necessary in conflict management and conflict resolution.

Facilitation: The ability to bring opposing groups together to find a solution, good facilitation will require you to understand some of the fundamental principles involved in resolving disputes. The approach to facilitation can either help or hinder any attempt at conflict management. The facilitation tactics include but not limited to questioning rather than talking, also listening instead of interrupting.

Mediation: Mediation is a tool for resolving conflict in the work place or dispute. It is often referred to as informal or alternative disputes resolution. This is because it's less formal than the traditional grievance, discipline procedure and employment tribunal. However it still follows a structured approach, because it involves the ability to mediate and facilitate the process of finding a solution.

Assertiveness: Responding to conflict assertively increases the likelihood of achieving your goals, even if the results are not perfect initially, it leads to the feeling of self- worth because you are straight forward. Self-confidence is acquired leading to open and honest relationships. It will equally lead to the ability to stick to your opinion, stand up for your rights or those of others.

Emotional intelligence: This allows an individual from viewing an issue from different perspectives. It will create room for empathy which will be discussed below. Emotional intelligence will give one the ability to control his or her emotions to avoid them from acting irrationally during an argument.

Empathy: This is the ability to put yourself in the other person's place to experience what the other person is feeling. By understanding and considering the other person's point of view, conflict can be managed without significant compromise from both parties.

Open communication: Is the ability to be honest during an argument for an easier resolution. Honesty and clear communication play an important role in the resolution process. To do this it is pertinent to acquaint yourself with what is happening and be open about the problem. allow individuals to express their feelings. These feelings may include anger or hurt. To resolve conflict and collaborate better, there should be transparency, honesty displayed in a reliable manner.

Avoiding criticism: The ability to present your argument without criticizing the person opposing you will go a long way to manage and resolve conflict. Don't get back at your critics by doing the same thing they did to you.

Responsibility: This is the ability to take responsibility for your actions when it is due, being accountable and responsible is important to conflict resolution, because it demonstrates integrity to everyone involved and shows that you are willing to follow through with your choices and suggestions.

Stress management: Is the ability to manage your stress properly in order not to make the situation worse. To successfully resolve a conflict, you need to learn and practice two core skills: *Quick stress relief*; which is the ability to quickly relieve stress in a moment.

Emotional awareness: This is the ability to remain comfortable enough with your emotions to react in a constructive way, even in the midst of a perceived attack.

Nonverbal communication: The ability to be respectful with your non-verbal communication by not rolling your eyes or mimicking your opposer will reduce conflict. In the midst of conflict, paying close attention to the other person's nonverbal signals may assist one in figuring out what the other person is really saying. this will allow the building of trust and reaching the root of the problem(Jones & Remland 1993).

Humour: Humour makes us feel at peace both mentally and physically, when used in the right manner and can help resolve difficult situations in life. it can help cope with stress , reduce anger, create good rapport with others and make one feel flexible, creative, and empathic. Humour can also make people in conflict to see themselves as humans capable of mistakes and not to take the issue too serious. The ability to use humor appropriately to diffuse the situation can make it easier to find a solution.

Problem solving: This means identifying the root cause of the conflict, the interest and needs of the parties involved will produce the ability to solve problems efficiently. to accomplish this, it is pertinent to gather relevant information, ask open ended questions and listen actively to the parties involved.

Perception: Often people will have divergent perceptions of what occurred based on their

assumptions, expectations, experiences and history. Being open to understanding how others have perceived the conflict and adjusting one's own perception when new information is received, is key to conflict management. So the ability to have a perspective in a conflict will lead to finding a solution.

Decision making: Any decision taken at any level have to take into cognizance the conflicting needs of the individuals, hence conflict resolution is a part of the decision making process. How well a conflict is resolved depends on the skill and leadership traits of the decision maker. The ability to make decisions about whether to pursue the conflict or not is also important in conflict management.

Consequences of not managing conflict

Conflicts inevitably arise at work or home. However, when conflicts aren't resolved, they can lead to various negative consequences. These include: Hurtful feelings, resentment and frustration, loneliness and depression, passive aggression and communication issues, increased stress and stress-related health problems, low morale, reduced productivity, staff turnover.

Contemporary Conflict Management Tips

Conflict is a part of life. Knowing a few strategies for managing conflict helps keep your home or workplace healthy. Here are a few tips to keep in mind when conflict arises:

Acknowledge the problem.

If someone comes to you with a dispute that seems trivial to you, remember it may not be trivial to them. Actively listen to help the other person feel heard, then decide what to do about the situation.

Gather the necessary information.

Information is power; no one can resolve a conflict unless all sides of the problem have been properly investigated. Take the time needed to understand all the necessary information. This will enable one choose the best conflict management style and find an optimal resolution.

Set guidelines.

Whether discussing a conflict with a spouse or intervening for two employees, setting a few guidelines is essential. Participants should agree to speak calmly, listen, and try to understand the other person's point of view. Agree up front that if the guidelines aren't followed, the discussion will end and resume at a later time.

Keep emotion out of the discussion.

An angry outburst may end a conflict, but it's only temporary. Talk things out calmly to avoid having the dispute arise again. It is always necessary to keep emotions under check and not allow it interfere in the workplace or at home. In doing this one must exercise self-control.

Be decisive.

Once you've talked through a dispute and evaluated the best approach, take action on the

solution identified. Let others understand what has been decided, which will convey to them that you care and is moving forward.

Artificial Intelligence and Conflict Management in the Workplace

It is proper to use Artificial Intelligence in the work-place because of the many models of AI and the pivotal roles it plays in conflict management. One of such models is the AI predictive modelling, which offers the potential tool to forecast conflict dynamics, and guide more effective peacekeeping interventions. By leveraging AI, policymakers and practitioners can develop proactive strategies for conflict prevention and resolution, leading to sustainable peace and stability worldwide, (Mandokhail, 2024).

AI can engage in conflict resolution in diverse ways. It can predict things, understand languages naturally, and even assist in mediation. Companies, schools and government establishments can use these technologies to handle concerns before they become significant problems, by improving how employees interact with each other thereby making the workplace more open and empathetic.

Predictive data analytics can assist the employer and management to see why disagreements occur, it enables them know when employees are stressed, why they misunderstand each other or why they are utilizing conflicting strategies. When the problems are identified and dealt with early, it will help the issues from escalating and becoming full-fledged conflict. When this is actualised, then productivity of teachers and other staff will be kept high in the workplace.

AI can use communication as a key tool to resolving conflict especially using the Natural Language Processing (NLP). This can greatly improve how teams talk and understand each other. NLP helps NIA systems analyse and understand human speech, revealing the tone, emotion and intention behind messages. This helps in nipping problems at the bud, by so doing conflict is reduced or averted. It will go a long way to foster cohesion among staff and indicate transparency.

AI also utilise Automated Mediation Tool. This tool help employers, teachers and management intervene quickly and resolve conflict quickly before they escalate. This is because there are new mediation tools which AI can use to help people with disagreements discuss and find a solution that works for both parties. This will be useful in software development especially where workers are working remotely and from different locations.

Importance of AI in conflict resolution at the workplace

AI is helpful in making the conflict resolution process fair and impartial. People can have personal biases or be drawn to their emotions, while AI systems can provide unbiased analytics and recommendations based on data and predefined algorithms. This is because AI enhance fairness and objectivity.

AI reduce human error, which may arise because of imperfection of man, bias, frivolities or nepotism and desire to favour others, this will enable management, school or government

establishment save money and make better, data-driven decisions for the entire organization, school or government establishment(Sule, 2024).

By automating routine task, AI has the potential to reduce bias and discrimination, ensuring fair and equitable treatment for all employees (Spilker, 2024). This is because AI is machine based and is devoid of human sentiments.

Employee Retention Prediction: by analysing employee behaviour, feedback and other metric, AI can predict which employee is leaving and enforce enabling proactive retention.

As humans we are bound to disagree with others from time to time Conflict management is an umbrella term for the way we identify and handle conflicts fairly and efficiently. The goal is to minimize the potential negative impacts that can arise from disagreements and increase a positive outcome. Conflict management refers to the way that you handle disagreements. On any given day, you may have to deal with a dispute between you and another individual, your family members, or fellow employees.

At home or work, disagreements can be unpleasant, and not every dispute calls for the same response. it is important to choose the right conflict management style, this will enable one to respond constructively whenever disputes arise. Conflict management is an art of resolving conflict or differences in a constructive and mutually beneficial manner

Conclusion

AI is a new tool but nonetheless very effective in conflict resolution in the work place, it has the potential to transform conflict resolution in software development. This is actualized by leveraging predictive analytics, using natural language processing and automated mediation technologies, schools, companies and government establishment can prevent conflicts, enhance communication and ensure fairness and objectivity by the use of artificial intelligence.

It is very necessary to manage conflict in the work-place; this is because of the consequence of not managing conflict, which may result in: hurtful feelings, resentment and frustration, loneliness and depression, passive aggression and communication issues, increased stress and stress-related health problems, high blood pressure, low morale, reduced productivity by staff, teachers or lecturers. Conflict management models are effective in the workplace when the skills needed for conflict management are adopted, these skills are emotional intelligence, communication, impartiality, patience, mediation, assertiveness, etcetera. The importance of AI in a workplace cannot be overemphasised, it produces excellence, time saving, productivity gains, consistency in result, etcetera. AI also has some disadvantages which include; high cost, technical complexity, talent gap, difficulty in generalization, security vulnerability, just to mention a few. Irrespective of all these, to effectively manage conflict in the work environment, artificial intelligence should be utilized in conjunction with humans but not to replace humans in the work-place.

Suggestions

Develop essential workplace skills, like giving and receiving feedback, coaching team members, building influence, conducting effective meetings, and managing conflict.

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