Managing Interpersonal Conflict through Emotional Intelligence:

Conservation of Resource Theory

Tri Oktianti Indrawiani [1], Suliyanto[2], Adi Indrayanto[3]

[1*] Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, toktianti@gmail.com, Indonesia
Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, suli_yanto@yahoo.com, Indonesia
Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, adiindrayanto@gmail.com, Indonesia
*Tri Oktianti Indrawiani

ABSTRACT

There is relatively little research on interpersonal conflict among traditional performing arts workers. Working in this industry has the potential for conflict and is a challenge to collaborate in producing a work. The resource conservation perspective carries the assumption that interpersonal conflict encourages counterproductive behaviour for individuals. This research is a preliminary study and aims to examine the effect of interpersonal conflict on counterproductive behaviour using emotional intelligence as a moderating variable. This research has theoretical implications in explaining the involvement of emotional intelligence as one of the crucial aspects in reducing counterproductive behaviour. This research also has practical implications, especially in designing strategies to retain highly talented art workers.

Keywords: Counterproductive Work Behavior; Conservation of Resource Theory; Emotional Intelligence; Interpersonal Conflict; Performing Art

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Interpersonal conflict is very prevalent in the workplace. Interpersonal conflict refers to incompatibility, inconsistency or disagreement between two or more interacting individuals (Rahim, 2011). Danielsson et al. (2015) reported that among the thousands of participants in their study over the past two years, 84% reported having experienced some type of conflict situation with coworkers, and about 50% experienced it weekly. In addition to its high prevalence, interpersonal conflict has been found to have detrimental effects on employees' work attitudes, health and well-being, life outside work and work productivity (Ye et al., 2019). In addition to the negative effects of interpersonal conflict on work outcomes and individual health, Zhou et al. (2019) showed that the effects of interpersonal conflict in the workplace can extend to employees' negative work behaviors.

One of the effects of interpersonal conflict is workplace deviance known as counterproductive behavior (CWB) (Ma and Liu, 2019; O'Connor et al., 2017). CWB is defined as behavior that deliberately violates significant organizational norms and results in a decline in the health of the organization, the health of individual organizational members or both (Robinson and Bennett, 1995). In organizational and individual domains, CWB has negative effects such as Machiavellianism, frustration, job dissatisfaction, turnover intention and reduced organizational performance and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Bennett and Robinson, 2000; Chen and Wang, 2019; Dunlop and Lee, 2004).

Banyumas is known as a region that has many and varied types of cultural wealth, some of which are of high quality and attractiveness. Cultural resources that include language, literature and regional script, arts, archaeology, welfare, traditional values and museums are still growing and developing and the culture can be relied upon for the development of national identity. On the other hand, artists play an important role in developing and advancing the arts, especially traditional arts in Banyumas. In this case, the progress or decline and even extinction of traditional arts, especially those in Banyumas Regency, lies with government policy and the creativity of artists. Artists as workers who rely on freedom of ideas and creativity are often faced with conflicts between artists. Competition between artists often causes interpersonal conflict. In addition, an unorganized work system and unclear job descriptions also trigger interpersonal conflicts between them.

Employees' emotional intelligence, as a stable personal resource that can reduce work stress, may moderate the interpersonal conflict-CWB relationship. Based on the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989), this study examines the moderating role of individual emotional intelligence - the ability of individuals to understand and manage their own and others' emotions (Petrides and Furnham, 2006) - on the relationship between interpersonal conflict and CWB. As such, this study contributes to the theoretical understanding of the boundary conditions associated with the effects of interpersonal conflict (Gu et al., 2020; Park et al., 2020).

1.2 Research Objectives

This study aims to extend previous research on the relationship between interpersonal conflict and CWB. Previous research shows that the effects of interpersonal conflict vary across individuals indicating the existence of moderators that regulate the relationship between interpersonal conflict and its outcomes (Kuriakose et al., 2019). This study analyzes the moderating effect of emotional intelligence. This research is interesting because research on the relationship between interpersonal conflict and CWB is still limited, besides that research on CWB in the context of traditional performing arts workers has never been done.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Counterproductive Work Behavior

Counter Productive Behavior (CWB) is a concept that was first raised by Mangione and Quinn (1975) who discussed the concept of counterproductivity in the context of industrial and organizational psychology. They identified a phenomenon called counter productive behavior. On

the one hand, employees decide to continue working in an organization, but on the other hand, employees do not show the expected performance (unproductive). According to Mangione and Quinn, employees who decide to continue working in an organization, but are not productive can display counterproductive behaviors such as spreading rumors (gossiping) in the workplace environment, showing poor performance, violating work procedures, stealing property or equipment belonging to the organization, damaging equipment, equipment, or products belonging to the organization accidentally but not reporting it, and consciously destroying equipment, equipment, and products belonging to the organization.

The impact of counterproductive behavior is very negative for both employees and organizations. The results of research by Spector, Fox, and Domagalski (2006) show that counterproductive behavior in the workplace is a form of aggression that impacts the well-being and mental health of individual employees who are victims. In addition, counterproductive behavior in the workplace also reduces the effectiveness of work that takes place in an organization.

2.2 Interpersonal Conflict

Intrapersonal conflict in the workplace refers to poor relationships experienced with others in the workplace. Intrapersonal conflict occurs when individuals or groups perceive differences and conflicts between themselves and other individuals regarding interests, resources, beliefs, values or practices that are important to them (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008). This conflict can occur in task-related relationships and social-interpersonal relationships. This means that poor relationships at work can occur between individuals who interact with each other for functional reasons (e.g. interactions related to work roles) and between individuals who interact with each other voluntarily (e.g. social interactions). Workplace interpersonal conflict differs from other related constructs, such as workplace bullying. This conflict is characterized by sporadic episodes of hostile incidents that do not necessarily continue over time and are not intended to harm someone (Baillien et al., 2017). Factors such as hostility, jealousy, or poor communication between those involved in delivering the service can increase the perception of interpersonal conflict in the workplace.

As a type of low-quality interaction, interpersonal conflict can disrupt organizational life and result in negative behaviors (Hershcovis et al., 2007; Spector & Jex, 1998). These findings contribute extensively in terms of the propensity for counterproductive behaviors by employees. Interpersonal conflict in the workplace has been shown to have a positive relationship with counterproductive work behaviors and in some cases, has been found to be one of the strongest predictors of counterproductive work behaviors of various other work stressors (Bayram, Gursakal, & Bilgel, 2019).

2.3 Moderation of Emotional Inteligence

Emotional intelligence refers to a set of emotional abilities to understand, manage and use emotional information (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). The role of emotional intelligence has been widely examined in previous studies using different variables such as stress and suicidal intention (Abdollahi et al., 2016), personality and creativity (Jafri, 2020) and perceived terrorism threat and workplace compliance (Shah et al., 2020). Previous research results suggest that emotional intelligence may also serve as a moderator on the relationship between interpersonal conflict and CWB, for example, emotionally intelligent people are better able to control themselves, therefore, they are more likely to avoid engaging in negative activities that may harm their organization (Ugwu et al., 2017).

According to COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), individuals feel stress when they experience loss of resources for self-actualization, reduced resource gain, or threat of resource loss. Resources refer to physical objects, individual characteristics, status and social ties (Cheng et al., 2012). According to Shaukat et al. (2017), conflict between individuals leads to a loss of resources which then manifests in the form of stress. COR theory also suggests that when individuals experience the threat of losing job resources, they seek to minimize resource loss and prevent future resource loss. They utilize existing resources to compensate for resource loss. Therefore, in line with COR theory, we argue that employees facing interpersonal conflict will experience resource loss and, consequently, they will seek to compensate for this resource loss through existing resources, i.e. through their personal characteristics (Zhao and Guo, 2019). Thus, emotional intelligence as a personal trait (Cheng et al., 2012) may be a valuable resource that has a stress-reducing effect and provides the potential to overcome negative emotional reactions resulting from interpersonal conflict.

The importance of emotional intelligence possessed by individuals in dealing with stressful situations is the focus of this study. research Sharma et al. (2016) produced findings that emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between workplace conflict and individual emotional and behavioral reactions to these conflicts. Chen et al. (2019), individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence are better able to understand, regulate, and utilize emotional information than those with lower levels. Therefore, employees will differ in their propensity to engage in CWBs in the face of stressful events such as workplace conflict (Ma and Liu, 2019).

3. Research Methodology

This research used quantitative methods. The participants in this study were 30 traditional performing arts workers who were sheltered in traditional art studios in Banyumas Regency. The final sample comprised 30 respondents, with a response rate of 100%. All the scales were taken from earlier research and presented in English as it is the official language of business organizations in Pakistan (Kundi et al., 2020). Unless stated otherwise, all items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Interpersonal conflict was measured with a five-item scale developed by Spector et al. (1988). CWB measured using 12 items taken from Aquino et al.'s (1999) workplace deviance scale, which consists of two dimensions. CWB-O was measured using seven items. Emotional intelligence measured using 12 items borrowed from Wong and Law (2002).

Figure 1 Research Model:
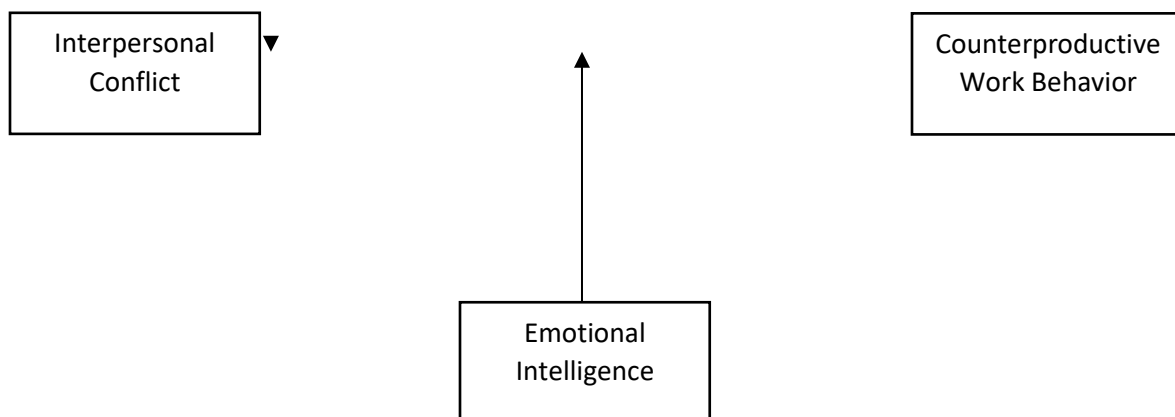
4. Results

In this study, all hypotheses were accepted. H1 suggested that interpersonal conflict positively relates to CWB. Interpersonal conflict positively predicted CWB-O (b = 0.43, p<0.01) and CWB-I (b = 0.36, p<0.01), supporting H1a and H1b. H2 suggested that the relationships of interpersonal conflict with (a) CWB-O and (b) CWB-I will be moderated by emotional intelligence, such that the positive relationship is weaker at higher levels of emotional intelligence. Our results supported the buffering effect of emotional intelligence (b = 0.51, p<0.01) on the interpersonal conflict and CWB-O relationship. Moreover, the buffering effect of emotional intelligence on the interpersonal conflict and CWB-I relationship was also significant (b = 0.39, p<0.05). Therefore, H2a and H2b were supported. The results of the simple slope analysis indicated that the relationship between interpersonal conflict and CWB-I was significant when emotional intelligence was low (b = 0.55, p<0.001) but became insignificant when it was high (b = 0.05, ns), in further support of H2a. Similarly, the relationship between interpersonal conflict and CWB-O was significant when emotional intelligence was low (b = 0.77, p<0.001) but became insignificant when it was high (b = 0.21, ns), in further support of H2b.

5. Discussion

The influence of interpersonal conflict on CWB-O and CWB-I, as well as the moderating role of emotional intelligence. Our findings indicate that interpersonal conflict positively influences employee CWB-O and CWB-I (H1a and H1b supported), most likely as a result of employees having conflicting experiences at work and reciprocating the favour by adopting CWB (Low et al., 2019).

Our findings were consistent with previous research findings. Bruk-Lee and Spector (2006) investigated the impact of conflict with supervisors and coworkers on CWB-O and CWB-I in 133 dyads of full-time working participants at a university in the United States. They discovered that conflict with coworkers was a significant predictor of In his study of 30 art performers from six organizations in Pakistan, CWB-I. Haq (2011) investigated the impact of interpersonal conflict on job outcomes. He discovered that interpersonal conflict has a positive impact on interpersonal and organizational workplace deviance (similar to CWB). In their study of 116 employee-coworker dyads, Kessler et al. (2013) discovered that interpersonal conflict resulted in negative emotions, which resulted in CWB. Our findings may also be consistent with the findings of Chen et al. (2005), who discovered positive outcomes from productive conflict when moderated by appropriate conflict management. The positive moderating influence of high emotional intelligence (such as appropriate conflict management) on CWB provides a potential gender explanation for workplace conflict outcomes.

Furthermore, our findings showed that emotional intelligence negatively moderated the relationship between interpersonal conflict and CWB directed toward the organization and individuals (CWB-O and CWB-I) (H2a and H2b supported), most likely because employees with high emotional intelligence have less extreme emotional reactions to stressful events, such as interpersonal conflict, to help them cope (Wong and Law, 2002). Previous research found that emotional intelligence played a negative moderating role in the relationships between indirect supervisor conflict and employee deviant behaviour (Ma and Liu, 2019), perceived threat of terrorism and workplace deviance (Shah et al., 2020), job pressures and auditors' judgment (Yang et al., 2019), perceived stress and suicidal ideation (Abdollahi et al., 2016) and job insecurity and

emotional and behavioral reactions (Jordan et al., 2002), indicating the crucial role of emotional intelligence in controlling emotional reaction to stressful events which may lead to negative consequences.

References

Abdollahi, A., Carlbring, P., Khanbani, M. and Ghahfarokhi, S.A. (2016), "Emotional intelligence moderates perceived stress and suicidal ideation among depressed adolescent inpatients", Personality and Individual Differences, Vol. 102, pp. 223-228

Aquino, K., Lewis, M.U. and Bradfield,M. (1999), "Justice constructs, negative affectivity, and employee deviance: a proposed model and empirical test", Journal of Organizational Behavior, Vol. 20 No. 7, pp. 1073-1091.

Bruk-Lee, V. and Spector, P.E. (2006), "The social stressors-counterproductive work behaviors link: are conflicts with supervisors and coworkers the same?", Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, Vol. 11 No. 2, p. 145.

Chen, G., Liu, C. and Tjosvold, D. (2005), "Conflict management for effective top management teams and innovation in China", Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 42 No. 2, pp. 277-300.

Chen, H.-T. and Wang, C.-H. (2019), "Incivility, satisfaction and turnover intention of tourist hotel chefs: moderating effects of emotional intelligence", International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, Vol. 31 No. 5, pp. 2034-2053.

Chen, H.X., Xu, X. and Phillips, P. (2019), "Emotional intelligence and conflict management styles", International Journal of Organizational Analysis, Vol. 27 No. 3, pp. 458-470.

Cheng, T., Huang, G., Lee, C. and Ren, X. (2012), "Longitudinal effects of job insecurity on employee outcomes: the moderating role of emotional intelligence and the leader-member exchange", Asia Pacific Journal of Management, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp. 709-728.

Danielsson, C.B., Bodin, L., Wulff, C. and Theorell, T. (2015), "The relation between office type and workplace conflict: a gender and noise perspective", Journal of Environmental Psychology, Vol. 42, pp. 161-171.Yang, S.W., Trincardo, F., Labianca, G. and Agneessens, F. (2019), "Negative ties at work", Social Networks at Work, Routledge, New York, NY.

De Dreu, C. K. W., & Gelfand, M. J. (2008). Conflict in the workplace: Sources, functions, and dynamics across multiple levels of analysis. In C. K. W. De Dreu & M. J. Gelfand (Eds.), The psychology of conflict and conflict management in organizations (pp. 3–54). Taylor & Francis Group/Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Dunlop, P.D. and Lee, K. (2004), "Workplace deviance, organizational citizenship behavior, and business unit performance: the bad apples do spoil the whole barrel", Journal of Organizational Behavior, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 67-80.

Gu, Y., You, X. and Wang, R. (2020), "Job demands and emotional labor as antecedents of female preschool teachers' work-to-family conflict: the moderating role of job resources", International Journal of Stress Management, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 23-34.

Haq, I.U. (2011), "The impact of interpersonal conflict on job outcomes: mediating role of perception of organizational politics", Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, Vol. 25, pp. 287-310.

Hershcovis, Sandy & Turner, Nick & Barling, Julian & Arnold, Kara & Dupré, Kathryne & Inness, Michelle & LeBlanc, Manon & Sivanathan, Niro. (2007). Predicting workplace aggression: A meta-analysis. The Journal of applied psychology. 92. 228-38. 10.1037/0021-9010.92.1.228.

Hobfoll, S.E. (1989), "Conservation of resources: a new attempt at conceptualizing stress", American Psychologist, Vol. 44 No. 3, p. 513.

Jafri, M.H. (2020), "Moderating role of emotional intelligence on personality – employee creativity relationship", Management and Labour Studies, Vol. 45 No. 1, pp. 15-30.

Jordan, P.J., Ashkanasy, N.M. and Hartel, C.E. (2002), "Emotional intelligence as a moderator of emotional and behavioral reactions to job insecurity", Academy of Management Review, Vol. 27 No. 3, pp. 361-372.

Kessler, S.R., Bruursema, K., Rodopman, B. and Spector, P.E. (2013), "Leadership, interpersonal conflict, and counterproductive work behavior: an examination of the stressor-strain process", Negotiation and Conflict Management Research, Vol. 6 No. 3, pp. 180-190.

Kundi, Y.M., Hollet-Haudebert, S. and Peterson, J. (2020), "Linking protean and boundaryless career attitudes to subjective career success: a serial mediation model", Journal of Career Assessment, p. 1069072720959782.

Kuriakose, V., Sreejesh, S., Jose, H., Anusree, M.R. and Jose, S. (2019), "Process conflict and employee well-being", International Journal of Conflict Management, Vol. 30 No. 4, pp. 462-489.

Low, Y.M., Sambasivan, M. and Ho, J.A. (2019), "Impact of abusive supervision on counterproductive work behaviors of nurses", Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources, Vol. 57 No. 2, pp. 189-215.

Ma, J. and Liu, C. (2019), "The moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between supervisor conflict and employees' counterproductive work behaviors", International Journal of Conflict Management, Vol. 30 No. 2, pp. 227-245.

Mangione, T. W., & Quinn, R. P. (1975). Job satisfaction, counterproductive behavior, and drug use at work. Journal of Applied Psychology, 60(1), 114–116. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0076355

O'Connor, P.J., Stone, S., Walker, B.R. and Jackson, C.J. (2017), "Deviant behavior in constrained environments: sensation-seeking predicts workplace deviance in shallow learners", Personality and Individual Differences, Vol. 108, pp. 20-25.

Rahim, M.A. (1985), "A strategy for managing conflict in complex organizations", Human Relations, Vol. 38 No. 1, pp. 81-89.

Robinson, S.L. and Bennett, R.J. (1995), "A typology of deviant workplace behaviors: a multidimensional scaling study", Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 38 No. 2, pp. 555-572.

Salovey, P. and Mayer, J.D. (1990), "Emotional intelligence", Imagination, Cognition and Personality, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 185-211.

Shah, S.J., Shah, S.A.A., Ullah, R. and Shah, A.M. (2020), "Deviance due to fear of victimization: 'emotional intelligence' a game-changer", International Journal of Conflict Management, Vol. 31 No. 5, pp. 687-707.

Sharma, J., Dhar, R.L. and Tyagi, A. (2016), "Stress as a mediator between work–family conflict and psychological health among the nursing staff: moderating role of emotional intelligence", Applied Nursing Research, Vol. 30, pp. 268-275.

Shaukat, R., Yousaf, A. and Sanders, K. (2017), "Examining the linkages between relationship conflict performance and turnover intentions: role of job burnout as a mediator", International Journal of Conflict Management, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 4-23.

Spector, P.E., Dwyer, D.J. and Jex, S.M. (1988), "Relation of job stressors to affective, health, and performance outcomes: a comparison of multiple data sources", Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 73 No. 1, p. 11.

Ugwu, L.I., Enwereuzor, I.K., Fimber, U.S. and Ugwu, D.I. (2017), "Nurses' burnout and counterproductive work behavior in a Nigerian sample: the moderating role of emotional intelligence", International Journal of Africa Nursing Sciences, Vol. 7, pp. 106-113.

Wong, C.-S. and Law, K.S. (2002), "The effects of leader and follower emotional intelligence on performance and attitude: an exploratory study", The Leadership Quarterly, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 243-274.

Ye, Z., Liu, H. and Gu, J. (2019), "Relationships between conflicts and employee perceived job performance", International Journal of Conflict Management, Vol. 30 No. 5, pp. 706-728.

Zhao, H. and Guo, L. (2019), "Abusive supervision and hospitality employees' helping behaviors: the joint moderating effects of proactive personality and ability to manage resources", International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, Vol. 31 No. 4, pp. 1977-1994.

Zhou, Z.E., Meier, L.L. and Spector, P.E. (2019), "The spillover effects of coworker, supervisor, and outsider workplace incivility on work-to-family conflict: a weekly diary design", Journal of Organizational Behavior, Vol. 40 No. 9-10, pp. 1000-1012.