

RELATIONSHIP OF CONFLICT-STYLE, CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF FOOTBALL TEAMS IN THE IRAN PRO LEAGUE

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ABSTRACT

The conflict is an unavoidable element of human life. It may effect on success and failure of a team or group if it is not properly managed. This study aimed to investigate the relationship among the type of conflict (task and relationship), conflict management style (cooperation and competitiveness), and the effectiveness of football teams in Iran Pro League. For this purpose, all the players and coaches of 16 teams participating in the 16th Iran Pro League championship in 2017 selected as a sample. In order to obtain information, Jehn's questionnaire regarding the type of conflict, conflict management questionnaire of Tjosvold and colleagues, and team effectiveness questionnaire of Van Der Veget were used. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) method was applied to measure the validity of the questionnaire, and Composite Reliability (CR) was used to obtain its reliability. Using structural equation modeling method and partial least squares method, it was found that there is a positive and significant relationship between task conflict and relationship conflict in the Iran Pro League. Both task conflict and relationship conflict have a negative effect on the team effectiveness. Also, the collaborative conflict management style has a significant effect on the team effectiveness from the perspectives of coaches and players. This construct has a positive and significant effect on the team's effectiveness from the viewpoints of coaches and players. In addition, the competition style has a negative effect on effectiveness from the viewpoint of the coaches, but it has not a significant effect on effectiveness from the players' viewpoint statistically.

Keywords: Conflict, task conflict, relationship conflict, effectiveness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Before starting research about team and teamwork, the concept of the team should be defined precisely. A team consists of a small group of people who are in charge of some corresponding tasks. They are all committed and responsible for achieving a common goal (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Teams include humans which managed by human beings, so interpersonal and inter-team conflict is inevitable. Conflict is an organizational truth. One reason for the inevitability of the conflict is that managers and other staff always compete for scarce resources. As a result, managers should keep an optimal level of conflict. It provides a particular attribute in the organizations, teams, and its members (Stroh, North, & Neal, 2002). Conflict is a social phenomenon resulted from the structure of social relationship (Kolb, 2008). The conflict is a constant characteristic of all organizational systems made by the human being (Jaffee, 2008). Conflict is represented in the various forms inside the individual life and organizational environment. Organizations include people with various characters, needs, values, beliefs, expectations, and perceptions. They make conflict inevitable in the organization (Haghighi, 2009).

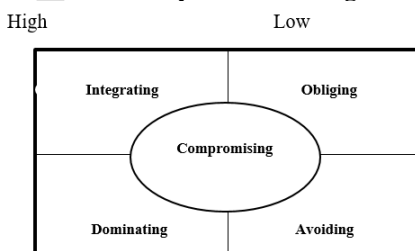
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Conflict is an inevitable issue. It's resulted from different goals, values, and beliefs but it can be directed, minimized and resolved (Erfurt, 2002). After identifying the conflict, managers should differentiate between the destructive conflict and helpful conflict. In case of being destructive, the conflict can be resolved. If the conflict is helpful, it should be used effectively to sustain the cooperation and organizational interactions (Vivar, 2006). In the case of strengthening the cooperation, it is possible to establish a more coherent relationship. As organization safety increase, the effectiveness also increases. Using conflict, the conflict management encounters conflict correctly to satisfy the needs and provide creativity and prosperity (Slocum, 2002). Acquiring conflict management knowledge and skills is necessary to practice it.

Relationship conflict, also known as emotional conflict, often refers to differences resulting from personality encounters or emotional interactions among team members (Jehn, 1997). The study showed that there is a positive relationship between team's task and performance (Tjosvold et al., 1998; Jehn, 1994). The duty conflict under certain conditions can be considered helpful for the team's effectiveness (Lovelace, 2001; Jehn et al., 1999). The various studies show that the conflict management style also effects on team success (Lovelace et al., 2001).

Five conflict management styles explore based on individual and situational factors that suggested as - (i). Integrating style: by this method, both conflicting teams and individuals may obtain their required results while they are in a win-win position. They both share information openly and listen and develop empathy. They perceive issues accurately (Rahim et al., 2000); (ii) Compromising technique: in this style, both parties in a give-and-take situation leave something after a discussion to reach a compromise (Yuan, 2010). They change their viewpoint to avoid sustained dispute (Lussier, 2010); (iii) Dominating style: it is based on power and related to direct physical hostility. When a conflicting team acquires something; it means other team losses that (Rahim, 1995); (iv) Obliging style: it is high on cooperation and low on decisiveness. Dominating the interest of conflicting teams' resolves conflict (Rahim, 1983). A team emphasizing commonalities and keeping a future relationship will be self-effacing; and (v) Avoiding style: in this style, conflicting team fails to direct issues. They represent behaviors like abandonment, indifference, avoidance, impassivity, and competition (Rahim et al., 2001). In this case, conflict is resolved.

Figure 1: The dual concern model of the styles of handling conflict



It should be noted that the type of conflict cannot be predicted by a particular management style (Khalid & Fatima, 2016). In the situation of conflict of duty, groups often choose integrated strategies in comparison to when there is a relationship conflict. In addition, avoiding strategies more likely are applied in relationship conflict than the task conflict situation (Marques et al., 2015). Some researchers have pointed out a positive relationship between the cooperation style and the degree of satisfaction with the profession in their studies (Slabbert, 2004). The study shows that collaborative conflict management style is more effective than competition based conflict management style in increasing the team effectiveness (Tjosvold et al., 2005). Since different factor influences on the effectiveness of teams, this question arises that how to improve

the team's effectiveness considering the type of inter-inter-player conflicts and the conflict management style of coaches. In this study, checking the type of conflict among the players of the football leagues of Iran and identifying the styles used by coaches when faced with a different taste, disputes and conflicts between them and their impact on the effectiveness of the team is evaluated. Then a model is presented. In this way, productivity can be increased through correct conflict management, providing reconciliation, and the organizational effectiveness in the sports environments. In this study, it is important to address key points in the field of conflict management along with the related components that less attention has been paid to it.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

2.1 Sample

The present study is non-experimental. It is a kind of a structural equation modeling. The statistical population of this research includes all the players and coaches of the teams participating in the football league championship of Iran's clubs in 2017. Due to the limited statistical population (164 players and 39 coaches), it was decided to employ the total population as an example. After distributing and receiving questionnaires that some of them were incomplete or could not be analyzed, 157 players and 34 coaches were involved in the sample.

2.2 Tools

In order to collect information about the background of the research, library studies were used. In order to measure the variables, various tools such as researcher-made information questionnaire, conflict type questionnaire, conflict management questionnaire, and team effectiveness questionnaire were used. The questionnaire of Jin's Conflict (1997) includes 8 questions. It is measured by two dimensions of conflict (task and communication. Responses were ranked based on Likert's seven-value scale. Validity and reliability of this questionnaire have been confirmed in various researches. In order to measure conflict management, a questionnaire of Tjosvold et al., (2006)'s was used. It measures both dimensions of competition and cooperation conflict management style in dealing with conflict. Responses are ranked based on Likert's seven-point scale. Tjosvold et al declared alpha coefficient of cooperation conflict management scale equal to be 0.78 and conflict management scale equal 0.79. The team's effectiveness is defined as the value of the team for its stakeholders (Argote & McGrath, 1993). The questionnaire of team effectiveness in this study consists of two parts. The first part measures the team's effectiveness from team coaches' point of view. It is a six-point scale designed by Van der Veget et al (Van der Veet, 2000).

2.3 Procedure

The coaches and supervisors of the teams were asked to complete the questionnaire. Responses are valued based on the seven Likert scale from very low (1) to very high (7). The alpha coefficient was reported to be 0.80. The second part that measures the effectiveness of the team from the team players' point of view includes a five-point scale which is derived from studies of Alper et al., (2000). The responses in this section are also valued from the very low (1) to very high (7) based on the seven Likert scale. Tjosvold, Law, and Sun have reported this alpha coefficient of 0.83. Despite the popularity of Lizerl for implementing the structural equation model, software that does not depend on the sample size such as Lizerl is now considered by researchers. One of the newest approaches to structural equation modeling is partial least squares method. As the number of

variables is high, or sample size is low for each construct, this method of variance-based structural equation model is very suitable. It provides similar results for model estimation (Rich et al., 2007). The implementation of this technique is performed by special software in which Graph PLS and SPLS are most commonly used. In order to determine the validity of the questionnaire, the Discriminant validity method of average variance extracted (AVE) was applied. Various researchers determined value up to 5/0 indicating the suitability of this indicator. For this index to reach 5/0, questions that have a factor of less than 0.4 have to be removed in each structure. In order to determine the reliability of this study, composite reliability (CR) method was applied. The coefficient for a structure shows acceptable reliability which its CR level is more than 0.6. As this level approach 1, it's reliability increase. Due to the accuracy of this method, alpha Cronbach is used less often today because of the defects in the structural equation model (Raykov et al., 1998). The relationships between variables in the structural equation model are divided into two general areas including the relationship between latent variables and explicit variables and relationships between latent variables and latent variables. The first division is called measurement model and the second one called structural model. In the measurement model, the relationships between the adjectives and markers should be regarded. Here, the adjective is a variable that cannot be measured directly and should be measured through markers or visible variables which are directly measurable. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) mainly is a hypothesis test method. It determines whether the markers planned for introducing structures variables or latent variables. It also shows that selected markers how accurately are indicative of the attribute (Bentler et al., 1999).

Considering the *t* statistics higher than 2 for all the coefficients of examined markers and attributes, the results of the confirmatory factor analysis indicate used measurement models this study are suitable. It indicates that the markers used to measure the attribute examined by this study are consistent with the factorial structure and theoretical basis rationally.

3. RESULTS

The mean and standard deviations, as well as the correlation coefficient between the variables of the research, are presented in Table 1. There is a significant positive relationship between conflict of a task and relationship conflict ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.59$). There is also a reversed significant association between task conflict and team effectiveness from the viewpoint of coaches and players ($p < 0.01$). By examining the relationship between relationship conflict and team effectiveness according to the results of the table, it can be seen that there are an inverse and significant relationship between them. The results show that collaborative management style has a positive and significant relationship with the effectiveness of team from the point of view of coaches and players ($p < 0.01$). However, there is a significant relationship between competing style and teamwork effectiveness.

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficient between research variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Task conflict	2.83	1.13	1					
Relationship conflict	3.17	1.01	-.59**	1				
Collaborative style	3.31	1.19	-0.29**	-0.33**	1			
Competition style	2.29	0.84	0.18*	0.06	-0.53**	1		
Team effectiveness from coaches' viewpoint	5.38	0.77	-0.40**	-0.18*	0.36**	-0.42**	1	
Team effectiveness from players' viewpoint	4.47	1.23	-0.62**	-0.40**	0.30**	-0.29**	0.54**	1

$p < 0.05^*$, $p < 0.01^{**}$

In Figure 1 and Table 2, the effectiveness of the team from the viewpoint of the coaches and players was predicted using two constructions including collaborative conflict management and competition conflict management. The collaborative conflict management style has a significant influence on the effectiveness of the team from the viewpoint of coaches and players. This structure has a positive and significant effect on the team's effectiveness from the viewpoint of coaches and players at the level of 0.01. It did not show a statistically significant effect on the effectiveness of the player's point of view.

Findings of this model show that conflict management collaboratively has a significant effect on the effectiveness of the team. However, the effectiveness of the team is decreased from the viewpoint of the coaches if conflict management is competitive, in which the negative coefficient of this path indicate it. According to the viewpoint of managers and players, respectively 23% and 10% of the dependent changes in the team effectiveness are related to independent structures of the research, i.e. the styles of cooperative and competitive conflict management styles. As a result, the effect of conflict management style on the team's effectiveness from coaches' viewpoint is more than it from players' viewpoint. Also, both groups believe that conflict management should operate in a collaborative approach to have a significant and positive influence.

Figure 1: The structural model and measurement the dependent structures of team effectiveness and independent structure of conflict management style

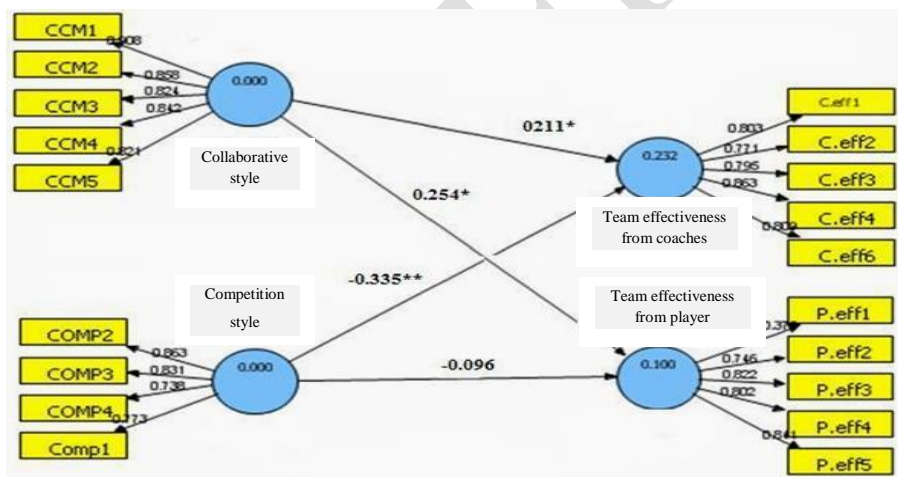
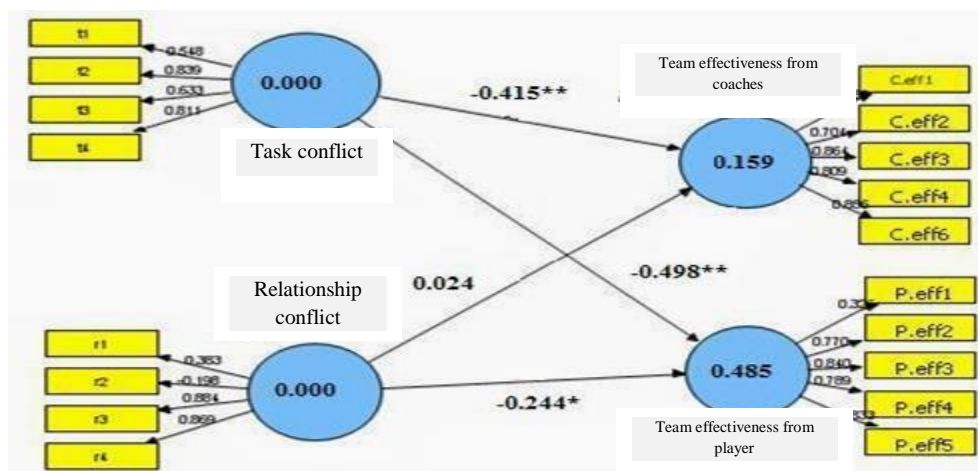


Table 2: The standardized path coefficients of the direct effects of conflict management style variables

Path	Path coefficient	t	p-Level	R ²
Collaborative conflict management style – team effectiveness (coaches)	0.21	-1.65	0.05	0.23
Competitive conflict management style- team effectiveness (coaches)	-0.33	-2.32	0.01	
Collaborative conflict management style – team effectiveness (players)	0.25	1.75	0.05	0.1
Competitive conflict management style- team effectiveness (players)	-0.096	-0.65	ns	

In Figure 2 and Table 3, the effectiveness of the team from the viewpoint of coaches and players is predicted using two structures including task conflict and relationship conflict.

Figure 2: Structural modeling and measurement of structures depending on team effectiveness and independent structure of conflict type



In professional football league teams, the task conflict has a significant effect on team effectiveness. This structure has a significant and negative effect at the level of 0.01 on team effectiveness from the viewpoint of coaches and players. From the viewpoint of coaches and players, the team effectiveness decreases if there is a task conflict in a team.

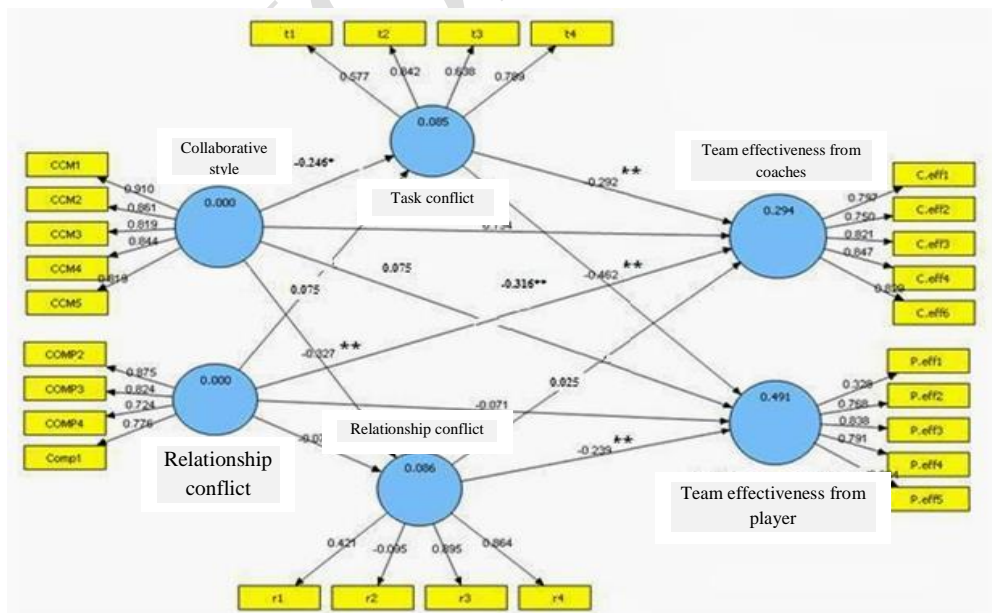
The relationship conflict has no significant effect on effectiveness statistically from the viewpoint of coaches. It has a significant effect on level 0.05 on effectiveness from the viewpoint of players. From the viewpoint of managers and players, respectively 16% and 48% of the changes in the structure of the team is related to the exogenous independent structure of research, i.e. task and relationship conflicts. 48% of the changes in the effectiveness of the team are predictable from players' viewpoint by task conflict and relationship conflict. As a result, the effect of team conflict on the team's effectiveness from the perspective of player is more than it from coaches' perspective. This finding is also theoretically significant because from players' perspective a higher percentage of the variance of team effectiveness is defined by the type of conflict within the team. This amount is about three times according to the opinion of the coaches.

Table 3: The standardized path coefficients of the direct influences of the variable of the type of team conflict

Path	Path coefficient	t	p-Level	R ²
Collaborative conflict management style – team effectiveness (coaches)	-0.415	-2.65	0.01	0.159
Competitive conflict management style- team effectiveness (coaches)	0.024	1.02	ns	
Collaborative conflict management style – team effectiveness (players)	-0.498	-3.21	0.01	0.485
Competitive conflict management style- team effectiveness (players)	-0.244	-1.69	0.05	

In Figure 3, team effectiveness from the viewpoints of coaches and player is predicted using conflict type structures and conflict management style. In a comprehensive study of the team effectiveness from coaches perspective along with independent structures including collaborative, competitive, task, and relationship conflict, both structures of competitive and tasks conflict had a negative and significant effect on team effectiveness but two other one had no significant effect. The results show that 29% of changes of the team effectiveness are definable by two structures of the competitive and task conflict from the coach perspective. This finding confirms the results of previous small models. Here, just influence of conflict management has been reduced significantly due to a simultaneous examination of the two further structures that have a positive relationship at a level of 0.05 in the first model from coaches' viewpoint. While determining the team effectiveness from the perspective of players, both structures of task conflict and relationship conflict show a negative and significant effect. Interestingly, in determining the team effectiveness from the attitude of the players, both collaborative conflict management and competitive conflict were not reported. Therefore, it is confirmed again that coaches are more accountable about conflict management style. In this area, players believe that conflict task and communication reduce effectiveness. It is predicted 49% for it that is high level. Therefore, 49% changes in team effectiveness are definable from players' point of view. The model shows that the task conflict derived from the collaborative conflict management has a significant influence at the level of 0.05. Thus, collaborative conflict management reduces task conflict, while competitive conflict management does not have capacity practically since its relationship is not significant. Also, the model shows that collaborative conflict management has a negative and significant effect on relationship conflict but the competition style does play a role in action in the reduction of relationship conflict.

Figure 3: Structural and measurement model with dependent team effectiveness management from the viewpoint of players and coaches and independent structures of conflict type and management conflict style



4. DISCUSSION

The results showed that there was a positive and significant correlation between task conflict and relationship conflict in professional football league teams. The task conflict has a negative and significant effect on the team effectiveness from the viewpoint of players and coaches at the level of 0.01. From the viewpoint of coaches and players, the team effectiveness reduces if there is task conflict in the team. These findings were inconsistent with researches of Jehn (1994), Simons and Peterson (2000), and Tjosvold (2006) that reported a positive relationship between task conflict and team performance. They are consistent with findings of Jennsen et al., (1999); Dechurch and Mark, (2000); De Dreu and West, (2001); Jehn et al., (1999); Lewis et al., (2001), De Dreu and Weingart, (2003). Therefore, it can be said that among the players in the football team of the professional football leagues, task conflict has a negative and significant effect on team effectiveness and it is necessary to manage this kind of conflict in a right way. The findings showed that the relationship conflict didn't have a significant effect on the team effectiveness from the coaches' viewpoint statistically, but it had a negative and significant impact on effectiveness from the players' viewpoint at the level of 0/05. In several studies, the negative effect of relationship conflict on team effectiveness and performance is more than task conflict. In football teams of the Iran Pro League, the effect of task conflict is more than relationship conflict. So the players and coaches of professional football league will pay more attention to the conflicts related to the practice and goals of the team. In the professional football league, the relationship conflict may turn into a task conflict that further shows its negative impact. Simons and Peterson (2000), and Amason and Schweiger (1997) declare in their studies that variations in ideas and goals cause that task conflict become a communicative conflict (Amason et al., 1997; Simon et al., 2000). Thus, its negative effect is higher. In the present study, emotional conflicts and one's perceptions of others are presented in the form of task conflict. According to Figure 1, the collaborative conflict management style had a significant effect on the team effectiveness from coaches' viewpoint. It also had a positive and significant effect on the team effectiveness from the players' viewpoint at the level of 0.05. Also, competition style had a negative effect on effectiveness from coaches' viewpoint at the level of 0.01, but it did not have a significant effect from players' viewpoint statistically. This finding is consistent with studies of Alper et al. (2006); Slabbert, (2004); Deutsh, (1973); and Tjosvold, (1998). The collaborative style leads to more efficiency and team effectiveness compared to the competition based style in conflict management.

According to the first model, the conflict management style (collaborative and competitive) regarding the positive or negative effect specified in the model from coaches' viewpoint had more impact on team effectiveness than it from players' viewpoint. The impact of discovering management style on team effectiveness is more important for coaches. But according to the second model, conflict types which both have a negative effect can be predicted with a higher ratio from player's viewpoint. As a result, the players actually are opposed to the conflict in a team. A large percentage of variations (49%) of team effectiveness is explained by these two constructions. Another important result obtained from the model is that the task conflict has a negative effect on the team effectiveness from the coaches' viewpoint. Therefore, the negative effect of task conflict on the team effectiveness can be explained about 16% from the viewpoint of the coaches, and 16% of the changes in team effectiveness are predicted by task conflict. In the present study, the conflict management style had a negative effect on task conflict and communication. This finding is consistent with Tjosvold et al. (2006). The competitive conflict management style did not show a significant relationship with communicative and task conflict. This finding is not consistent with Tjosvold's study which declared that competitive conflict management style has not a positive effect on the communication and task conflict.

5. CONCLUSION

In professional football league teams, there is a positive and significant relationship between task conflict and relationship conflict. They both have a negative effect on team effectiveness. Also, task conflict management style reduces relationship and task conflict, so it improves team effectiveness.

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