CHAPTER-4

METHODOLOGY

Scope of the Study

The study covers two aspects: (a) attitudes of employees (Managers and Supervisors) in respect of their values, approaches, and considerations towards interpersonal conflicts to ensure effective approach to conflict resolution methods and (b) organizational practices to ensure respondents coordination, skills and awareness towards conflict management strategies for sustaining an effective organizational culture.

Need for the Study and Expected Contribution

It is said that the next global frontier for India Inc is encouraging constructive conflicts at workplace. Since conflicts are important for organizations and managers today to adapt and to bring change, the study is not only relevant but also significant. In view of the ongoing debate on how conflicts can be considered and managed as an important characteristic of an organization, a study of attitudes of executives/supervisors is considered relevant. Attitudes of executives/supervisors are important for managing conflicts that represent the constructive or destructive elements for a business organization, as they play a significant role in this aspect.

The present study is expected to contribute to the theoretical base on approach to conflicts in organizations on one hand and for improvement of practices for effective management on the other. The study may stimulate and provide an insight into the approaches required by the management to the respondents and readers to think about conflicts and introspect their ways of dealing with it at workplace. The study, by highlighting what the organizations are expecting and doing, as well as what they can do, would contribute to reorienting their practices for having a constructive approach towards building the organization on trust and confidence of all the stakeholders especially the employees and management who together drive the organization, challenge the competitive business world with excellent organizational culture and strategies.
Objectives of the study

The primary objectives of the study are

- To analyze the employees level of awareness on the conflict management procedures at Amara Raja Group of Companies.
- To evaluate the level of skills of the employees to deal with the conflicts in an effective manner at Amara Raja Group of Companies.
- To examine the level of satisfaction of the employees on the existing conflict management procedures at Amara Raja Group of Companies.
- To analyze the encouragement given by the management to the employees to deal with the conflict redressals.
- To assess the influence of inter-personal relationships among the employees of the organization on the conflict management at Amara Raja Group of Companies.

The secondary objectives of the study are

- To examine the approach of the employees towards the conflict among Amara Raja Group of Companies.
- To analyze the gender impact on the conflict management procedures.
- To evaluate whether educational qualification of respondents has an effect on conflict management procedures at Amara Raja Group of Companies.
- To find out the impact of experience on the conflict management abilities of the respondents at Amara Raja Group of Companies.
- To evaluate whether the age of the employees has impact on their awareness on the systems and structures of conflict management at Amara Raja Group of Companies.
- To assess the affect of reward system of the organization on conflict management at Amara Raja Group of Companies.
- To examine whether there is any difference of opinion between technically educated employees and non-technically educated employees on the conflict management system of the organization.
To examine the availability of resources for conflict management has influence on the conflict management procedures of the organization.

Data Sources and Collection

The secondary data are drawn from research reports, journals and internet. The case studies and practices of certain organizations (chapter-I, chapter-II and chapter-3) are collected from secondary data sources. The primary data – the view points of employees – are collected with the help of a questionnaire. The questionnaire is developed based on earlier studies (Marc Robert, and John Ford, (2003) and it is modified according to the pilot study observations. Pilot study is conducted in a same organization. Questionnaires are distributed among 50 percent of the employees. About 550 Managers and Supervisors of different cadres responded to the questionnaires. On the basis of observations made during the pilot study, questions are rearranged accordingly and the final questionnaire is developed. The questionnaire comprises of five parts – Organizational policies, respondents opinion on conflicts, conflict management procedures, need to document the conflict management procedures, Skills and knowledge, awareness and satisfaction on conflict management procedures at Amara Raja Group of companies. The questionnaire consists of 37 questions mostly of closed end type with a scale of 5 – points and few of open end type with yes or no to know the degree of agreement of the respondents.

Population

For undertaking the present study on the conflict management, the select units of Amara Raja Group are considered. Each and every company’s Managers and Supervisors are taken as sample for the study. The topic of conflict management in any organization pertains to a very sensitive area. Conflict and its timely management are pervasive at all levels of the organization. It is necessary to consider the attitudes, opinions, level of their satisfaction, awareness and skills of all employees of each and every company to make the study meaningful and reliable.
### Table – IV.1 : Company-Wise Distribution of total employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Company</th>
<th>No. of Managers (M(^3) to M(^9))</th>
<th>No. of Supervisors (s(^1) and s(^2))</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARBL</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARPSL</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPPL</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARIPL</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AREL</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>611</strong></td>
<td><strong>547</strong></td>
<td><strong>1158</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The population of the study is represented in the above table no. Overall the Managers (M\(^3\), M\(^4\), M\(^5\), M\(^6\), M\(^7\), M\(^8\), M\(^9\)) and Supervisors (S\(^1\), S\(^2\)) are about 1158, Among 611 belong to Managerial cadres and 547 belong to Supervisory cadres. Managers and Supervisors of all the companies of Amara Raja are considered.

**Sample**

50 percent of the population 1158 (Managers and Supervisors) is taken as sample. That comes to 579. Among them, about 17 questionnaires are unfilled as some of the questions are not responded and are incomplete, and about 12 questionnaires could not be recollected from the respondents. Finally, 550 completely filled up questionnaires are taken up for analysis. Management of conflicts which are inevitable in any organization needs a comprehensive approach to tackle them with skills, awareness and encouragement by the management to yield positive and constructive results out of conflicts. Amara Raja Group of Companies is the biggest units working in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. The organization works along with changes and developments of global trends and challenges with regarding all its activities of the organization. With production, marketing, innovation and administration of human resources are carried on international standards. Hence, the present research is carried at Amara Raja Units. The following is the distribution of sample by companies. Among 7 units of Amara Raja, 5 units are considered for the study.
Table - IV.2 : Company-Wise distribution of sample respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Company</th>
<th>No. of Managers (M³ to M⁹)</th>
<th>No. of Supervisors (s¹ and s²)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARBL</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARPSL</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPPL</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARIPL</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AREL</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>290</strong></td>
<td><strong>260</strong></td>
<td><strong>550</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About 579 questionnaires were distributed in all the 5 companies of Amara Raja Group among which about 567 could be recollected by the researcher. The researcher personally canvassed the questionnaires and sought co-operation of Executives and Supervisors of the companies. Some of the respondents expressed inability to fill in while some others felt it was not a right topic for research as no one would be open in this aspect. Some others asked for time and promised to mail back the filled in responses but many did not keep their word. As such persuasion and reminding have become necessary.

**Figure II. 1 Research Issues**

The research focuses on the key issues of conflict management procedures of the company. The opinion of the respondents, their level of satisfaction, their level of awareness on companies procedures of conflict management, the level of encouragement, level of skills, the availability of resources for conflict management procedures form the key research issues of the present study.
Fig. No - IV.1 : Research issues on Conflict Management Procedures

Sampling Technique

A proportionate Stratified Random Sampling technique is adapted to collect the data from 50 percent of employees (Managers and Supervisors) from each and every unit of Amara Raja Group.

Statistical Techniques applied

Collected data is analyzed using appropriate statistical tools like Frequency tables (one-way tables), Cross tabulations (two-way tables), Percentages, Chi-square test, independent sample t-test, One-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance), Karl Pearson’s Co-efficient of Correlation and Multiple Linear Regression with the help of SPSS-19. Obtained results are properly concluded at various significant levels.
Tools for the investigation

The secondary data are drawn from research reports, journals and internet. The case studies and practices of certain organizations (chapter-I, chapter-II and chapter-III) are collected from secondary data sources. The primary data – the viewpoints of employees – are collected with the help of a questionnaire. The questionnaire is developed based on earlier studies (Marc Robert, and John Ford, (2003) and it is modified according to the pilot study observations. Pilot study is conducted in a same organization. Questionnaires are distributed among 50 percent of the employees.

Phase-wise development of the study

About 550 Managers and Supervisors of different cadres responded to the questionnaires. On the basis of observations made during the pilot study, questions are rearranged accordingly and the final questionnaire is developed. The questionnaire comprises of five parts – Organizational policies, respondents opinion on conflicts, conflict management procedures, need to document the conflict management procedures, Skills and knowledge, awareness and satisfaction on conflict management procedures at Amara Raja Group of companies. The questionnaire consists of 37 questions mostly of closed end type with a scale of 5 – points and few of open end type with yes or no to know the degree of agreement of the respondents.

Reliability of the schedule

Validity in relation to research is a judgment regarding the degree to which the components of the research reflect the theory, concept, or variable under study (Streiner & Norman. 1996). The use of reliability and validity are common in quantitative research and now it is reconsidered in the qualitative research paradigm. Since reliability and validity are rooted in positivist perspective then they should be redefined for their use in a naturalistic approach. Reliability and validity of the relevant research concepts, particularly from a qualitative point of view are redefined in order to reflect the multiple ways of establishing truth. The reliability of the schedule is established through a prior pilot study and the reliability is proved.
Reliability tests

Testing for reliability is about exercising an application so that failures are discovered and removed before the system is deployed. Because the different combinations of alternate pathways through an application are high, it is unlikely that one can find all potential failures in a complex application. However, one can test the most likely scenarios under normal usage conditions and validate that the application provides the expected service. A pilot study is conducted to find the reliability of the questionnaire and reliability is tested.

ANOVA test

One-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance), is used to observed significant difference among three or more independent groups with regard to variables under study.

t-tests

To observe variation between two independent groups viz., Male, Female; Technical, Non technical with respect to variables under study t-tests are done.

Karl Pearson’s Co-efficient of Correlation.

Karl Pearson's Co-efficient of correlations are calculated for the variables under study to know the degree of interrelationship among them.

Chi-square test

Chi-square test of independence of attributes is also used to know the association between two attributes (qualitative variables).

Limitations

It appears that Indian companies are not yet open to outside researchers. Unless some known person influences, entry pass for research cannot be obtained. Similarly, it seems that Indian managers are not much interested in expressing their views. The difficulties faced by the researcher are similar to other researchers in the university who are doing research in business organizations.
The limitations of social science research are also applicable to this study. The subject is one, which respondents viewed as an embarrassing one to discuss. They argued that there are no conflicts in the company as such to be discussed or revealed. Even though there exists some conflicts they are not suppose to discuss in open. The tendency is to give socially acceptable answers to avoid either social ridicule or organizational scrutiny. To overcome this, most of the questions are designed as not individual specific but general. To maintain confidentiality, as desired by respondents, names of the respondents are not collected (as advised by respondents in pilot survey). Respondents refused to write their names and requested for complete anonymity. They were assured of complete confidentiality.

Keeping these limitations in mind, the findings can be generalized to a large extent, for two reasons.

- The respondents are drawn from Amara Raja Group of Companies in different locations and of different sizes in the industrial and service sectors.

- Managerial and Supervisory cadres (Managers of M⁴, M⁶, M⁷, M⁸, M⁹ cadres and Supervisors of S¹, S² ) are considered for the study as majority included for the present study are from these cadres and are taken as per the convenience of the management. Hence, only these cadres are taken for the study.

- Most of the findings of the study corroborate with the findings of the earlier studies.

**Research Gap**

Conflict management is considered as an important aspect for having organizational sustainability with effectiveness and efficiency. There are number of studies made by many researchers and scientists in the field of conflict management systems, designing an internal organizational system for conflict management (Etty Liberman, Yael Foux Levy and Peretz Segal,2009). Conflict management, efficacy, and performance in organizational teams (Linda L Putnam, 2007). The conflict and positive organization (Dean Tjosvold,2007). The virtue and vice of workplace conflict (Carsten K W De Dreu, 2007). (George Kohlrieser,2007 ) conducted a study assessing six essential skills for managing conflict at workplace. Janice L Drechslin; Diane Kiddy discussed in their article From Conflict to Consensus : Managing competing interests in the organization. There are many studies focusing on various important pre-requisites
for an organization to manage with the conflicts at work. Some viewed from the point of organizational strategies, some from the view of organizational culture, some from organizational policies and procedures and few from the point of management style.

Evidently, there is no study focusing on the multi-dimensional approach to understand and study conflict management in an organization. The study focuses on the management policies, employees’ especially Managers and Supervisors attitude, skills, Knowledge, interpersonal relationships, awareness on conflict management procedures of the organization and rewards, resources and encouragement that management gives to the skilled people to deal with the conflicts at workplace. The present study finds relevance in view of such gap in research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
The following research questions are raised for investigation.

Attitude of Managers and Supervisors

Policies and Procedures related

1. Is there a need to document a policy on conflict management?
2. On which aspects Conflict Management measures focused on?
3. Who are the resource persons for handling conflicts at work place?
4. Which Conflict Resolution Procedures are available?

Approach to conflict related

1. How do respondents (Managers/supervisors) judge a conflict?
2. How do employees see conflict?
3. How do employees consider relationships?
4. Do they accept feedback given by their superior for the performance is unbiased?
5. Do the employees react to a conflict positively?

Satisfaction on the existing procedures related

1. Are the employees aware of desirable conflict management behaviour?
2. Are they satisfied with the conflict management values known and shared?

3. Are they provided with any training methods and techniques to manage conflicts at workplace?

4. Do they accept that they are well thought-out to be the part and parcel by the management to share the values related to the conflicts in the organization?

5. Are they satisfied with the existing procedures and their consistency?

6. Are they satisfied with the procedures available to handle the full range of disputes that occur?

7. Do the interest-based options (e.g. Mediation) are available to the satisfaction of the employees and Executives/Supervisors?

8. What is their opinion on the processes designed by the management in resolving conflicts at work?

**Skills and Knowledge related**

1. Is Conflict management a core competency in the organization?

2. Does the organization know about the procedures available?

3. Do the people know how to use the procedures for conflict management?

4. Are they skilled at listening to each other, probing for interests and exploring creative option?

5. Are they skilled at using rights based options such as mediation, investigations and arbitration?

**Resources and Inter-personal relationships related**

1. Are there people available to provide help to disputants e.g. to give advice, represent them, serve as mediators.

2. Does the organization have the resources (time, money, and people) to deal with conflict?

3. Does the organization have a senior management champion to deal with conflicts?

4. Do the people in their organization feel that they have someone to talk to in
confidence?

5. Does the organization have an evaluation program on conflict management in place?

**Rewards and consequences related**

1. Can disputants air their grievances fully in their own terms without consequences?

2. Do disputants participate in decision-making and shaping dispute resolution outcomes?

3. Do people get feedback and information they need when they need it?

4. Does the organization reward a collaborative approach?

5. Do performance reviews consider conflict management and resolution skills?

6. Are their consequences for conflict avoidance?

7. Do they provide people with feedback and information when they need it?

8. How many conflicts are resolved so far by the respondents?

**Significance of the Study**

By finding answers to the above questions, the present study is expected to contribute to the theoretical base on conflicts in organizations on one hand and for improvement of practices on the other. Organizations are increasingly becoming global, from a simple “let’s export” mindset, companies are moving to the next stage – establishing marketing, manufacturing and distribution networks abroad. Operational excellence, quality systems, proactive human resource strategies, logistics – Global companies have ultimately arrived at viewing good and positive conflict management styles in relation to improvement of the performance. They are to be managed very effectively to strengthen organizational culture and help ensure stable growth and expansion. The company's adaptability to various internal and external changes managing conflict from the very personnel level and to that of the organizational level is indispensable requirement of today's organizations.
Hypotheses

Hypotheses are proposed based on the earlier studies as described below.

McEvoy, Glenn M.; Cascio, Wayne F. (1989), on the basis of a review of 22 years of articles published in 46 behavioral science journals, it is found a total of 96 independent studies that reported age–performance correlations. Total sample size was 38,983 and represented a broad cross-section of jobs and age groups. Meta-analysis procedures revealed that age and job performance generally were unrelated. Furthermore, there was little evidence that the type of performance measure (ratings vs. productivity measures) or type of job (professional vs. nonprofessional) moderated the relation between age and performance significantly. Hence the first hypotheses are;

H-1 there is significant impact of age and experience on the conflict management procedures.

Mahmoud M. Yasin, Carlos F. Gomes, Filipe Almeida (2009), discussed desired performance-related characteristics for entry-level managers are studied from the perspective of 106 Portuguese executives. The results indicate that soft characteristics and skills, such us leadership, entrepreneurship and organisational learning skills, appear to be more important than technical skills. While these skills and characteristics are valued by today's business organizations, the educational system does not appear to be preparing its graduates accordingly. The resulting educational gaps have important performance-related implications to both the business organisations and the higher education institutions. Hence the second hypotheses is established as;

H-2 There is significant difference between technically educated and non-technically educated in dealing with conflicts.

The study taken up Neil Brewer, Patricia Mitchell, Nathan Weber, (2002) examined the relationship among biological sex, gender role, organizational status, and conflict management behavior of males and females in three similar organizations. Individuals (N = 118) from upper and lower status organizational positions completed the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II, in the context of two recalled organizational conflicts (Rahim, 1983), and the Bern Sex Role Inventory (Bern, 1974). After controlling for biological sex, when compared with other gender roles masculine individuals were highest on the dominating conflict style, whereas feminine individuals were highest on the avoiding style, and androgynous individuals on the integrating
style. Further, upper organizational status individuals were higher on the integrating style, while lower status individuals reported greater use of avoiding and obliging styles. Basing on this study, the third hypotheses are developed as;

**H-3 There is significant impact of gender on the approach to conflict management.**

The study undertaken by Chris van Tonder, Werner Havenga and Jan Visagie discusses the uncertainty that accompanies organizational change heightens prospects for intra organizational conflict. Havenga (2002), indicated that causes of conflict at the level of the organization could also include resource availability; affirmative action programs; the scope and content of workload; the introduction of new management techniques; and differences of a cultural and racial nature. A typology that further categorizes sources of conflict is offered by Nelson and Quick (2001) who differentiate between structural factors (causes) i.e. those that develop from within the organization and originate from the manner in which work is organized, and secondly, personal factors, which emerge as a result of individual differences among employees. Thus, the fourth hypothesis is built as;

**H-4 There is significant impact of resources for conflict management on the skills of the employees**

The study of Etty Liberman, Yael Foux Levy and Peretz Segal (2009) found that positive environment with interpersonal relationships are one of the important conditions required for a successful incorporation of the conflict management system in the organization. Therefore the fifth hypothesis is:

**H-5 there is no significant influence of inter-personal relationships on the skills to apply for conflict management procedures.**

Conflict in organizations has been defined by Putnam and Poole as “the interaction of interdependent people who perceive opposition of goals, aims, and values, and who see the other party as potentially interfering with the realization of these goals”. Thus when conditions of interdependence, interaction and interference co-exist in the organizational context, conflicts occur. Conflict is the expression of this incompatibility. Modern organizations thrive on teamwork, collaboration and interdependence. Organizational conflicts are inevitable and studies show that about 20 percent of employee time is spent on managing conflicts. Bokkasam Sasidhar, Jaba Mukherjee Gupta, Saad Alghanim, and Rashid M. Al-Hamali (2012). Hence the sixth hypothesis is;
H-6 There is significant impact of inter-personal relationships on the awareness towards conflict management procedures.

A constructive conflict that influences the work performance is deemed to be very essential in organizations by many researches. Every organization will have a structured conflict management system defined or undefined. Well established conflict management systems are important to lead the organization towards growth and development. These factors were identified in many studies. The rights based options viz., mediation, arbitration, adjudication, etc. Linda L Putnam (2007) presented a survey the traditional conflict resolution models and non-union environment characterized by team-based work-systems. Thus, the seventh hypothesis is;

H-7 There is significant influence of encouragement given by the management on the awareness of conflict management procedures.

This study was conducted to describe level of conflict, conflict management styles, level of job satisfaction, and intent to stay, and to ascertain relationships among conflict, conflict management styles, level of job satisfaction, intent to stay, and turnover of professional nurses in Thailand. The findings showed that the overall level of conflict was at a moderate level. The majority of subjects used accommodation most frequently to manage conflict. The result showed some relationships among these variables, but no relationship between intent to stay and turnover of professional nurses. Wipada Kunaviktikul, Raymual Nuntasupawat, Wichit Srisuphan, Rachel Z. Booth. (2000). Thus, the eighth hypothesis is;

H-8 There is a significant impact of satisfaction on existing procedures on the resources available at organization to manage conflicts.

Conflict is inevitable in organizational setting. Managers should be aware of various approaches in handling the conflict to mitigate its negative effect on subordinates' performance or job satisfaction as dissatisfaction itself could lead to many organizational dysfunctions (Churchill, Ford, & Walker, 1976; Fisher & Gittelson, 1983; Van Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981; Rahim & Buntzman, 1989). It is believed that positive interpersonal relationship at workplace is able to increase subordinates' satisfaction and subordinates with higher level of satisfaction are more likely to be committed to the organization (Brown & Peterson, 1993). The study conducted by Lee Kim Lian1 and Low Guan Tui (2008) on data from 139 respondents from major industries showed that subordinates were more satisfied with their superiors'
supervision through the exercise of integrating, compromising and obliging styles. On the contrary, subordinates who perceived their superiors as primarily using dominating and avoiding styles viewed them as incompetent in supervision and thus lowering their level of satisfaction with supervision. Among the conflict handling styles, integrating was most correlated with organic structure. The organic structure was found to be positively correlated with subordinates' satisfaction. These results implied that organic structure can be a potent force in maintaining organizational stability. The exercise of dominating style was found to be only marginally correlated with superior's age. Superior rank in lower hierarchy level was found to have a negative impact, albeit marginally on the exercise of dominating style. The present results also seemed to suggest that subordinates tend to be less satisfied with superiors with wider span of control. Hence the ninth hypothesis is;

**H-9 There is significant impact of skills to apply for conflict management procedures on the level of satisfaction towards conflict management procedures.**

Pramod Verma and K Kumar (1992) in a study stated that industrial conflicts will continue to be a critical factor in the viability of Indian organizations. Managements will therefore have to evolve an integrated view of human resources and to respond constructively and humanely to conflicting situations in their respective organizations. Attempts can be made to minimize industrial conflicts by resorting not only to negotiated settlements but also to the democratization of industrial relations. Hence the tenth hypothesis is constructed as;

**H-10 There is influence of encouragement given by the management on the skills to apply for conflict management procedures**