

Ethical Values and Organizational Culture Structure as Constructive Internal Conflict Resolution Instruments

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze how ethics and organizational culture are used in resolving internal conflicts and their impact on overall organizational management. The research is conducted through a literature study approach by referring to various theoretical and empirical sources from reliable publications. The results show that organizational ethics, in the form of moral values such as justice, honesty, and responsibility, are able to shape constructive individual behavior in dealing with differences. Meanwhile, organizational culture becomes a normative medium that unites individuals in symbolic structures and collective habits that uphold social harmony. When both are implemented consistently, the conflict resolution process in the organization can take place more healthily and oriented towards the transformation of relations. The impact is seen in increased trust between individuals, clarity of internal procedures, and strengthening of a justice and transparent organizational climate. In other words, ethics and culture not only function as elements of identity, but also as strategic managerial tools in creating organizational stability and sustainability. This research confirms the importance of organizational investment in building ethical awareness and strengthening culture as an integral part of healthy and competitive governance.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations are vibrant social spaces where individuals work, interact and contribute in an interdependent system. In this space, tensions often arise as a result of differences in values, viewpoints, or expectations. Conflict is an unavoidable part of modern organizational dynamics. What determines the quality of an organization is not simply the presence or absence of conflict, but how the conflict is managed. One of the developing approaches in the management discipline is the use of ethics and organizational culture as a foundation for constructive conflict resolution (Oppong-Adjei et al., 2013).

Ethics in organizations is not just a set of moral rules, but a value system that is internalized in mindset and work behavior. It directs how individuals behave towards others, superiors, and external parties of the organization. Meanwhile, organizational culture is a system of symbols and meanings that are mutually accepted and embodied in daily practices.

These two things together form a frame of reference that guides collective behavior, including in conflict situations. When ethical norms and organizational culture are strongly built, the organization has moral and symbolic resources to reduce conflict escalation (Kalaichelvi et al., 2017). Ethical norms encourage fair and civilized conflict resolution, while organizational culture provides constructive communication and problem-solving patterns.

In practice, organizations that are able to consistently instill the values of honesty, justice and respect have a greater chance of creating a harmonious workspace. A culture that is open to dialogue, that recognizes the diversity of ideas, and that makes room for differences becomes an organizational strength in dealing with internal dynamics. In other words, organizational ethics and culture are not just ideal values, but practical foundations in creating a sustainable conflict management system (Pineda, 2018).

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Interestingly, this ethical and cultural approach is gaining ground in modern management because instrumental and procedural approaches are considered insufficient in addressing the complexity of human relations in organizations. Research that examines how ethics and organizational culture can function as conflict resolution tools is highly relevant. This research not only provides conceptual understanding, but also opens a space for reflection for organizations that are looking for managerial approaches that are humane, adaptive, and oriented towards the sustainability of work relationships (Gulua, 2018). The ethics and culture approach does not only refine relationships between individuals, but also strengthens the organization's resilience in the face of external changes and pressures.

The main problem in organizational conflict management lies in the weak translation of ethical values into daily work policies and procedures. According to Greenberg (1990), the mismatch between formal values and actual practices creates a space of distrust that triggers latent conflicts between individuals or between work units. In this kind of situation, the organization loses the moral capacity to resolve conflicts fairly, because the values upheld are no longer carried out in reality. The conflict resolution process will be viewed as illegitimate by the parties involved because it is based on a value system that is considered inconsistent.

The next problem arises from dysfunctional organizational cultures, such as those that are overly hierarchical, closed to criticism, or ignore the balance of relationships between parts. Robbins and Judge (2007) note that organizational cultures that reject transparency and participation are often fertile ground for destructive conflicts that are difficult to manage. In the absence of a healthy dialog mechanism, differences in views develop into prolonged personal tensions. Without space for equal and constructive discussion, tensions between individuals or teams will take root and form polarization.

Another problem is the weak ethical literacy among top management and employees. When ethical values are narrowly understood or commodified simply for the sake of organizational image, conflict resolution tends to be cosmetic. Velasquez (1992) warns that without honest philosophical reflection, ethics in organizations can become a tool of domination, not an instrument of resolution. This imbalance places cultural and ethical values in a formalistic position, without sufficient practical power to ease real tensions on the field. Without serious efforts to improve ethical literacy and make it an integral part of organizational processes, this will make it difficult to build a fair and healthy work environment.

The research on the relationship between ethics, organizational culture, and conflict management is noteworthy because it touches on fundamental aspects of organizational sustainability. Ethics and culture not only serve as ideal values, but become frameworks that shape the way organizations interact internally and externally. When conflict is not managed fairly, the accumulated dissatisfaction will create a toxic work environment. This leads to a decline in loyalty, productivity, and can even threaten the structural stability of the organization. In a competitive global landscape, organizations are required to have healthy and justice governance, and achieving this requires a deep understanding of the ethical and cultural dimensions of work.

Strengthening the ethical and cultural dimensions of conflict management has long-term value in shaping organizational character. A healthy work culture can create a collaborative ecosystem, encourage innovation, and build solidarity amidst the diverse backgrounds of individuals in the organization. In this era of rapid change, organizations need to realize that stability is not achieved through uniformity, but through reinterpreting diversity in a cohesive value system. Consistent ethics and an inclusive organizational culture are the foundation for the creation of strong collective values. Strengthening the ethical and cultural dimensions can be a step towards conflict resolution and transformation of a more humane and highly competitive organization.

This research aims to dig into how ethics and organizational culture play a role in resolving internal conflicts, as well as analyzing their impact on overall organizational management. The focus of the research lies on the interaction between ethical norms, work culture patterns, and managerial mechanisms in dealing with conflicts between individuals and between units in the organization. The results of this research are expected to enrich theoretical and practical understanding in building an organizational system that is justice, reflective, and responsive to differences.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a literature study approach as a methodological foundation to explore the concepts of ethics, organizational culture, and conflict management in the realm of modern organizations. Literature study allows researchers to explore the theoretical frameworks that have been developed by experts and synthesize relevant empirical findings. As stated by Merriam (1998), the literature study serves as a conceptual analysis tool that provides space for researchers to compare and relate various perspectives that already exist in various academic sources, such as scientific journals, organizational theory books, and case study reports.

The analysis process was conducted systematically through identification, classification and interpretation of secondary data sourced from trusted literature. These steps are in line with literature-based qualitative research procedures as described by Neuman (2006), where validity is maintained through interpretive acumen and narrative consistency. This research combines thematic and interpretive approaches to dissect how ethical values and organizational cultural frameworks are carried out in managerial practices, and how they influence the internal conflict resolution process. Using a variety of sources across time and regions, this study seeks to provide reflective insights that can be used as a basis for developing organizational policies and practices that are more oriented towards justice and sustainability of employment relationships.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Ethics is not just a collection of moral rules written down in official organizational documents, but a system of value orientations that become the foundation of every professional interaction. Ethics is the foundation for building trust, integrity and shared responsibility. In the dynamic world of work, there is often an exchange of interests, interpretations, and pressures that trigger friction between individuals or groups. In such situations, ethics appears as a guideline that reorganizes social relations so as not to escape the framework of reasonableness and responsibility. Ethics helps individuals to navigate conflicts without losing their way while taking into account moral aspects and common interests. It does not work as a rigid barrier, but as a guide so that decisions made remain grounded in humanitarian principles (Handy & Russell, 2018).

The values instilled through work ethics form a collective organizational moral structure. This structure is the foundation of a healthy organizational culture. Each individual in the organization brings a different background and ethical understanding. For this reason, the existence of shared value standards is an important element in unifying perceptions and behavior. At this level, the code of ethics functions as a moral compass that provides direction when there is uncertainty or conflict. It is not a tool of coercion, but rather a space for agreement on what is worthy and should be upheld in professional life (Zawisza, 2018). The code of conduct also encourages collective responsibility in maintaining an ethical, fair and respectful work environment. By building a shared awareness of these values, an organization not only prevents deviant behavior, but also strengthens its character and competitiveness in the long-term

Conflict in organizations often stems not from bad intentions, but rather from a failure to understand the limits of propriety or decency in action. In complex and stressful work dynamics, individuals may act based on personal assumptions, habits, or perceptions without realizing that their actions may violate social or ethical norms that apply in the work environment. When ethics becomes an active operational foundation, organizations no longer see conflict as dysfunction, but rather as an opportunity to revisit the integrity of internal relationships. With this approach, conflict resolution moves from merely resolving disputes to establishing a more civilized system of interaction. Relationships rooted in ethics will tend to be more resilient to external pressures as well as internal differences (Meneses-Orozco et al., 2020).

The success of the organization in preventing and handling conflict is largely determined by how the ethical values are internalized in every line of work. Ethics that are only at the policy level will not have a significant impact if they are not lived in the daily practices of the members of the organization. Shared ethics will create an atmosphere of trust that transcends formal structures. This trust becomes a social binder that encourages collaboration and mutual respect between team members. Under these circumstances, disciplinary action is not always necessary because social control takes place naturally through collective consciousness. This is the reason why organizations need to foster ethical values as a growing system, not just something that is imposed from the top down (McDonald, 2014). Organizations need to create spaces for dialogue, learning, and exemplification so that ethical values can take root organically in every line of work.

In a broader perspective, ethics has a strategic position in shaping an organization's reputation in the eyes of the public. When an organization is known to have high ethical standards, the trust of partners, consumers, and the society will strengthen. This not only impacts the image, but also the sustainability of the business. Consumers are more likely to choose products or services from organizations that are considered socially responsible, fair to their employees, and transparent in conducting business. Partners and investors will be more comfortable working with entities that have an ethical reputation, as it lowers reputational and legal risks. Building an operational ethics system is not just a moral obligation, but an investment that creates social and structural organizational resilience (Grigoropoulos, 2019). Strong ethics help organizations deal with external pressures, manage reputational crises, and maintain integrity amidst the challenges of change.

Ethics in organizations act as a normative foundation that sets the boundaries between acceptable and avoidable behavior in the work environment. The existence of a clear code of ethics provides moral direction for individuals in navigating interpersonal relationships, especially when tensions arise due to differences in perceptions or interests. Ethics governs relationships between individuals and builds a system of trust that allows organizations to function harmoniously and effectively. As explained by Treviño et al. (1998), organizations that instill values of integrity, justice, and responsibility have a higher tendency to prevent destructive conflict. A living code of conduct - not just an administrative document - creates a collective awareness that conflicts can be resolved without compromising the principles of humanity and professionalism. This is because these values create shared standards of behavior that foster mutual understanding, empathy, and recognition of the rights and contributions of each individual in the organization.

Organizational culture plays an important role in structuring how ethical values are translated into daily practice. Every organization has symbolic patterns and unwritten norms that shape social expectations of individual behavior within it. Culture is the main place where ethical values are practiced and passed on from one generation of the organization to the next. According to Schein (1992), organizational culture is rooted in basic assumptions that influence collective perceptions and decisions. In the context of conflict, a culture that supports openness, empathy and collaboration creates a psychological atmosphere conducive to dialogue and constructive problem solving. Culture not only gives color to organizational life, but also determines how the organization deals with internal differences and tensions.

Ethics and culture are intertwined in forming an interpretive framework for organizational members when dealing with conflict. In a culture that emphasizes the values of trust and transparency, conflict is not seen as a threat, but rather as part of the growth process. According to Victor and Cullen (1988), a highly ethical environment strengthens the courage of individuals to express views without fear of retaliation. This is crucial in preventing latent conflicts from developing into open hostility. When ethical and cultural norms support healthy communication, conflict resolution can take place more efficiently and with dignity. The settlement process is not undertaken solely to eliminate the problem, but rather to restore and strengthen the relationship. Organizations that have a strong ethical foundation and an open culture will be better equipped to deal with internal dynamics without losing moral direction.

The implementation of ethics in conflict resolution requires leaders who are not only technically competent, but also morally strong. It is not enough for a leader to master the technical or procedural aspects of managing an organization, but also to be a figure who upholds ethical values in every action and decision. Leaders who are committed to ethical values will use power wisely and serve as role models in the mediation process. According to Brown et al. (2005), ethical leaders are able to shape an organizational climate that encourages participation and mutual respect, two essential elements in conflict resolution. When employees see that their superiors are impartial and adhere to the principles of justice, trust in the organization's internal systems will increase significantly.

A conflict-responsive organizational culture is not formed instantly, but through a long-term process of value internalization. Employees need to experience firsthand how these values are carried out in decision-making, incident management, and in performance evaluation. In a study by O'Reilly et al. (1991), it was found that alignment between personal values and organizational values increases loyalty and reduces the potential for conflict. If the values instilled by the organization collide with individual values, tensions will arise which if not handled wisely can develop into interpersonal friction.

Organizational ethics also reflect the extent to which procedural justice is implemented in the managerial system. In an organization that upholds ethics, each individual has confidence that his or her rights will be respected and his or her voice will be heard fairly. When conflict resolution mechanisms are justice, transparent, and predictable, there is less likelihood of conflict escalation. Greenberg (1990) argues that procedural justice is the main determinant of employee perceptions of the legitimacy of organizational decisions. If procedures are discriminatory or closed, then even small conflicts can develop into structural problems that interfere with broad organizational performance.

In culturally mature organizations, conflict resolution becomes part of the organizational learning process. Mistakes are not always treated as moral failures, but rather as opportunities for collective improvement. Argyris and Schön (1996) refer to this as "double-loop learning", where the organization's ability to not only solve problems, but also re-examining the underlying values behind decisions. In this framework, organizational culture serves as a flexible container, where ethics and conflict experiences come together to produce more adaptive and reflective managerial practices.

The positive impact of implementing ethics and a healthy organizational culture can be seen in the increased effectiveness of communication and coordination between work units. When basic values such as mutual respect and openness have become part of collective habits, conflict resolution becomes a more natural process with less resistance. According to Katzenbach and Smith (1993), teams that have cohesive cultural values tend to be more effective in handling conflict and making joint decisions. This has a direct impact on productivity and the smooth running of the overall management process. Efficiently resolved conflicts can redirect energy towards achieving the organization's strategic goals.

In contrast, organizations that ignore the ethical and cultural dimensions tend to be prone to repeated and intractable conflicts. When there is no common value reference, each party will interpret conflict based on personal or narrow group interests. In such a situation, conflict has the potential to become a source of organizational disintegration and fragmentation. The larger the organization and the more complex its structure, the more important cultural and ethical values become the basis for managing social interactions within it.

Consistently implemented ethics and organizational culture play a crucial role in creating an effective conflict resolution system, both preventively and curatively. By instilling ethical values during the employee onboarding process, organizations can build a strong foundation for healthy interactions among employees. This process engages not only an introduction to policies and procedures, but also an emphasis on the importance of open communication and mutual respect. When employees understand and internalize these values, they are more likely to avoid behaviors that can trigger conflict, as well as being better equipped to handle differences of opinion in a constructive way. According to Schminke et al. (2005), organizations that have high ethical standards and a culture that supports openness are not only better able to prevent conflict, but also more successful in maintaining internal stability and adapting to external pressures. When employees feel that they are working in an ethical and transparent environment, they are more likely to contribute positively and feel involved in the organization's aims. This creates a more harmonious working atmosphere, where issues can be identified and resolved before they develop into larger conflicts. Consistent implementation of ethics and culture serves not only as a tool to resolve conflicts, but also as a proactive strategy to create a healthy and productive work environment.

It is also important to note that in an era of globalization and increasing diversity, ethical and culture-based conflict management is a strategic element in maintaining organizational sustainability. The diversity of employee backgrounds presents its own complexities in conflict management. In this situation, universal ethical values and inclusive organizational culture become a bridge to build mutual understanding. Ethical values that are clearly communicated and practiced by organizational leaders will form a shared guideline on how conflicts should be addressed. Cox (1993) states that multicultural organizations that successfully manage differences ethically will be more competitive globally. Organizational ethics and culture serve not only as internal tools to maintain harmony, but also as external strategies in winning the increasingly complex global competition.

Overall, the effectiveness of ethics and culture in conflict management creates a work ecosystem that is balanced between productivity and psychological well-being. Ethics acts as a guardian of integrity, providing a moral framework for every decision and interaction, while organizational culture shapes the emotional and social atmosphere that supports the formation of healthy relationships. Conflict is no longer considered a negative symptom, but rather a signal that invites the organization to grow through a deeper understanding of the dynamics of work relationships. When ethics and culture-based conflict management work synergistically, organizations not only survive, but also develop in a more socially and structurally mature direction. Such organizations have greater resilience to crisis, as they have embedded the values of trust, fairness and openness as part of their collective identity.

CONCLUSION

Ethics and organizational culture prove to be two conceptual as well as practical foundations in dealing with the complexity of internal conflicts that often arise in work dynamics. This research shows that organizations that develop ethical values and build a collaborative culture are better able to create a safe space for conflict resolution without creating social fragmentation. Ethics provide clear moral guidelines on acceptable and unacceptable behavior in organizations, while organizational culture creates a social environment that supports positive ways of interaction between individuals. When these values are consistently implemented, the conflict resolution process not only reduces tension, but also strengthens working relationships and increases overall organizational stability.

Consistent implementation of ethics and strengthening of organizational culture have long-term effects on organizational governance, both in terms of managerial sustainability, employee loyalty, and work productivity. By making conflict resolution part of a shared value ecosystem, organizations can build resilient and flexible internal social structures. This implication is critical for organizations that want to survive and develop in an increasingly complex, uncertain and diversity-rich social and business landscape.

To maintain the effectiveness of ethics and culture-based conflict management, organizations need to strengthen internal education mechanisms on these values, and actively build a participatory, reflective and adaptive resolution system. Organizational leaders must become moral figures who are able to maintain the consistency of ethical and cultural values in every decision-making. Investing in the development of ethical leadership and a healthy work culture is a concrete step in building a justice, inclusive and sustainable organization.

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