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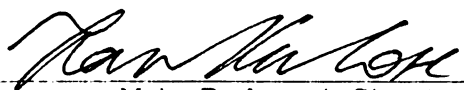
COMMUNICATION NETWORK APPROACHES TO
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AT THE WORKPLACE AND
JOB SATISFACTION

presented by

HYE EUN LEE

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COMMUNICATION NETWORK APPROACHES TO CONFLICT
MANAGEMENT AT THE WORKPLACE AND JOB SATISFACTION

By

Hye Eun Lee

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

COMMUNICATION NETWORK APPROACHES TO CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AT THE WORKPLACE AND JOB SATISFACTION

By

Hye Eun Lee

The current study examined the relationship between conflict management styles and job satisfaction. Based on Balance Theory, it was predicted that, as an employee has more and more balanced conflict management styles with all employees with whom he or she communicates in an organization, he or she will be more and more satisfied with his or her job. Next, it was questioned whether there are any differences among styles regarding the relationship between a balanced style and job satisfaction. One hundred and thirty-three employees from 15 small organizations in South Korea completed a questionnaire where communication networks at the workplace and each participant's conflict management style and job satisfaction were measured. It was found that similarity in integrating as a style of conflict management among employees in a communication network was positively related to each employee's job satisfaction. In contrast, similarity in compromising, dominating, or obliging styles were not related to each employee's job satisfaction. Finally, implications and limitations of these findings were discussed.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	v
CHAPTER 1	
INTRODUCTION.....	1
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	2
Conflict and Conflict Management Styles.....	2
Balance Theory	6
Relationship between Conflict Management Styles and Job Satisfaction.....	9
Hypothesis and Research Question	14
CHAPTER 2	
METHOD	16
Sample	16
Procedure	16
Measures	17
Operational Definitions	18
Procedure to Analyze	20
FOOTNOTES	20
CHAPTER 3	
RESULTS	21
Overview	21
Effects of Similarities from Styles in Conflict Management Styles on Job Satisfaction	22
Effects of Similarities from Items in Conflict Management Styles on Job Satisfaction	22
CHAPTER 4	
DISCUSSION	24
Implication for Conflict Management Styles.....	24
Implication for Similarities	25
Limitations and Directions for Future Research	26
Conclusion	27
APPENDICES	28
REFERENCES.....	36

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Reliabilities, CFA Results and Correlations.....	32
Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Conflict Styles, Similarities in Conflict Styles and Job Satisfaction	33
Table 3. The Effects of Conflict Styles and Similarities from Conflict Styles on Job Satisfaction	34
Table 4. The Effects of Conflict Styles and Similarities from Items of Conflict Styles on Job Satisfaction.....	35

CHAPTER1

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is inevitable and pervasive at the workplace. Before 1990, most of the organizational literature presumed that conflict is detrimental (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). but if conflict is managed appropriately, conflict has been found to lead to beneficial effects for individuals, teams, and organizations (Chen, Liu, & Tjosvold, 2005; De Church & Marks, 2001; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Pondy, 1992; Putnam & Wilson, 1982). Constructive management of conflicts and successful resolution of disputes can provide opportunities for coworkers to get to know each other better and strengthen their relationships (Tjosvold, Hui, & Sun, 2004). Conflict management, however, is not easy. Different ways to manage conflicts exist, and individuals can differ in their conflict management preferences. When disputants try to manage conflict with disparate styles, such dissimilarity may become an additional inhibition against successful resolution. Although such resolution can be achieved when individuals share similar conflict management styles, not all conflict styles need to be shared. For example, two individuals with similar cooperative styles are more likely to resolve their conflicts and to develop a satisfying relationship with each other than are two individuals with similar avoidance styles. It is questioned whether it is a particular style of conflict management preference that is related to job satisfaction and/or if it is the extent to which coworkers are balanced concerning their preferences for a particular style of conflict management in their workplaces.

The current study focuses on the relationship between conflict management styles and job satisfaction by examining communication networks at the workplace in order to fully identify conflict management at multiple levels. The position of each employee in the communication networks affects with whom he or she is likely to face conflicts in the workplace and if conflicts need to be managed between only two people at a time and/or among multiple group members collectively. By applying Balance Theory (Heider, 1958) to conflict management styles among coworkers, the current study investigates the extent to which the relationship between individuals' preferred styles and their coworkers' preferred styles of conflict management are related to individual job satisfaction.

For this, this paper will first define conflict, explain various causes and effects, and explain five conflict management styles. Next, a brief overview of the basic elements and assumptions of Balance Theory and its various empirical applications will be presented. After that, how this theory can be applied in understanding the relationship between conflict management styles and job satisfaction will be discussed. Finally, a rationale will be provided for the hypothesis and research question regarding the positive relationship between balanced styles and job satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conflict and Conflict Management Styles

Conflict refers to a process whereby one party perceives that its interests, goals, values, needs, or behaviors are being opposed, disagreed with, or negatively affected by another party (or other parties) (Wall & Callister, 1995). Conflict can happen in

interpersonal relations with subordinates, peers, and superiors and in intragroup and intergroup relationships at the workplace and across organizations. There are various causes of conflict at the workplace, including differences in individual characteristics such as personality, values, and commitment to position (Putnam & Wilson, 1982), communication failure, usually misunderstanding each other (Putnam & Poole, 1987; Thomas & Schmidt, 1976), and previous interactions (Tjosvold & Chia, 1989), to name a few.

Interpersonal conflict in organizations can have both beneficial and detrimental effects on individuals, groups, and organizations. On the one hand, conflict leads to negative emotional reactions such as tension, stress, hostility, distraction from performing tasks, communication difficulties, endangering of relationships, and finally reductions in effectiveness (for a review, see De Dreu, 1997; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Wall & Callister, 1995). In an extreme case, conflict can be a cause of workplace violence (Stone, 1995). Because of these negative effects, people try to avoid interpersonal conflict, and, if it occurs, people try to resolve it as soon as possible.

On the other hand, conflict can be positively related to performance in groups. Avoiding and suppressing conflict reduces creativity, innovation, decision quality, communication among group/team members, and opportunities to build strong relationships between employees (De Dreu, 1997; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Tjosvold, Hui, & Sun, 2004). In addition, conflict is useful for the understanding of diverse viewpoints and a variety of options (Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1990; Schwenk, 1990).

Due to the double-edged nature of conflict, boundary conditions for constructive conflict over destructive have been examined. Three approaches have been suggested so

far. The first approach is to reduce or avoid conflict. Although the value of conflict to open discussion is emphasized (Jehn, 1997; Simons & Peterson, 2000), the scholars supporting this approach have claimed that conflict should be minimized or shunned at the workplace since conflict itself inherently has negative consequences (cf. Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). Because conflict is inevitable at the workplace, where employees must interact, this approach is considered unrealistic (Leung & Tjosvold, 1998).

The second approach is to encourage one type of conflict over another type of conflict. Jehn (1995) identified task conflict and relationship conflict as two major types of conflict at the workplace. Task conflict includes various disagreements about work and different viewpoints and ideas about the topics of interest or decisions, and relationship conflict is about personnel problems due to incompatibilities in personalities and attitudes of employees. Task conflict tends to lead to positive outcomes, whereas relationship conflict causes negative outcomes (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Simons & Peterson, 2000). Since task conflict sometimes triggers relationship conflict or vice versa, it is not practically feasible to encourage task conflict while discouraging relationship conflict (Simons & Peterson, 2000).

The final approach is to manage conflict. If conflict is managed in appropriate manners, it results in beneficial effects (Chen, Liu, & Tjosvold, 2005; DeChurch & Marks, 2001; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Pondy, 1992; Putnam & Wilson, 1982). De Dreu and Weingart (2003) pointed out the importance of conflict management in work groups, and De Dreu and Beersma's (2005, p. 106) also commented on the "unfortunate" state of scholarly affairs concerning the lack of attention on the effect of conflict management on "soft" outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, well-being, and health).

Rahim (1983) defined five conflict management styles –integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising–based on two dimensions: concern for self and concern for others. Integrating involves high concerns for both parties involved in a conflict. Individuals using this style collaborate with the other party to reach a solution acceptable to them both. This style is characterized by openness, an active exchange of information, and examination of differences. Obliging engages low concern for self and high concern for the other party. People using this style attempt to deemphasize the differences and underscore characteristics in common in order to satisfy the other party's concerns. Dominating involves high concern for self and low concern for the other party. This style is associated with a win-lose orientation and forcing behaviors to satisfy the concerns for self. Avoiding employs low concerns for both parties. The characteristics of avoiding are non-confrontation and withdrawal, so people using this style play down the importance of the conflict issues and try not to think about them. Finally, compromising involves moderate concern for self as well as the other party. People using this style give up something in order to reach a mutually acceptable solution.

Conflict literature has embraced the five style paradigm (e.g., Blake & Mouton, 1964; Rahim, 1983; Thomas, 1976), but it has been empirically difficult to differentiate among integrating, obliging, and compromising styles (cf., Weider-Hatfield, 1988). At a more macro level, integrating, obliging, and compromising may all indicate collaborating with the other party like one cooperative style (De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997). Compared to avoidance and domination styles, managing conflicts through collaboration by integrating, obliging, and/or compromising can lead to greater individual and team effectiveness (De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997). When a conflict is managed through

collaboration, employees can confront reality to create innovative solutions to challenging problems (De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997). Also, employees are more likely to express their needs, positions, and interests, understand the other parties, and become less egocentric (Leung & Tjosvold, 1998). Compared to domination, collaboration leads to higher-quality decisions and stronger relationships (Tjosvold, 1998).

The five conflict management style paradigm has been widely used in Asian countries as well as in the U.S. (cf. Chang, & Cho, 2006; Holt, & DeVore, 2005; Kim, Wang, Kondo, & Kim, 2007; Lee, 2002). Although Asians tend to choose avoiding more than Americans (Lee, & Rogan, 1991; Lee, 2002; Tjosvold, Hui, & Sun, 2004; Tjosvold, & Sun, 2002), Korean employees have been reported to use all of these five styles (Kim, Wang, Kondo, & Kim, 2007; Lee, 2002).

In general, conflict can negatively affect job satisfaction (see De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). If conflict is managed constructively through open discussion and mutual understanding, however, people are more likely to reach mutually beneficial solutions, reduce the likelihood of future conflict, and build quality relationships and trust. In this way, job satisfaction may increase. Accordingly, how conflict is managed is an important consideration for job satisfaction. Heider's (1958) Balance theory provides insight into how this is so.

Balance Theory

Balance Theory provides an explanation of how an employee's balanced preference of conflict management styles is related to his or her job satisfaction. Balance Theory posits relationships among three types of elements (Heider, 1958). The three elements include a focal person (*P*), another person (*O*), and an event (*X*) that is

perceived by the two people. Balance Theory focuses on *P*'s three kinds of interpretations: that of his or her relationship with *O*, that of his or her perception of *X*, and that of *O*'s perception of *X*. Although Balance Theory involves relations among these three elements, the relations between only two of the elements can be considered at a time. In other words, a dyadic relationship can be assumed to exist between *P* and *O* (or between *P* and *X*) when *P* considers only one relation with *O* (or *X*). On the other hand, a triadic relationship exists among *P*, *O*, and *X* when *P* considers the three relations between *P* and *O*, *O* and *X*, and *P* and *X* simultaneously.

Some more specific relationships among these three elements can be characterized by sentiment and unit formation (Heider, 1958). Sentiment refers to the way *P* feels or evaluates *O* or *X*. Although sentiment can take various types and forms, Heider originally classified it into two types: liking and disliking. Some researchers later broadened the boundary of the sentiment to include more complicated types of evaluations, such as approving and disapproving and agreeing and disagreeing (e.g., Curry & Emerson, 1970; Insko, 1981).

Unit formation occurs when *P* perceives himself or herself to belong with *O*, when *P* perceives himself or herself to belong with *X*, or when *P* perceives *O* to belong with *X*. There are a number of factors that influence unit formation. For instance, if two people share similarity, proximity, or interaction, they may form a unit, or if a person owns an entity, a unit is made up of the person and the entity. Although Heider (1958) suggested that unit relations can be roughly divided into two types—belongs and does not belong—like sentiment, Insko (1981) pointed out that “does not belong” does not have a negative relation to “belongs.” For example, it is clear that “*P* likes *X*” is a negative

relation with “*P* dislikes *X*” in the sentiment relation. In terms of the unit relation, however, it is unclear which has a negative relation to “*P* is married to *O*” between “*P* is divorced from *O*” and “*P* is not married to *O*.” This is partly the reason why most researchers after Heider explored only positive unit formation while both positive and negative sentiments have been treated together (e.g., Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Insko, 1981; Petty & Cacioppo, 1981).

Balance Theory explains *P*’s cognition of a balanced state or an imbalanced state with the relationships of these sentiments and unit formation. If *P* and *O* make a unit and have a similar attitude toward *X* of liking or disliking or if *P* (or *O*) owns *X* and *P* and *O* have similar interpretations about *X*, *P* has a balanced state. Otherwise, *P*’s cognitive state is imbalanced. Namely, a balanced state refers to a stable situation because a perceived unit and sentiments coexist without any stress on *P*’s cognitive organization.

One main assumption of Balance Theory is that human beings prefer harmonious states over imbalanced states (Heider, 1958). As balance increases, people’s pleasure increases, so people try to increase balance while decreasing imbalance. In addition, even when a person achieves a balanced state, generally positive sentiments create more pleasantness than negative sentiments because similarity in liking between *P* and *O* toward *X* creates attraction effects along with balance effects, whereas similarity in disliking does not (Jordan, 1953; Zajonc, 1968). If people experience imbalanced states, they try to resolve these disharmonious states. For example, *P* may deny the unit or change his or her attitudes toward *O* (or *X*). From time to time, however, *P* does not resolve the disharmony, even when he or she is aware of the unbalanced situation. In these cases, *P* experiences tension and stress to change. The greater imbalance a person

faces, the more stressed and uncomfortable the person is (Insko, 1981).

Although Balance Theory was originally formulated to explain individual psychology related to the context of interpersonal relations (Heider, 1958), the theory has been broadly used to explain and predict attitudes, persuasive arguments, management techniques, social networks, and so on. For example, Curry and Emerson (1970) found that people tended to perceive another person's attraction toward a third person as similar to their own attraction to the third person. Aronson and Cope (1968) supported Balance Theory with the finding that people like their friends' friends and their enemies' enemies, and dislike their friends' enemies and their enemies' friends. Also Woodside and Chebat (2001) argued that consumers' behavior could be explained by Balance Theory. That is, the purchasing behavior of consumers can be explained by a balanced triadic relationship among a consumer, the quality of a product, and a producer. Finally, social scientists have attempted to expand the application of Balance Theory to the study of social networks (e.g. Markiewicz, Devine, & Klausilas, 2000).

Relationship between Conflict Management Style and Job Satisfaction

Balance Theory can be applied to understand the relationship between conflict management styles at the workplace and job satisfaction. As stated before, when P , as an employee, interacts with O , another employee, conflict between the two parties (P and O) can occur. If P perceives O 's conflict management style to be incompatible with P 's own style, it can lead to cognitive imbalance for P . Given that people prefer balanced states to imbalanced states (Heider, 1958), there are four possible reactions to imbalanced states. First, P may break off the relationship with O . That means that P denies the unit formation. As employees generally cannot decide with whom to work on their own at the

workplace, leaving the organization is the only solution for this. A second way would be for *P* to change his or her own style to be compatible with *O*'s. Like the first reaction, it causes *P* to eliminate the cause of the imbalance. The third way is for *P* to persuade or influence *O* to change *O*'s style to be compatible with *P*'s. It is not easy, however, for people to break off their relationships, adjust their conflict management styles to be harmonious with those of others, or to persuade others to change theirs. Thus, people may choose the fourth way of dealing with an imbalanced state: enduring the imbalanced state. If *P* and *O* have to spend a lot of time working side by side at the workplace, *P* must continue to bear the inconsistent state. Enduring the inconsistent state leads to unpleasantness, tension, or stress for *P* if not only conflict itself but also disagreements on how to manage it cause negative emotional reactions. These negative feelings may become relevant to an individual's job satisfaction. The current study focuses on this last case.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is defined as an overall emotional reaction to a job that results from employees' comparisons of actual outcomes with expected ones (Cranny, Smith, & Stone, 1992). According to this definition, job satisfaction consists of three components: affection, outcomes related to a job, and comparison processes. Employees with greater job satisfaction perceive their jobs to be more meaningful and have more motivation to do their jobs better.

Job satisfaction has received great attention because job satisfaction significantly influences positive organizational outcomes (Cranny et al., 1992). In the short term, if employees have higher levels of job satisfaction, their productivity increases and their absences and intention to turnover decrease (e.g., Katzell, Thompson, & Guzzo, 1992;

Smith, 1992). In the long term, higher levels of job satisfaction are positively associated with employees' active attitudes toward adapting to a change in environment, such as downsizing, cooperative attitudes with coworkers, and positive contributions toward organizational culture and climate (Smith, 1992). Lambert (1991) also contended that job satisfaction positively influences employees' motivations to do their job well. Lastly, higher levels of job satisfaction are related to less stress regarding work (Ironson, 1992).

Employees' interpersonal relationships in the workplace are positively related with job satisfaction. Although many studies have focused mainly on job characteristics, management styles, and employees' characteristics as predictors of job satisfaction (Glisson & Durick, 1988; Neumann, 1993), increasing attention has been paid to employees' workplace relationships with superiors, subordinates, or coworkers as new predictors of job satisfaction. For example, the Leader Member Exchange model (LMX) shows how the quality of the relationship that employees have with their superiors influences their job satisfaction. According to LMX, superiors do not use the same style in dealing with all subordinates but rather develop a different type of relationship or exchange with each subordinate. These relationships range from those that are based strictly on employment contracts (e.g., low quality LMX) to those that are characterized by mutual trust, respect, liking, and reciprocal influence (e.g., high quality LMX) (Graen, Novak, & Sommerkamp, 1982). Workers who perceive their relationships with their superiors as having a higher quality of interaction reported higher levels of job satisfaction (Epitropaki & Martin, 1999; Graen et al., 1982). The reason is that employees with higher quality LMX have less difficulty in maintaining the relationship (Lee, 1998; Lee & Jablin, 1995), greater satisfaction with their supervisors (Duchon, Green, & Taber,

1986), a higher level of satisfaction in communicating with their superiors (Lee, 1999; Mueller & Lee, 2002), and more social support from their superiors (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997).

Balanced styles of conflict management. Similarities generally positively affect job satisfaction. If individuals' values and traits are congruent with their perceptions of the climate of their workplace, they perform better and express greater job satisfaction (Downey, Hellriegel, & Slocm, 1975). Wexley, Alexander, Greenawalt, and Couch (1980) reported that, if a subordinate is aligned with his or her supervisor in terms of attitudinal similarity, the subordinate is more satisfied with his or her job. The more superiors and subordinates agree with each other on communication assumptions (i.e., interaction norms related to asking for suggestions, requesting instructions, informing about policies, etc.), the more subordinates are satisfied with their jobs.

Balance theory explains why similarities among employees lead to higher job satisfaction. Similarities can be interpreted as balanced states for employee cognition. In the same vein, the relationship between conflict management styles and job satisfaction can be explained. Among the conflict management styles discussed above, integration, which involves high concerns for both self and the other party, is supposedly the most ideal way to manage conflict. What if, however, A prefers the integration style whereas B prefers the domination style when A and B have conflict at the workplace? If both parties do not have balanced styles, the conflict could be more difficult to resolve.

Communication networks. In order to understand the complete dynamics of conflict management, they should be examined in relation to communication networks at the workplace. Most studies have focused only on individual levels (e.g., Brewer,

Mitchell, & Weber, 2002; Thomas & Schmidt, 1976), dyadic levels (e.g., Tjosvold & Sun, 2002), or group levels (e.g., Simons & Peterson, 2000; De Dreu, 2006; Lovelace, Shapiro, & Weingart, 2001). Communication networks are defined as “the patterns of contact that are created by the flow of messages among communicators through time and space” (Monge & Contractor, 2003, p.3). Communication networks describe who communicates with whom at the workplace, and so are able to identify relationships that could potentially have conflict at the various levels of personal, dyadic, triadic, group, and organizational.

The position of each employee in the communication network of the organization provides a clue regarding the other party or parties who are relevant to understanding each employee’s conflict management and job satisfaction. For example, if A only interacts with his or her superior, B, conflict in the dyadic relationship between A and B should be focused on; however, if A works as a team member, all conflict in the team will need to be examined. If A is an employee who links to two groups that would otherwise not be linked but is not a member of either group (i.e., liaison; Brass, 1995) or is an employee who is a member of two or more groups (i.e., bridge; Brass 1995) in the organization, only multilevel analyses using communication networks can grasp the full dynamics of the relationship between conflict management and job satisfaction.

In sum, when applying Balance Theory to the relationship between conflict management styles and job satisfaction, it can be argued that imbalanced styles among employees at work can lead to unpleasantness and stress. Especially if they involve incompatible conflict management styles, employees have greater difficulties in managing conflict. Different conflict management styles result in misunderstandings,

incompatibility of goals and values, and disagreements. As a result, employees with imbalanced styles will be more dissatisfied with their jobs. On the contrary, if they have balanced conflict styles, employees can manage conflict in constructive ways, build trust, improve performance, and accordingly increase job satisfaction.

Hypothesis and Research Question

Communication networks at the workplace should be considered in order to fully understand the relationship between conflict management styles and job satisfaction. If an employee has a balanced style with one employee, but an imbalanced style with another, the balance and the imbalance can cancel each other out. If an employee has only balanced (or imbalanced) styles with all employees with whom he or she works, however, the relationship will be strengthened positively (or negatively). Therefore, the following hypothesis is presented.

H1: If an employee has more balanced conflict management styles with the employees with whom he or she communicates in the organization, he or she will be more satisfied with his or her job.

Although similarities in integrating, obliging, or compromising styles of conflict can represent a balanced state for the individuals involved and can positively affect job satisfaction, similarities in domination or avoidance do not necessarily reflect a balanced state and may be even worse than dissimilarities. If both parties involved in a conflict use the same style, domination or avoidance, similarity in domination or in avoidance does not have the same effect as similarity in other styles, such as integrating, obliging, and/or compromising. In the same way that similarity in liking creates attraction effects whereas similarity in disliking does not (Jordan, 1953; Zajonc, 1968), similarity in collaboration is

a genuine balanced style, but similarity in domination or in avoidance may be imbalanced styles like dissimilarity in styles.

The five conflict management styles are differentiated by the different concerns for self and the other party. If two parties in a conflict have similarities in integrating, obliging, or compromising styles, each party perceives that the other party has high or at least moderate concern for the other party. For instance, even when A has the obliging style (i.e., low concern for self and high concern for the other party), if B, the other party, also has the obliging style, both parties receive high concern from each other. In contrast, if people in conflict have similarity in domination or avoidance, neither cares about the other party, which might be an uncomfortable and unpleasant situation leading to cognitive imbalance. Accordingly, “similarity” in all styles may not necessarily lead to a “balanced style.” It is possible that a balanced state from a particular style may be associated with job satisfaction more strongly than from other styles. Therefore, the following research question has been developed.

RQ1: Is there any difference among the styles in terms of the relationship between the resultant balanced style and job satisfaction?

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Sample

One hundred and thirty-three employees (age $M = 34.81$, $SD = 8.16$, and 56.4% male) from 15 small organizations in South Korea participated in the study. As it is desirable for all employees in the organizations to participate in the study in order to obtain complete communication networks, many organizations were contacted. All of the participants were ethnically as well as culturally Korean. All of the full-time employees in 17 organizations agreed to participate in the study. Since not all of the employees in two of the organizations completed communication networks, data from these were excluded for further analyses. Participating organizations were two fire stations, four branches of insurance companies, two food companies, two design companies, two hospitals, two schools, and an advertising company.

The average number of the employees was 8.48 ($SD = 4.88$), ranging from 5 to 19. The employees worked for 72 months on average ($SD = 72.95$), ranging from 1 to 341. For education level, 59 (44.4%) of the participants had 4-year college degrees, 33 (24.8%) had community college degrees, and 22 (16.5%) had high school degrees.

Procedure

Participants were asked, in the questionnaire, to identify those with whom they communicate when looking at a list of all of the employees. Accordingly, pre-approvals from all of the employees were obtained before the questionnaire was developed. After the communication networks were measured, participants were asked to indicate their own conflict management styles and job satisfaction.

Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to investigate employee's job satisfaction related to conflict management styles. To protect participant confidentiality, all participants were instructed to directly mail their completed questionnaires to a designated person unrelated to the organizations or participants. Then, the designated person changed the participants' names into ID numbers (ex. A1, A2 etc.). That person was designated by the researcher before the questionnaire was distributed to the employees. In addition to the questionnaire, participants received envelopes with a return address and postage. Finally, those who completed the questionnaire were paid five dollars in exchange for their participation.

Measures

The questionnaire consisted of communication network measures, scales for conflict management styles, a job satisfaction scale, work-related information (e.g., employment length and job types), and demographic information (See Appendix I – III for details).

Communication network measure. Participants were asked to indicate how often they talk about work-related activities on a regular basis with each individual on the list of all of the employees at their work (See Appendix I for details). The response format for the measure was a 5-point scale (1 = never, 2 = hardly, 3 = sometimes, 4 = frequently, 5 = always).

Conflict management styles. The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory II (ROC-II) was used to measure five the conflict management styles: Avoiding, Compromising, Dominating, Integrating, and Obligating. Each subscale had four to seven items. See Appendix II for the items of each style. The response format for these

measures was a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

When using AMOS, the CFA results for multidimensionality of five factors were not acceptable, so CFAs were repeatedly conducted to find items and factors consistent with multidimensionality and parallelism. The model generating applications are reasonable (Jöreskog, 1993) when the initial model does not fit the data and is modified based on theoretical sense and reasonable statistical correspondence to the data. After several items were removed and compromising and integrating were merged into one factor, integrating, the results showed acceptable multidimensionality (See Table 1). The reliabilities (Cronbach's α) of the four factors ranged from .77 to .81.

Job satisfaction. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) short form (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967) has been widely used to measure job satisfaction with acceptable reliabilities (e.g., Corbett, Martin, Wall, & Clegg, 1989; Naumann, 1993; Watson & Slack, 1993). Therefore, 14 items from the MSQ were used for the study (see Appendix II). The response format for the measure was a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The CFA results produced a unidimensional model with the eight items; therefore, these items were used for further analyses. The reliability (Cronbach's α) of the job satisfaction scale in the current study was .88.

Operational Definitions

Operational definition of communication networks. The communication link between two people was measured on a continuous scale (1 = never, 2 = hardly, 3 = sometimes, 4 = frequently, 5 = always) once for each individual, with the measurement with the other being computed by averaging the two measurements. For example, if A reported that A communicates with B with 5 (always) on the scale and B reported that B

communicates with A with 3 (sometimes) on the scale, then the link has 4 (frequently) on average. This method is more reliable than the usual self-reported single measurement.

After computing averages, the communication links were identified dichotomously. That is, employees rated at least 3.5 were considered to have communication links at the workplace. The average number of links was 7.27 ($SD = 3.42$), ranging from 1 to 16.

Operational definition of similarity in style. There are two main ways to compute the similarity of each style. Each style was measured with three to five items. One way is to compute similarity from the values of styles. After calculating the mean of each style from the values of items, absolute differences between means of employees were obtained. Since the possible maximum value of difference is four (the difference between five [strongly agree] and one [strongly disagree]), the difference between five and the obtained difference is the similarity score. This method to calculate similarity is referred to as similarity from styles.

The other way is to calculate similarity from the values of items. The absolute differences obtained from each item for the styles can be averaged and then subtracted from five. This method to calculate similarity is referred to as similarity from items. For example, if person A and person B answered one, three, five, three and three, three, three, three for one style with four items, four would be obtained from the first method while three would be obtained from the second method. Among the pairs of (1, 3), (3, 3), (5, 3), and (3, 3), however, only two pairs are similar. If the means of each style are compared, the dissimilarity of the first pair is canceled out by the dissimilarity of the third pair. The second method covers broader disparities than the first method, but the first method

conceptually represents the similarity. Therefore, the data were analyzed with both methods in the study.

Procedure to analyze

The similarities in style were obtained using SPSS MATRIX. With the similarities, SPSS LINEAR REGRESSION was used to investigate the effects of the similarities in four styles on job satisfaction. Before conducting the linear regression, the assumption of linearity was roughly confirmed through scatter plots between similarities in conflict management styles and job satisfaction.

For the possibility of a multilevel effect on conflict management styles, variance in conflict management styles was decomposed to see if a substantial amount of variance was attributable to having the same organization (i.e., 2nd level effect). Overall, having the same organization accounted for little of the variance in preferences for conflict management styles. For avoiding, more than 93% of the variance was attributable to individual employees (i.e., 1st level). More than 89% for dominating, more than 96% for integrating, and more than 91% for obliging were also attributable to individual employees. Finally, more than 89% of the variance for job satisfaction was attributable to individual employees. There were no significant organizational differences for any of the styles. Therefore, a multilevel analysis was not used for the main analyses¹.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) results showed consistent findings from Regression analyses, so only Regression results were reported.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Overview

The results show that integrating ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.62$) is the most preferred style, followed by obliging ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.58$), while dominating is the least preferred style ($M = 2.62$, $SD = 0.77$), as shown Table 2. Mean scores of integrating, obliging and avoiding were significantly higher than the scale mid point (3) (one-sample t [132] = 10.87, $p < .001$ for integrating; one sample t [132] = 8.91, $p < .001$ for obliging; one-sample t [132] = 2.48, $p < .05$ for avoiding). Particularly, about 80% of the participants reported greater than the scale mid point (3) in integrating and more than 70% of the participants reported greater than the scale mid point (3) in obliging. Mean score of dominating was significantly lower than the scale mid point (3) (one-sample t [132] = -5.66, $p < .001$). Less than 30% of the participants reported greater than the scale mid point (3) in dominating. Therefore, it is concluded that integrating and obliging are mostly used while dominating is not used very commonly.

The results in Table 2 also show that similarities in integrating ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.38$ for similarity from conflict styles; $M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.27$ for similarity from items) and in obliging ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.36$ for similarity from conflict styles; $M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.25$ for similarity from items) are higher than similarities in avoiding ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.44$ for similarity from conflict styles; $M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.36$ for similarity from items) and in dominating ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.36$ for similarity from conflict styles; $M = 4.07$, $SD =$

= 0.33 for similarity from items).

The hypothesis predicted that, if employees have more similar preferences for conflict management styles with the employees with whom they communicate in the organization, they will be more satisfied with their jobs. The research question asked whether there is any difference among the styles regarding the relationship between the resultant balanced style and job satisfaction. For the hypothesis and the research question, two regression analyses were conducted for the dependent variable (job satisfaction), as shown Tables 3 and 4.

Effects of Similarities from Styles in Conflict Management Styles on Job Satisfaction

The regression analysis showed significance, $adj. R^2 = .32$, $F(8, 124) = 8.79$, $p \leq .001$ (See Table 3). Integrating ($\beta = .489$, $t = 5.74$, $p < .001$) and similarity in integrating ($\beta = .23$, $t = 2.47$, $p = .02$) predicted job satisfaction, whereas avoiding ($\beta = -.01$, $t = -0.10$, $p = .92$), dominating ($\beta = .07$, $t = 1.00$, $p = .32$), obliging ($\beta = .15$, $t = 1.62$, $p = .11$) and similarities in avoiding ($\beta = .04$, $t = 0.43$, $p = .67$), dominating ($\beta = -.02$, $t = -0.26$, $p = .80$) and obliging ($\beta = -.15$, $t = -1.70$, $p = .09$) did not predict job satisfaction.

Various results showed that there was minimum collinearity among eight predictors (i.e., Avoiding, dominating, integrating, obliging, similarity in avoiding, similarity in dominating, similarity in integrating, and similarity in obliging). Tolerance of the predictors ranges from .62 to .96, and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) ranges from 1.04 to 1.61.

Effects of Similarities from Items in Conflict Management Styles on Job Satisfaction

The regression analysis showed significance, $adj. R^2 = .34$, $F(8, 124) = 7.93$, p

.001 (See Table 4). Integrating predicted job satisfaction, $\beta = .47, t = 5.47, p < .001$, whereas avoiding ($\beta = -.01, t = -0.07, p = .95$), dominating ($\beta = .06, t = 0.73, p = .47$), obliging ($\beta = .18, t = 1.96, p = .05$), similarities in avoiding ($\beta = .05, t = -0.60, p = .55$), integrating ($\beta = .09, t = 1.15, p = .25$), dominating ($\beta = -.02, t = -0.26, p = .79$), and obliging ($\beta = -.10, t = -1.36, p = .18$) did not predict job satisfaction.

Various results showed that there was minimum collinearity among eight predictors (i.e., Avoiding, dominating, integrating, obliging, similarity in avoiding, similarity in dominating, similarity in integrating, and similarity in obliging). Tolerance of the predictors ranges from .64 to .94, and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) ranges from 1.06 to 1.57.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The data were partly consistent with the hypothesis predicting a positive relationship between similarity in conflict management styles and job satisfaction. The finding is that the similarity from styles in integrating as a balanced style is positively related to employee job satisfaction.

Implication for Conflict Management Styles

Conflict literature has conceptually supported the five style paradigm (e.g., Blake & Mouton, 1964; Rahim, 1983; Thomas, 1976), and Rahim and Magner's (1995) Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA) reported acceptable fit indexes for a five factor model, but it has been empirically difficult to differentiate among integrating, compromising, and obliging styles (cf., Weider-Hatfield, 1988). The current study showed a four factor (i.e. dominating, avoiding, integrating, obliging) model with acceptable fit indexes using Korean participants. The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory II (ROC-II) has been widely used by conflict management research in Korea (Kim, Wang, Kondo, & Kim, 2007; Lee, 2002); however, only reliabilities are usually reported. Although the inventory was developed in the U.S., the current study shows that ROCII is an acceptable measurement scale with four factors in Korea.

Particularly, the findings show that similarity in integrating is positively related to employee job satisfaction. This can be interpreted to mean that similarity in integrating is a real balanced state whereas similarities in domination, avoidance, and submission do

not reflect a balanced state. Employees who similarly choose integrating in a conflict situation will perceive that the other party has high concern for the other party. This perception makes each employee more collaborative. Compared to avoiding and dominating, integrating leads to positive organizational outcomes, such as individual and team effectiveness (De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997), innovative solutions to challenging problems (De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997), higher-quality decisions, and stronger relationships (Tjosvold, 1998). Integrating itself is important as an ideal conflict management style, but similarity in integrating with coworkers with whom each employee communicates is also an important factor to consider at the workplace.

Implication for Similarities

The similarity scores in conflict management styles were used as predictors in the linear regressions. The similarity scores were computed from the absolute difference between participants' own scores and their coworkers' scores. These difference scores have been pervasively used in organizational behavior research (Edwards, 1994) and in personality research (Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000). In spite of their widespread use, difference scores suffer from some methodological problems (Edwards, 1994). The current study shares these problems. One of the main problems is failure to compute the reliability of difference scores. According to the well-known formula (Guilford, 1954), the reliability of difference scores can be articulated in terms of reliabilities of the pre-scores and post-scores. When participants' scores and their coworkers' scores are considered as the pre-scores and the post-scores, the reliability of the pre-scores are very similar to the reliability of the post-scores because participants' coworkers also are participants in the current study. As a result, the reliability of the difference scores is not

obtained with this method. Moreover, the absence of the reliability of the difference scores makes it difficult to evaluate measurement errors of the difference scores.

When the difference scores are computed from participants' scores and their coworkers' scores, the assumption of independent observation is violated because participants' coworkers are also participants in the current study. As a result, the significant tests may be biased and misleading. Finally, if the difference scores are used as an independent variable, the range of the variable is restricted and subsequently reduces the explained variance (Edwards, 1994).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This research represents a theory-driven examination of how similarities in conflict management styles among employees in communication networks relate to job satisfaction. For this, information on all communication networks within organizations was acquired and an effect of a group of employees with whom each employee communicates was investigated. Usually cognitive inconsistency is a hypothetical construct, so it was measured indirectly by the strength of attempts to decrease it in consistency research (Oshikawa, 1970), but this study tried to measure imbalance directly through the differences among coworkers in conflict management styles. In spite of these merits, the study has several limitations.

First, the study could not determine whether the disparity between the real similarity and the perceived similarity might have led to the result. Measuring the perceived similarity may address the other possibility. When asked to report their coworkers' conflict management styles, the results would provide participants' perceptions on their coworkers' conflict management styles. If participants are asked to

evaluate their coworkers' conflict management styles, it also would not violate the assumption of observation independence. Thus, the similarities in conflict management styles should be assessed by this method as well.

Second, other *Xs* should be examined. The current study only focused on similarities in examining a balanced state. Other factors may lead to significant effects on the triadic relationships. For example, balanced styles could be different based on the relative status of the two parties. That is, each employee's referent role as superior, subordinate, or peer will affect his or her cognitive balance. Korean employees are usually dominating with subordinates, compromising with peers, and obliging with superiors (Lee, 2002). Considering that the participants of the study were Korean employees in Korea, this issue suggests that various pairs of styles can be possible *Xs* in the triads, subsequently influencing job satisfaction. Therefore, various *Xs* should be addressed in future research.

Conclusion

It is very likely that employees will have conflict with those with whom they interact within organizations. How they manage conflict influences not only the psychological well-being of employees but also their organizational behaviors. The current findings show that similarity in integrating as a balanced conflict management style with coworkers was positively associated with employee job satisfaction. This finding implies that cognitive balance leads to effects on organizational behaviors. Better understanding of cognitive balance at the workplace is valuable for organizations. Further research on the relationship between conflict management and job satisfaction may lead to useful extensions of Balance Theory.

Appendix I.

Instruction: Here is a list of all the employees of your organization. Please indicate how often you speak with each person at work on a regular basis about work-related activities.

[illegible]

Appendix II

Five Conflict Management Styles

Avoiding

1. I attempt to avoid being “put on the spot” and try to keep my conflicts to myself.
2. I usually avoid open discussion of my differences with my partner.
3. I try to stay away from disagreements with my partner.
4. I avoid disagreeable encounters with my partner.
5. I try to keep the disagreements between my partner and myself to a minimum in order to avoid hard feelings. *
6. I try to avoid unpleasant exchanges with my partner.*

Dominating

1. I use my influence to get my ideas accepted.*
2. I use my authority to make decisions in my favor.
3. I use my expertise to make decisions in my favor.*
4. I am generally firm in pursuing my side of issues.
5. I sometimes use my power to win a competitive edge over my partner.

Integrating/Compromising

1. I try to find a middle course to resolve impasses.*
2. I usually propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.
3. I negotiate with my partner so that a compromise can be reached.*
4. I “give and take” so that a compromise can be made.*
5. I try to investigate issues with my partner to find a solution acceptable to both of us.
6. I try to integrate my ideas with those of my partner to come up with a decision jointly.
7. I try to work with my partner to find solutions to problems which satisfy our expectations.
8. I exchange accurate information with my partner to solve problems together.
9. I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that issues can be resolved in the best possible ways.*
10. I collaborate with my partner to come up with decisions acceptable to both of us.*
11. I try to work with my partner to gain a proper understanding of a problem.*

Obliging

1. I generally try to satisfy the needs of my partner.*
2. I usually accommodate the wishes of my partner.
3. I give in to the wishes of my partner.
4. I usually make concessions to my partner.
5. I often go along with the suggestions of my partner.
6. I try to satisfy the expectations of my partner.*

Job Satisfaction

1. I am satisfied with being able to keep busy all the time.*
2. I am satisfied with the chance to be “somebody” in the community.
3. I am satisfied with the way my boss handles his or her workers.*
4. I am not satisfied with the chance to do things for other people.*
5. I am satisfied with the chance to do something that makes use of my abilities.*
6. I am satisfied with the way company policies are put into practice.
7. I am satisfied with the freedom to use my own judgment.*
8. I am satisfied with the chance to try my own methods of doing the job.
9. I am satisfied with the working conditions.
10. I am not satisfied with the way my coworkers get along with each other.

- 11. I am satisfied with the praise I get for doing a good job.
- 12. I am not satisfied with the feeling of accomplishment I get from the job.
- 13. I would recommend this job to a friend.*
- 14. I find real enjoyment in my job.

Note. * was excluded for acceptable reliabilities and/or acceptable CFA results in the final analyses.

Appendix III

Demographic information

1. Your age? _____
2. Your gender? ☐ Male ☐ Female
3. Your ethnic background (check one)
 - ☐ Caucasian ☐ Hispanic
 - ☐ African American ☐ Pacific Islander
 - ☐ Native American ☐ Other (Please specify) _____
 - ☐ Asian American
4. Please mark the highest level of education you have received.
 - ☐ Some High School ☐ Associates Degree
 - ☐ High School Degree ☐ Bachelor's Degree
 - ☐ Some College ☐ Currently Attending a Graduate School
 - ☐ Currently Attending a College ☐ Graduate Degree
 - ☐ Other (Please Describe) _____

Working experience

1. List your *most recent job* and the *number of years* you have been employed there:

Most recent job:

Number of years at your most recent job:

2. In your current job, how many hours do you work *per week*? _____ Hours
3. How would you describe your current job (you may check more than one)?
 - ☐ Admin/Support ☐ Human Resources
 - ☐ Finance ☐ Management
 - ☐ Healthcare ☐ Public Service
 - ☐ Hourly/Skilled ☐ Sales
 - ☐ Technology ☐ Other (Specify) _____

Appendix IV

Table 1. *Reliabilities, CFA Results and Correlations*

Reliabilities and Correlations					
	<i>Avoiding</i>	<i>Dominating</i>	<i>Integrating</i>	<i>Obliging</i>	Job Satisfaction
<hr/>					
Conflict Management Styles					
<i>Avoiding</i>	(.77)				
<i>Dominating</i>	.11	(.81)			
<i>Integrating</i>	-.11	-.06	(.82)		
<i>Obliging</i>	.23**	-.09	.32**	(.78)	
Job satisfaction	-.02	-.01	.44**	.26**	(.86)
<hr/>					
<u>CFA results</u>					
<hr/>					
	Contrast with baseline model				
	χ^2	<i>df</i>	χ^2 / df	χ^2 difference /df difference	GFI AGFI CFI RMSEA NFI
<hr/>					
Conflict Management Styles					
<i>Baseline(one-factor)</i>	627.4	104	6.03**	-	.64 .53 .39 .18 .36
<i>Four-factor</i>	154.6	98	1.58**	78.80**	.90 .87 .93 .06 .84
<hr/>					
Job satisfaction	51.3	20	2.57**		.93 .87 .93 .10 .90

Note.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Reliabilities are reported in parentheses on the diagonal.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Conflict Styles, Similarities in Conflict Styles and Job Satisfaction

<u>Conflict Styles</u>					
	<i>Avoiding</i>	<i>Dominating</i>	<i>Integrating</i>	<i>Obliging</i>	Job Satisfaction
Mean	3.16	2.62	3.58	3.45	3.27
Median	3.25	2.67	3.6	3.5	3.25
Mode	3	2	4	3.5	3
SD	0.73	0.77	0.62	0.58	0.63
Range	1-4.75	1-4	2.6-5	2.25-5	1.75-5
<u>Similarities from Conflict Styles</u>					
	<i>Similarity in Avoiding</i>	<i>Similarity in Dominating</i>	<i>Similarity in Integrating</i>	<i>Similarity in Obliging</i>	
Mean	4.16	4.18	4.34	4.36	
Median	4.25	4.24	4.44	4.45	
Mode	4.5	4.5	4.45	4.5	
SD	0.44	0.36	0.38	0.36	
Range	2.17-4.97	2.33-4.83	1.84-4.9	1.94-4.88	
<u>Similarities from Items in Conflict Styles</u>					
	<i>Similarity in Avoiding</i>	<i>Similarity in Dominating</i>	<i>Similarity in Integrating</i>	<i>Similarity in Obliging</i>	
Mean	4.01	4.07	4.26	4.26	
Median	4.06	4.11	4.27	4.28	
Mode	4, 4.75	4.33	4.60	4.25	
SD	0.36	0.33	0.27	0.25	
Range	2.35-4.86	2.33-4.61	3.55-4.65	3.5-4.68	

Table 3. *The Effects of Conflict Styles and Similarities from Conflict Styles on Satisfaction.*

		B	S.E.	β	<i>t</i>
<u>Conflict Styles</u>					
	Avoiding	- 0.01	0.07	-.01	-0.10
	Dominating	0.06	0.06	.07	1.00
	Integrating	0.50	0.09	.49	5.74***
	Obliging	0.16	0.10	.15	1.62
<u>Similarities from Conflict Styles</u>					
	Avoiding	0.05	0.13	.04	0.43
	Dominating	-0.03	0.13	-.02	-0.26
	Integrating	0.37	0.15	.23	2.47*
	Obliging	-0.26	0.16	-.15	-1.70
$F(8, 124) = 8.79, p < .001, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .32$					
Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$					

Table 4. *The Effects of Conflict Styles and Similarities from Items of Conflict Styles on Job Satisfaction.*

	B	S.E.	β	<i>t</i>
<u>Conflict Styles</u>				
Avoiding	-0.01	0.07	-.01	-0.07
Dominating	0.05	0.06	.06	0.73
Integrating	0.48	0.09	.47	5.47***
Obliging	0.20	0.10	.18	1.96
<u>Similarities from Items</u>				
Avoiding	0.09	0.14	.05	0.60
Dominating	-0.04	0.15	-.02	-0.26
Integrating	0.21	0.18	.09	1.15
Obliging	-0.26	0.19	-.10	-1.36
$F(8, 124) = 7.93, p < .001, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .30$				
<i>Note.</i> *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$				

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