Influence of Team Conflicts on Collaborative Value within Ashoka Fellows' Organizations in Africa

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ABSTRACT

Team conflicts result from an incompatible interaction among team members due to actual or perceived differences, and its effect varies with fundamental aspects of the group setting. This study investigated the influence of team conflicts on collaborative value; how both relationship and task conflicts impacted how the Ashoka team members interacted within and with other teams as collaboration is crucial in today's interconnected world, where many new organizational forms, such as strategic alliances, public-private partnerships, and networks, are necessary. This study adopted the explanatory sequential mixed-method research design. Data analysis techniques combined descriptive and inferential statistics. The study results confirmed that team conflicts influence collaborative value, and Intra-organizational social capital is a significant mediator between team conflicts and collaborative value. A unit change in Team Conflicts significantly changes Collaborative Value within Ashoka Fellow Organizations in Africa by 33.6 % after mediation, an increase of 9.8%. Since conflicts are common in teams, the study recommends that team leadership incorporates intra-organization social capital to increase their collaborative value.

Keywords: Team Leadership, Collaborative Value, Team Conflicts, Teams, Ashoka

I.   INTRODUCTION

Conflict, a central part of organizations, can motivate and lead to deeper understanding, better relationships, greater creativity, and a more just world, or it can become intractable, entrenched, and seemingly insurmountable where resources, human talent become fruitless endeavors (Coleman, 2018). Team conflict results from an incompatible interaction among team members due to actual or perceived differences, and its effect varies with fundamental aspects of the group setting (De Wit et al., 2012). Although conflict typically occurs during an interpersonal interaction within a team, members experiencing conflict can subconsciously influence other team members' behaviors (Emich, 2014). There are two types of conflicts: relationship and task conflicts (He et al., 2014). Relationship conflict refers to emotional or affective conflict and occurs due to personal mismatches resulting in interactive confrontations, tensions, and differences in individual values, tastes, and styles (Desivilya et al., 2010). Relationship conflict manifests itself as friction and clashes over one's mannerisms (Lee & Wong, 2017). On the other hand, task conflict or cognitive conflict occurs due to differences in views and insights concerning the team's tasks. Task conflict mainly results from different perceptions in the delivery of resources, work procedures, and policies (Desivilya et al., 2010), including disagreements among team members about particular aspects of a task (Hu et al., 2017).

Relationship conflict is more likely to occur in inter-organizational teams because of the different cultures, beliefs, and goals (Hu et al., 2017), as Team members who hold varied understandings of organizational values are more likely to experience mistrust and tensions than those with similar value clarifications (McClure, 2010). There is a difference in the roles conflict plays in intra-organizational and inter-organizational relationships because of geographic and cultural differences, where sharing complex information is easier for intra-organizational teams than inter-organizational teams. Intra-organizational teams benefit more from task conflict's creativity because the teams can share information and co-create knowledge better than inter-organizational teams (Hu et al., 2017).

 This study investigated how both relationship and task conflicts impacted how the Ashoka team members interacted within and with other teams as collaboration is crucial in today's interconnected world, where many new organizational forms, such as strategic alliances, public-private partnerships, and networks, are necessary (Schruijer, 2020). The study also examined how team conflicts affected collaboration value; finding compatible partners, coordinating relational processes, and aligning self-motives with collective objectives (Kumar, 2014), which, if managed inadequately, can undermine mutual trust, encourage opportunistic behavior, and create unenforceable commitments between partners (Krishnan et al., 2016). The study also explored how Intra-organizational Social Capital mediates the relationship between team conflict and collaborative value. The intra-organizational SC derived from interactions within and between formal and informal teams in organizations from work teams to the entire organization (Lee et al, 2017) conceptualizes an organizational resource that entails the premise of mutual objectives, trust, reciprocity (Yen et al., 2015), respect and appreciation, sharing of information and knowledge and standard norms (Milana & Maldaon, 2015).

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

After defining team conflict as the concept that comprises relationship conflict and task conflict, Hu et al. (2017) examined both the linear relationship between relationship conflict and team creativity and the nonlinear relationship between task conflict and team creativity (Hu et al., 2017). The study results indicate the importance of differentiating between relationship and task conflicts in inter-organizational teams and suggested that teams that seek high team creativity levels should overcome the challenges of exploiting task conflict's benefits while minimizing the disadvantages of relationship conflict (Hu et al., 2017). The negative impact of team conflicts demonstrated in a case where fifty to sixty percent of inter-organizational teams in Architecture, Engineering, and Construction (AEC) industries disband without achieving the desired outcomes shows that there is a need for collaborating teams to cope with the cognitive, social, institutional, and geographical differences among them for successful completion (Hu et al., 2017).

Interorganizational collaborations are prone to encounter value conflicts in their work. For example, values are the goals and obligations that the policy aims to promote as desirable in the public policy arena. Team conflicts between such goals and obligations in the design and implementation of public policies are familiar tensions among efficiency, effectiveness, equity, justice, and security. In such a situation, team conflicts can be for two reasons: policymakers increasingly asking for collaborations to remedy complex public problems that traditional teams, such as legislatures or administrative agencies, have failed to address because they encompass deeply contested values; and collaborations including multiple actors, institutional logics, and accountability relationships that often embody conflicting values (Page et al., 2018). Team conflicts may lie in partner organization teams' interests or values and the institutional environment surrounding collaboration. Team conflicts may also occur in the problem domain because partner teams have different ways of framing a problem or challenge, including its definition and root causes and acceptable goals and solutions. These sorts of team conflicts often manifest as competing aims among collaborative partner teams or difficulties in understanding problem definitions and solutions (Page et al., 2018).

Team conflicts have also emerged due to globalization, interconnected trends of using team-based work structures, and the growth of corporate conglomeration (Eisenberg & Mattarelli, 2017), resulting in many organizations working with multicultural distributed teams across broad geographical boundaries (Maznevski & Chui, 2013). Whereas global teams aim to apply the talent, varied knowledge, and skills of professionals notwithstanding of their setting and cultural context (Gibson et al., 2014), the cultural diversity that comes about with these strategies most often result in team conflicts and disagreements (Hinds et al., 2014). In a similar study on relational conflict in multicultural distributed teams, Harush et al. (2018) observed a higher presence of multicultural distributed teams as globalization infuses most daily lives. While working in global teams, team members are exposed to and contribute to a global culture that includes events, practices, and styles. The study further argues that when team members identify themselves as global multicultural teams, they stimulate higher perceived closeness levels, contributing to lower relational conflict levels (Harush et al., 2018). Therefore when team members from diverse teams interact more closely and get to know each other, they replace their initial reserved perceptions with personal knowledge about them and move from surface-level perceptions and indifference to more connected, deep-level engagements (Guillaume et al., 2015; Chiu and Staples, 2013). Therefore, the study claims that under low levels of team interconnection, the higher perceived proximity impacts how teams relate and lowers the relational conflict (Harush et al., 2018).

Intra-organizational Social Capital plays an essential role in developing more cooperative, productive, and stable relationships with organizations that contribute to teams' and organizations' growth and development (Lee et al., 2017). The benefits of intra-organizational SC are personal and organizational, such as reducing turnover and employee absence, increasing employee satisfaction and reinforcing "intellectual capital" by creating a supportive environment of knowledge and information exchange and preservation (Ben Hador, 2017). The nature and quality of the relationships among team members, relational social capital, affect behavior where trust engenders cohesion and general reciprocity that help overcome free-riding. High trust also enhances knowledge exchange and promotes efficient operation, especially where knowledge exchange carries risk and uncertainties (Prieto-Pastor et al., 2018). Cognitive capital is the extent to which team members have a shared understanding of their work tasks and the teamwork (Meng et al., 2018) and the contexts of meaningful communication among them (Lee et al., 2015). It develops among team members whose activities have a common focus (Randel et al., 2017) and reflects the shared understanding that is converged on by all team members (Chang, 2017). Drawing from this literature, we highlight the three specific aspects of social capital to explain how the intra-organizational social context mediates the relationship between team conflicts and collaborative value.

III.   METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the explanatory sequential mixed-method research design consisting of two distinct phases: quantitative and qualitative. The researcher collected and analyzed the quantitative data. Secondly, qualitative data was collected and analyzed to elaborate on the first phase's quantitative results. This approach's rationale was that the quantitative data and subsequent analysis would provide a general understanding of the research problem. The qualitative data and their analysis refined and explained those statistical results by exploring participants' views more deeply.

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and SmartPLS 3 software was adopted to analyze the data. Data analysis techniques combined descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistical tests were mean and standard deviation and preliminary data assessments that included reliability, normality, multicollinearity, and validity. The inferential statistical tests undertaken included goodness of fit and structural model assessment. The qualitative study applied purposive sampling and selected 6 Ashoka team leaders. This form of sampling was appropriate for this study as it was essential to select those that were enormously informative to give an insight into the results from the quantitative study.

IV.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's specific elements addressing Team Conflicts were task conflicts and relational conflicts of team members. The results in Table 1 revealed that the majority of the respondents were in agreement that team disagreements are usually task-oriented, and they have long discussions; however, team members always put reason before emotions, with a mean responses rate of 3.71 (Agreement) and a standard deviation of 0.808, with the highest agreement being from West Africa French region (Mean = 4.12). The majority of the respondents were in agreement that the conflicts which the team experience are usually associated with the tasks and justified in a way that makes sense to all team members (Mean = 3.61, SD = 0.803), with the highest agreement being from Pan Africa region with a mean of 4. Most respondents agreed that team members experience different opinions that are quite heated; however, it brings everything to the table (Mean = 3.8, SD = 0.853), with the highest agreement being noted from the West Africa French region.

On the opinion that the conflicts are characterized by intense feelings and a motivation to find the best solution, the majority agreed with an overall mean response of 3.76 and standard deviation of 0.842, with the highest agreement being noted from the West Africa French-speaking region. Most respondents agreed that team discussions are lively and energized; however, they have a shared need to find the best alternative (Mean = 4.13, SD = 0.63), with the highest agreement noted in the Southern Africa region.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics - Team Conflicts

Region		Our disagreements are usually task-oriented, and we have long discussions; however, we always put reason before emotions	The conflicts which the team experience are usually associated with the tasks and justified in a way that makes sense to all team members	We experience different opinions that are quite heated; however, it brings everything to the table	The conflicts are characterized by intense feelings and a motivation to find the best solution	Our team discussions are lively and energized; however, we have a shared need of finding the best alternative
West Africa English	Mean	3.62	3.66	4.03	3.69	4.14
	N	29	29	29	29	29
	Std. Deviation	0.903	0.814	0.499	0.85	0.639
West Africa French	Mean	**4.12**	3.68	**4.2**	**4.24**	4.12
	N	25	25	25	25	25
	Std. Deviation	0.726	0.852	0.408	0.523	0.526
East Africa	Mean	3.5	3.61	3.71	3.61	3.96
	N	28	28	28	28	28
	Std. Deviation	0.793	0.737	0.897	0.737	0.576
Southern Africa	Mean	3.59	3.41	3	3.35	**4.41**
	N	17	17	17	17	17
	Std. Deviation	0.618	0.87	1.173	1.057	0.795
Pan Africa	Mean	4	**4**	3	5	4
	N	1	1	1	1	1
	Std. Deviation	.	.	.	.	.
Total	**Mean**	**3.71**	**3.61**	**3.8**	**3.76**	**4.13**
	N	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
	Std. Deviation	**0.808**	**0.803**	**0.853**	**0.842**	**0.63**

The measurement model assessment involved assessing the constructs' internal consistency reliability, Multicollinearity test, and Normality test as presented in table 2. Team Conflict reliability of 0.712 is acceptable; a VIF of 2.0 confirms that the data is devoid of multicollinearity. A normality test with a significance of below 0.5 indicates that the data is suffering from nonnormality. However, the normal Q-Q plot Figure 1 shows that the observed values do not deviate much from the expected values.

Table 2: Statistical Tests – Team Conflict

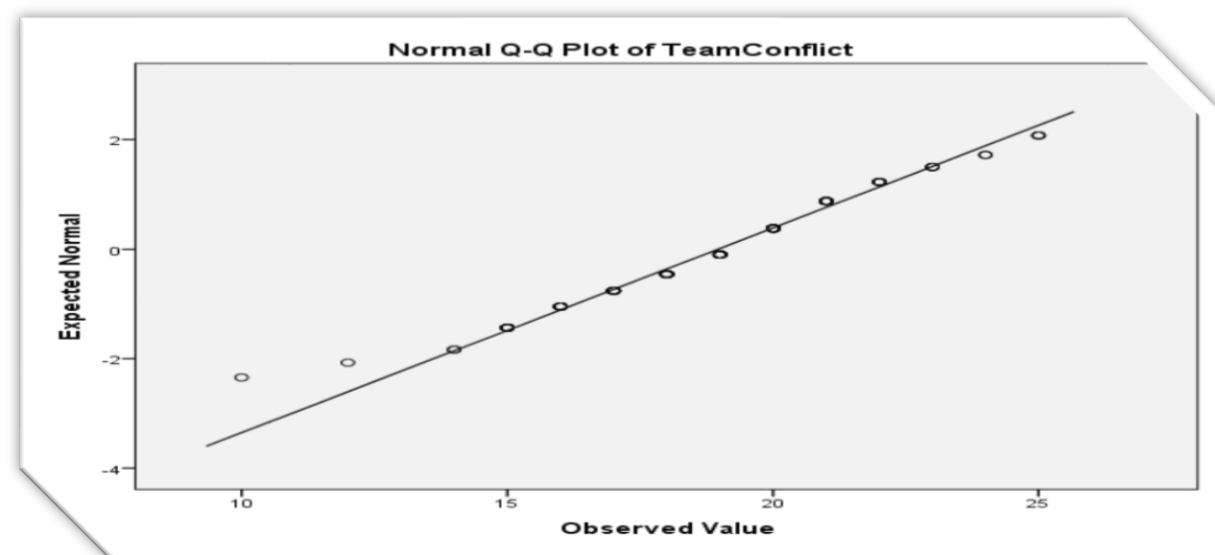| Reliability Test	Cronbach Alpha	No. of Items	Decision
	0.712	5	Acceptable
Multicollinearity Test	**Tolerance**	**VIF**	
	0.500	2.00	
Normality Test	**Statistic**	**Df**	**Significance**
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	.121	104	.001
Shapiro-Wilk	.971	104	. 021

Figure 1: Normal Q-Q Plot for Team Conflict

Analysis conducted to assess convergent validity on Team conflict latent variables presented in Table 3 found that the average variance extracted (AVE) range between 0.348 and 0.619. Thus, the convergent validity for Team Conflict explains 47% of their variance.

Table 3: Convergent Validity –Team Conflict

|		AVE
Our disagreements are usually task-oriented, and we have long discussions; however, we always put reason before emotions	1.000	0.619
The conflicts which the team experience are usually associated with the tasks and justified in a way that makes sense to all team members	1.000	0.430
We experience different opinions that are quite heated; however, it brings everything to the table	1.000	0.348
The conflicts are characterized by intense feelings and a motivation to find the best solution	1.000	0.543
Our team discussions are lively and energized; however, we have a shared need of finding the best alternative	1.000	0.405

As presented in table 5, the KMO index was 0.746, and Bartlett's Test was significant at X^2 (10, *N*=100) = 133.833, *p*<.05. Therefore, this output shows the team conflict factors were adequate for extraction since Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure was greater than 0.5 and Bartlett's test was significant (*p*<.05).

Table 4: KMO and Bartletts Test - Team Conflict

KMO Value		0.672
Bartlett's Test	Approx. Chi-Square	98.804
	df	10
	Sig.	0.000

The chi-square value for the model relationship between team conflict and collaborative value was 80.581, significant with a p-value below 0.05. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) was 0.732, which shows that the index was above 0.5, which represented an acceptable fit. SRMR value was 0.103, which was below 0.2 for the models. rms_theta value was 0.236 and thus below 0.4, which implies that the model was a good fit. The study used a fixed number of one hundred respondents for the analysis with a probability value of 5%. The model's statistical power value was 0.999, revealing that the model had adequate statistical power with a value above 0.8. There is no probability of correctly rejecting a null hypothesis when that hypothesis is not true in the population. The R^2 value was obtained from the model for the overall model team coaching and collaborative value (TCH&CV), as shown in Figure 2. Acceptable R^2 values are based on the context and in some disciplines, and an R^2 value as low as 0.10 is considered satisfactory (Hair et al., 2019). The R^2 value obtained on this model was 0.238, which indicated that the team conflicts model accounts for 23.8% of the variation in collaborative value. The variation of 76.2% is accounted for by other variables not included in this model.

The path analysis demonstrates that the constructs used to test Team Conflicts (TCF1-TCF5) were adequate with weights of between 0.401 and 0.810. This reveals that the Ashoka teams experience both relational and task conflicts, although their disagreements are usually task-oriented. The path analysis also confirms a positive relationship between Team Conflicts and Collaborative Value weighted at 0.487, which accounts for 23.8% of the variation in collaborative value.
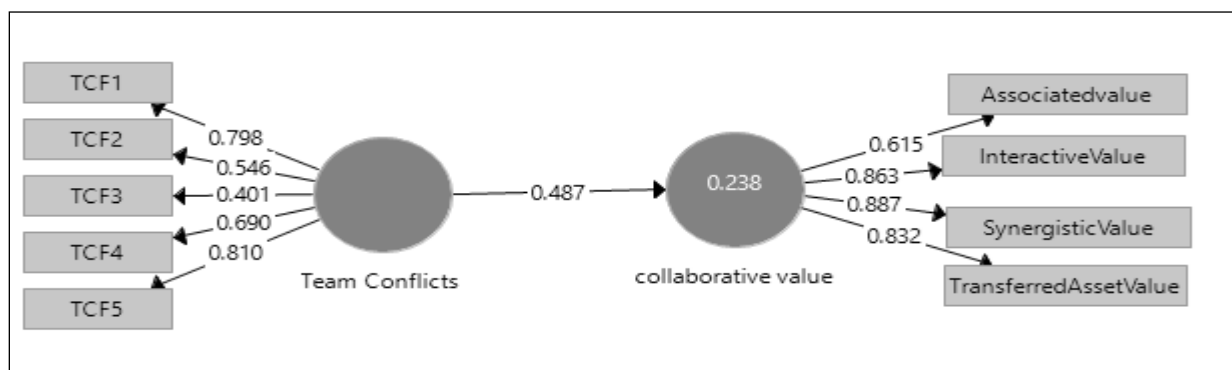
Figure 2: Path Model -Team Conflicts and Collaborative Value

There is a strong positive relationship of 0.506 between Team conflicts and Inta-Organizational social capital. Intra-organizational social capital mediates the relationship between team conflicts and collaborative value. Before mediation, the R square value is 0.238, as shown in figure 2. After mediation, the value increases to 0.336, indicating that the model of team conflicts accounts for 33.6% of the variation in collaborative value as shown in figure 3. The variation of 33.6% is accounted for through the mediation of Intra-organizational social capital, which is a significant mediator factor.
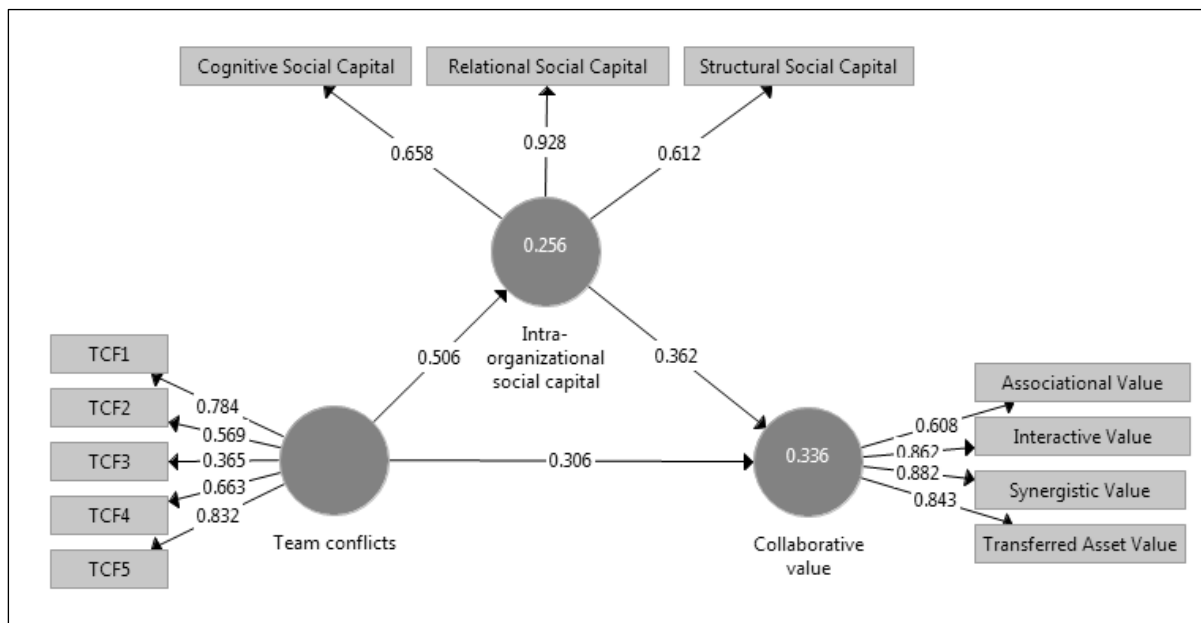

Figure 3: Path Model of Intra-organizational Social Capital Mediation in the relationship between Team Conflicts and Collaborative Value

Hypothesis testing – team conflicts and collaborative value

H $_{01}$: Team Conflicts do not significantly influence Collaborative Value within Ashoka Fellow Organizations in Africa.

The hypothesis was tested using the chi-square test. The acceptance/rejection criteria were that if the p-value is greater than 0.05, the Ho_1 is not rejected, but if it is less than 0.05, the Ho_1 is rejected. The p-value was 0.000<0.05, and the chi-square value was 80.581, and, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. The study concluded that Team Conflicts influences Collaborative Value within Ashoka Fellow organizations in Africa. The interviews from Ashoka senior staff informed the study on Team Conflict and Collaborative value. The Ashoka staff interviewed discussed the disconnect between the global and regional teams due to a lack of appreciation of the regional expertise, regional culture, and regional context as a practical decision-making agent. There is discomfort among Ashoka fellow teams who work with teams from the west as their opinions weigh more, especially if they offer a financial resource to the collaboration. This creates relational conflicts as the Ashoka teams feel unappreciated for the contribution they bring to the collaboration.

Another cause of conflict in Ashoka Fellows Organizations in Africa results from language and cultural barriers. To interact and synergize for collaborative value, Ashoka teams in Africa continue to experience task conflicts. An example was expanding ICON (Innovative Cooperative for Optimal Nutrition), a collaborative platform from the Sahel, to the English-speaking West Africa region. The cooperative's activities contribute concretely to increasing agricultural production and the productivity of local nutritious food among its members and partners, adding substantial value to local products for consumers at regional markets, and raising awareness about the importance of increasing their local consumption of nutritious food. All the Ashoka teams from both regions planned and agreed that ICON would serve them well and support their agriculture work. However, the reality is that the difference in language, culture, and leadership approach created conflicts. These conflicts, both relational and task-related, have affected and slowed down the collaborative value. This example validates the study results that team conflicts affect Collaborative Value with Ashoka Fellow teams in Africa.

V. CONCLUSION(S)

Team Conflicts which include task-oriented disagreements and relational disagreements, are usually solved through lengthy discussions and are justified in a way that makes sense over the different opinions among team members. Solving conflicts enhances collaborative value, and this is further enhanced when teams embrace intra-organizational social capital, which the study confirmed as a significant mediator between team conflicts and collaborative value. A unit change in Team Conflicts significantly changes Collaborative Value within Ashoka Fellow Organizations in Africa by 33.6 % after mediation, an increase of 9.8%.

VI. RECOMMENDATION(S)

Since conflicts are common in teams, the study recommends that team leadership incorporates intra-organization social capital to increase their collaborative value. Intra-Organizational Social Capital mediates the relationship between Team Conflicts and Collaborative Value within Ashoka Fellows' Organizations in Africa. Based on this finding, further research could be a study investigating how teams build their social capital and how Intra-Organizational Social Capital can be enhanced to improve teams' performance.

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