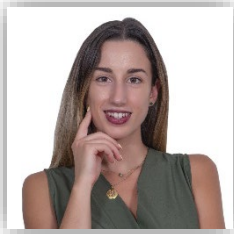


APPROACHES TO CONFLICT IN THE 5* HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN GREECE THROUGH A POSITIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY PERSPECTIVE



Aikaterini Ourania Prifti

Business Psychologist, MA in Positive Psychotherapy
at ICPS Greece (Athen, Greece)

Email: a.prifti@student.icps.edu.gr



Gabriela Hum

Positive psychotherapist, International Master trainer of Positive Psychotherapy,
Supervisor (Cluj, Romania)

President of the RPPA, Member of WAPP Board of Directors

Email: Gabriela.hum@positum.ro

Received 15.11.2022

Accepted for publication 30.12.2022

Published 20.01.2023

Abstract

The purpose of the current study was to understand the nature of the conflict reactions that employees of 5* Greek hotels that belong to the higher management levels tend to present. The research aimed to find out if there is any connection between special primary and secondary capacities described in PPT and conflict reactions in people who have higher management roles.

Keywords: positive psychotherapy, conflicts, hospitality

Introduction

Conflict is defined as a difficulty of one individual or more to decide upon a particular process or option and the resulting disturbance of the decision making which that can cause (Can, 2005). Wherever there is the human factor, conflict may arise and thus organizational conflict is also a spectrum of conflict equally researched in recent years. Organizational conflict is defined as a dispute between two or more co-workers or groups who are requested to functionally work in co-dependent positions that may however differ in status, management level, value, or perception (Nicotera & Dorsey, 2006). Conflicts as a natural and inevitable aspect of human interaction may

cause functional or dysfunctional consequences according to the way they are managed. Cupach and Canary (1995) reported that those who are capable of allocating and dealing with conflict through effective communication techniques will experience productive and positive results. Conflict management and conflict resolution ought to be seen as highly important characteristics which an employee is to bring to his/hers working environment and one that can potentially lead to increased work well – being.

Robbins (1987) stated that, on its own, conflict does not have negative meaning. It is, however, the way that it is settled or nurtured within an organization that may have significant negative consequences. Hence, it is only logical to expect pervasive effects to come from the different

conflict management styles in the organizations, that may lead the employees to an ongoing conflict experience.

To what degree, though, is this conflict affected by different factors? According to research, conflict levels are affected by the amount of stressful situations in the organization (Friedman, Curall & Tsai, 2000). This is also seen to work vice versa, where conflict levels affect the amount of stress in employees. Moreover, it has been presented that people with different dispositions are seen to create different social environments for themselves, when at work (Friedman, Curall & Tsai, 2000). Thus, it can be hypothesized that persons with different reactions to conflict, higher levels of stress or anxiety, or lower resilience and patience could also affect conflict, either increasing or decreasing it. A person's situation then will not only depend on external conditions but also on internal approaches towards his/her own problems or other people.

1.1. PPT and conflicts

Positive Psychotherapy (PPT) according to Peseschkian integrates humanistic, psychodynamic and cognitive – behavioral factors into a framework of inner capacities in individuals that may unfold a lifetime process of differentiation (Peseschkian, 1977). The approach takes into consideration not only the correct diagnosis of the symptoms but also the strengths of the patient and his/her inner, underdeveloped resources. It emphasizes activating these personal resources, supporting the individual in the process, and elaborating on his/her fantasies. It is an evidence and theory-based model with clinical applications, that has been operating among psychotherapists and medical doctors for decades (Dobiala & Winkler, 2016).

PPT is also characterized as conflict-centered. It emphasizes what is being “given” to the patient and works on that in order to overdevelop the right capacities for dealing with the conflicts of life (Cope, 2013). There are times when these capacities can become a source of the inner conflicts, as they receive different values or emphasis due to different cultures, time periods or even personality traits (Peseschkian, 2000). These conflicts are seen as microtraumas, daily infractions that are causing distress. They are also seen as value judgments based on concepts that are formed within everyone regarding our capacities (Kennedy et al., 2012).

It can be evident that the conflicts arise partly from the individual's values learned inside the family system and hence may originate from these capacities learned inside this system. The difference between PPT and other psychotherapeutic approaches is that PPT will not focus on the symptom but, instead, will aid to broaden the client's concept regarding these values, establish newly gained counter-concepts about them, and present to the client the past where he learned all of these reactions (Cope, 2013). The notion here is for the patient to understand how these patterns are affecting him/her in the present and to become his own creator in consciously working ahead to change any future reactions. It is an opportunity to comprehend that the symptoms may not be generalized and connect the incidents of the past with the repetitive patterns and behaviors of the future, to relieve the client.

There are numerous cases in which PPT has been utilized to provide further help and understanding. Cases of group therapy and family therapy have been explored for internal conflict situations, as well as child and adolescent situations. There is established research in medical environments where PPT has been proven helpful to the trainers, practitioners and doctors in establishing a psychosomatic method. Evidence also supports the efficacy of PPT in providing information and training in schools for vice – principals, school psychotherapists and teachers, speech therapists and groups of parents. PPT has also been used in organisational environments and management trainings, individual and group coaching and mentoring, ‘stress surfing’ (Kirillov, 2013) as well as in developing management techniques for operational and managing directors.

1.2. WIPPF

Peschkian has presented some well-tested inventories for understanding the internal conflicts and conflict contents of the individuals. One of them is the WIPPF, Wiesbaden Inventory for Positive Psychotherapy and Family Therapy, which is an 88-question inventory that make sense and establishes the meaning of these capacities, while also providing information about conflict resolution, family relations as well as the active-passive dimension to capacities (Cope, 2013). WIPPF's main function is the examination of the individual's characterological and personal

characteristics (primary and secondary abilities), where the conflict reacts inside the client, based on the Balance Model and the four areas, while also presenting the psychodynamics that are underlying every personality concept and trait (Serdiuk & Otenko, 2021).

WIPPF is formed by 27 inventory scales. They all assess the significance of the personal characteristics of the individual in the three basic areas: the actual capabilities that are primary in relation to themselves and secondary to their behaviour, the conflict reaction in the four areas of the balance model as described above and the perceived parameters of the model of relations. For the purpose of the present study, not all of the items of the questionnaire will be used.

The inventory has been used mainly in psychotherapy and has been focused on clients who need to create a higher self-assessment and start negotiating their internal sources and conflicted models (Serdiuk & Otenko, 2021). There is no research testing the inventory in an organisation to aid the employees to acquire business knowledge and improve their in-between relationships.

Methodology

2.1. Objective

The study will use quantitative methods to explore the research question. Personality traits will be investigated in order to evaluate their role in creating competition or avoidance within the organizations and working environments.

2.2. Research Question

The research question for the present study has been denoted as: "What is the level of conflict created in employees at the higher level of management in the hospitality industry in Greece, based on personality traits?"

For the purpose of the study and for running the data in order to determine the findings, some research sub-question are to be taken into consideration, as: "Will personality traits and standard reactions to conflict play a crucial role in dealing with conflict situations?"

2.3. Participants

30 participants were collected for the purpose of the study. The participants are employees at the higher-management level from a variety of 5* hotels in Greece. As the data were collected during summer 2022, which is the high season for hotels in Greece and employees tend to work increased hours (6/7 days a week, approximately 10 hours

per day) it was difficult to gain more participation as the individuals were not willing to take part. The participants were from hotels in Corfu, Santorini, Crete, Mithilini, Athens and Thessaloniki.

The researcher contacted the HR Manager of each of the above Hotels in order to firstly gain their permission. Then, either the HR Manager or the researcher would contact the participants individually, in order to explain some information regarding the research and why their participation is important. The respondents were informed that the data to be collected would be used only for the purposes of the current study and that their data will be maintained confidentially. Once they were informed of the confidentiality and ethical issues, they were given the self-administered questionnaires to fill in, which were transferred into a Google Form for their convenience.

The mean age of the participants was 29.20 years, while the majority of them was between 30 to 35 years of age. The employees were 43.3% male and 56.6% female. Exactly half of them have a University degree (50%), while only a percentage of 26.6% have a Masters degree.

2.4. Instrument development

The study's hypothesis is that there will be correlations between conflict and social norms or personality traits. The study used two different questionnaires: a) for personality traits, capacities and reactions to conflict: the WIPPF Questionnaire and b) for conflict resolution: the Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (CRQ).

The research consisted of three parts. The first part had questions regarding the agreement to participate and information about the research, also ethics. Gender, age and education level were also gathered as information on this first part.

Section 2 contained the WIPPF questions (Remmers, 1996) that presented the levels of primary and secondary capabilities, also conflict reactions in the areas of the body, achievement, contact and future / fantasy which the participants observe in themselves.

Section 3 consisted of the Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (McClellan, 1997a). The CRQ was developed by a higher education provider in the United States and can offer some greater insight to individuals regarding their self-awareness of conflict, while also giving the participants a better understanding of how to solve existing or potential conflict situations in their daily lives. Here the participants were asked to rate themselves regarding how they respond in different conflict situations.

Results

For the purpose of the study, age, gender, education level, secondary and primary capacities, reaction to conflict have been selected to be the independent variables and conflict resolution to be the dependent variable. Statistical analysis was conducted with SPSS version 28.0. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was employed for testing the respondents' demographic characteristics, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis.

For the purpose of the study, multiple regression analysis and a simple regression analysis was used to examine the data. Multiple regression was used as it aided conducting the analysis between our dependent variable and our several independent variables. Hence, the researcher could predict the value of the single dependent variable and how each predictor is weighed (Moore et al., 2006).

3.1. Normality check

First, a normality check was performed for the two variables of interest: competition and avoidance, along with all the other measurements of orderliness, cleanliness, punctuality, politeness, honesty, achievement, seriousness, reliability, thrift, obedience, justice, fidelity, patience, time, contact, trust, hope, tenderness, love acceptance, faith, body senses, work achievement, contact conflict and future fantasy and demographics: age and years of formal schooling. Based on the criterion Shapiro-Wilk and the normal plots, all aforementioned variables are normally distributed except for years of formal schooling, conflicts in the contact area and body senses area.

3.2. Initial correlation analysis

Correlation analysis using parametric statistical test Pearson r revealed no significant correlation patterns between demographics (age and years of formal schooling) and the two variables of interest: competition and avoidance.

Additional correlation analyses between avoiding and further measurements of conflicts in the areas of body senses, work achievement, contact, future fantasy, and patience, time, contact, trust, hope, tenderness, sexuality, love acceptance, faith, meaning of life, orderliness, cleanliness, punctuality, politeness, honesty, achievement, thrift, obedience, justice and fidelity failed to reach significance, with a small negative

correlation with seriousness – reliability [$r(30) = -.363$, $p = .035$], while equivalent correlations with competition revealed only a significant small negative correlation with justice [$r(30) = -.376$, $p = .040$].

3.3. Regression models

Finally, two distinct regression models were conducted. In the first multiple regression model competition was entered as the variable of interest and justice as predictors. The selection of this factor was based on the fact that its measurement revealed significant correlations with competition. The model predicting competition from justice was significant [$F(2,29) = 6.575$, $p = .005$]. Within this model justice ($\beta = -.337$, $t = -2.127$, $p = .043$) was significantly associated with reduced competition values. The total model explained 27.8% of variance (adjusted $R^2 = .278$) (see table 1).

Table 1
Multiple regression with competing as the criterion and trait anxiety and justice as predictors

Predictors	B	SE B	B
justice	-	.179	-
	.381		.337*

$R^2 = .328$, adjusted $R^2 = .278$

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

Conclusions

The purpose of the present study was to examine the conflict reactions of employees at the higher level of management in the hospitality industry in regards to factors such as the age, gender and education. Personality traits were examined through the method of Positive Psychotherapy using the WIPPF questionnaire, which gave the researcher the opportunity to observe the primary and secondary capabilities along with the conflict reactions and check for correlations.

The study contributed to the generally under-researched area of the hotel industry and conflict management aspects among Heads of Departments (HODs). It provided a greater insight into potential factors that create organizational conflict situations. According to the literature review, there is no previous research that has investigated this hospitality environment, and there is also a gap into looking at this subject from the perspective of positive psychotherapy. This research provided an opportunity to observe a great area of PPT, the conflict reactions, and granted insight into the two conflict management

styles discussed above – avoidance and competition – and where they are related in terms of the personality traits and stress factors.

The results of the WIPPF scale presented results of medium significance in response to the personality traits of the participants. The two conflict styles were both correlated with one personality capability. First, **avoidance was correlated with seriousness – reliability**, which was seen as belonging to the secondary capabilities of the participants. This relation is of significance for our research, as it provides an input to distinct personality traits of highly avoidant individuals when in conflict situations. Considering the meaning of the trait, it is seen that in conflict situations, participants who tend to follow an avoidance style are often seen to have higher levels of seriousness and reliability. These results could have a positive interpretation if they are to be elaborated according to the statement that individuals who present increased stress because of work are often seen to avoid it, in order to find the right balance in the work. Hence, seriousness and reliability are key capabilities that help the individual to judge the situation and decide on its desired outcome (Averti et al., 2004). According to the WIPPF questionnaire and based on the concepts of conflict reaction that are seen in Positive Psychotherapy, it is estimated that seriousness is a trait and capability of individuals that promotes autonomy and self-determination (Serdiuk & Otenko, 2021).

The competition style in conflict situations was significantly correlated with justice, which also belongs to the secondary capabilities of the WIPPF questionnaire. According to Serdiuk and Otenko (2021) justice promotes personal growth but may also make contributions to autonomy and self – determination, in the same way as seriousness and reliability can. That means that justice is a moderator and if it is in place, it can possibly affect the conflict reactions, and regulate the level of either the competition or avoidance which an individual will present.

References

- [1] CAN, H. (2005). *Organization and management*. Political Bookstore. Baski: Ankara.
- [2] COPE, T. (2014). Positive Psychotherapy: 'Let the truth be told'. *International Journal of Psychotherapy*, 18(2), pp. 62 – 71.
- [3] CUPACH, W. R., & CANARY, D. J. (1995). Managing Conflict and Anger: Investigating the Sex Stereotype Hypothesis. PJ Kalbfl fleisch & MJ Cody (Eds.), *Gender, power, and communication in human relationships*, pp. 233 – 255.
- [4] DOBIAŁA, E., & WINKLER, P. (2016). Positive psychotherapy'according to Seligman and 'Positive Psychotherapy'according to Peseschkian: A Comparison. *Int J Psychother*, 20 (3), 3.
- [5] FRIEDMAN, R. A., TIDD, S. T., CURRALL, S. C., & TSAI, J. C. (2000). What goes around comes around: The impact of personal conflict style on work conflict and stress. *International Journal of Conflict Management* 11 (1), pp. 32 – 55.
- [6] KENNEDY, R., VERDELI, H., VOUSOURA, E., VIDAIR, H., GAMEROFF, M. J., & ZENG, R. R. (2014). Incorporating evidence-based practices into psychotherapy training in clinical psychology Ph. D. programs in the United States. *Professional Issues 80 Adverts*, 18, pp. 21 – 38
- [7] KIRILLOV, I. (2020). Positive Psychosomatics. In: Messias E., Peseschkian H., Cagande C. (eds), *Positive Psychiatry, Psychotherapy and Psychology* (pp. 165-175). Springer, Cham
- [8] MCCLELLAN, J. (1997). The Conflict Resolution Questionnaire. URL:
- [9] <https://studentlifeguru.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/conflict-questionnaire.pdf> [accessed: 14.11.2022].
- [10] MOORE, A. W., ANDERSON, B., DAS, K., & WONG, W. K. (2006). Combining multiple signals for biosurveillance. *Handbook of biosurveillance*, pp. 235 – 242
- [11] NICOTERA, A. M., & DORSEY, L. K. (2006). *Individual and interactive processes in organizational conflict*. In J. G. Oetzel & S. Ting-Toomey (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of conflict communication: Integrating theory, research, and practice* (pp. 293–326). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- [12] PESECHKIAN, N. (2016). *Positive psychotherapy of everyday life*. Bloomington, USA: AuthorHouse. 326 p. (first German edition in 1977).
- [13] REMMERS, A. (1996). WIPPF 2.0 int. Transcultural Adaptation of the Psychotherapeutic Questionnaire WIPPF for the International Use. Theoretical and Practical Aspects. WIPPF 2.0 int. - Транскултурална обработка на психотерапевтичния въпросник WIPPF за международно приложение / теоретически и практически аспект. *Journal Positum*, pp. 13 – 28.
- [14] ROBBINS, S. P. (1978). "Conflict management" and "conflict resolution" are not synonymous terms. *California management review*, 21(2), pp. 67-75
- [15] SERDIUK, L., & OTENKO, S. (2021). The Ukrainian-language adaptation for the Wiesbaden inventory for Positive Psychotherapy and family therapy (WIPPF). *The Global Psychotherapist*, Vol. 1. No. 1, pp. 11 – 14. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52982/ikj135>

Study limitations

The current study presented some important limitations regarding the sample size, the age rankings (generations), the self – conducted reports, implications due to the summer season in Greece and heavy workloads and the low investigation and research of WIPPF Questionnaire.

