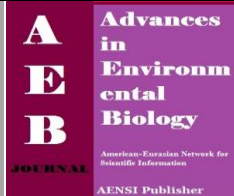




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The Influence of Social Axiom Towards Conflict Management Among Working Adult in Kangar, Perlis

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ABSTRACT

This study is to identify the relationship between social axioms and conflict management. Social axiom can be understood as the social beliefs or general understanding of the public and society. Social axioms are generalized beliefs about oneself, the social and physical environment, or the spiritual world, and are in the form of an assertion about the relationship between two entities or concepts (Leung et al. 2002). Conflict is the disagreement between two parties. Salami (2009) gives the definition of conflict in an organization as a disagreement between or within groups in an organisation. This study is conducted in Kangar, Perlis among the working adults. A total of 142 respondents were recruited and a questionnaire is used as the data collection method. The questionnaire consist of statements regarding the five social axioms, social cynicism; social complexity; religion; reward for application and fate control, and conflict management. The data collected through the questionnaire is analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results show that out of the five axioms identified, social cynicism and fate control does not have any significant relationship with conflict management. There are significant relationship between social complexity, religion and reward for application and conflict management, indicating that working adults in Kangar are influenced and motivated by social complexity, religion and reward.

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INTRODUCTION

The study is to confirm whether the conflict management is influenced by social axioms. Social axioms are known as generalized beliefs about oneself, the social and physical environment, or the spiritual world, and are in the form of an assertion about the relationship between two entities or concepts [6].

There are studies done to identify the dimensions of the axioms that are widely identified and used by society. In the investigation, many aspects have been investigated and Leung *et al.* [6] has identified five dimensions that are included in social axioms. The axioms identified are social cynicism, social complexity, and fate of control, religiosity and reward for application.

Pantelli & Sockalingam [8] cites the definition of conflict by Hocker & Wilmot as “an expressed struggle between at least two inter-dependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals”. Conflict can arise from many different basis. It can come from power differentials, competition over resources, tendencies to differentiate, ambiguity over responsibility and denial [8].

Being in a multi-cultural country like Malaysia, there are many different types of cultures and in Malaysia, many individuals are raised in society that is very much influenced by culture and tradition as well as general beliefs.

Malaysia ranks first in the humane orientation in the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) study among 18,000 managers in 62 countries. This shows that Malaysians are people oriented and influenced by culture, in additions to this, In addition, Malaysians are also religious [1].

Malaysia, besides having Islam as its official religion, also hosts three major ethnic groups and religions, namely Malay, Islam; Chinese, Buddhist/Christian; and Indian, Hindu/Christian [5]. It can be assumed that work experiences of Malaysian employees would reflect, to a certain extent, the rich cultural values of Islam, Christianity and Buddhism embedded in this multi-ethnic society [5]. With this, it can be believed that Malaysians manage conflict influences by culture, namely social beliefs.

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Literature Review:

The word social can be understood as communal or public or shared. It can be explained as something known to be collective or combined. Axiom is facts or reality that is given or done based on assumption. It is a belief, value and code that cannot be proved or disapproved. The words social and axiom combined can mean a shared belief by society or the public that is usually based on assumptions that do not have hard facts or proof to defend the belief as right or to argue that the belief is wrong.

Social axioms refer to context-free beliefs and assume the following form: A is related to B. A and B can be any constructs, and people's belief in a belief statement is reflected by their perceived likelihood of the relationship [6]. Social Axioms can be recognised as a general understanding by the public, an unspoken understanding or agreement. These general beliefs are pitched at a high level of abstraction and hence are likely to relate to social behaviours across a variety of contexts, actors, targets, and time periods [6]. These general beliefs are then labelled as social axioms.

A formal definition for social axiom has been given. Social axioms are generalized beliefs about oneself, the social and physical environment, or the spiritual world, and are in the form of an assertion about the relationship between two entities or concepts [6].

Leung *et al.* [7] developed a Social Axiom Survey (SAS) to identify the dimensions of Social Axiom.

The SAS was first constructed with statements about similar topics and issues and were grouped into the four following categories [7].

- Psychological attributes: Axioms concerning characteristics of individuals
- Orientation toward the social world: Axioms about the social characteristics of groups, organizations, and societies
- Social interaction: Axioms about how people interact with each other
- Environment: Axioms about aspects of the environment that have implications for social behaviour

The five identified factors of social axioms are:

- I. Social Cynicism
- II. Social Complexity
- III. Reward for Application
- IV. Religion
- V. Fate Control

Factor one is labelled cynicism because the items represent a negative view of human nature, a biased view against some groups of people, a mistrust of social institutions, and a disregard of ethical means for achieving an end [7].

The second factor is labelled social complexity because the items in this factor suggest that there are no rigid rules but rather multiple ways of achieving a given outcome and that inconsistency in human behaviour is common. The third factor is labelled reward for application because the items represent a general belief that effort, knowledge, and careful planning will lead to positive results [7].

The fourth factor is labelled spirituality as the items refer to the existence of supernatural forces and the functions of religious belief. The fifth factor is labelled fate control as the items represent a belief that life events are predetermined and that there are some ways for people to influence these outcomes.

Conflict, in an easier term can be known as disagreement. Conflict is a common hindrance, where two or more people have a dispute with each other. Interpersonal conflict is a disagreement between two or more persons. Organisational conflict is a disagreement between or within groups in an organisation [9]. Conflict is often seen as a negative issue and often involves a provocation of influential emotions like anger, irritation, doubt and nervousness.

Once a conflict occurs; there is always an assumption that it will produce a negative outcome. However, there has been findings stating that if conflict is handled properly, it can provide positive outcomes and benefits individuals. Robert A. Baron [4] has investigated the positive effects of conflict.

Conflict can be managed in many ways with strategies available to smooth the process of resolving the conflict. Balay [3] states that there are four types of concern in conflict management that leads to the approach used in conflict resolution. There is yielding, avoiding, problem solving and compromising.

Methodology:

To obtain the information needed in this research, a quantitative approach is chosen. The respondents of the research are working adults in the town of Kangar in Perlis and to investigate how much general beliefs influence them into managing a conflict. A quantitative research is, explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods [2].

The identified region that is used for the research is the town of Kangar, Perlis. The target respondents are working adult in the area. Since the target population of the research is not a relatively large population, this research targets 150 respondents. Furthermore, Sekaran [10] states that too large a sample size can be problem

and findings in the research that should be rejected might be accepted. However, too small a sample size is not encouraged as well. Sample sizes larger than 30 and less than 500 is appropriate for most research [10].

150 working individuals are then randomly selected to help in answering the research questions, namely the questionnaire formulated for the research. Out of the 150 questionnaires handed out, 142 questionnaires are retrieved, therefore, in this research, the 142 questionnaires will be used and analysed.

A questionnaire is used to obtain the data needed and to find the answer for the hypothesis of the study.

There are five hypotheses in this research.

H¹: Social cynicism influence how an individual manage conflict

H²: Social complexity influence how an individual manage conflict

H³: Reward for Application influence how an individual manage conflict

H⁴: Religion influence how an individual manage conflict

H⁵: Fate of Control influence how an individual manage conflict

There are two parts in the questionnaire formulated. The first part of the questionnaire is the demographics of the respondents. Five questions are asked in the demographic section. The general questions regarding age, gender, ethnicity, education level and income level is asked. The second part of the questionnaire is regarding the research objective, which is to investigate the influence of general beliefs towards conflict management.

The second part of the questionnaire consists of thirty questions, with five questions for each variable. With five independent variable and one dependent variable, there will be questions regarding the variables and the respondents are to rate how they feel about the statements.

The questions used in the questionnaire are closed questions. There are five alternatives given to the respondents, ranging from Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree. The respondents are asked to select which of the five they feel the most comfortable with according to the statements in the questionnaire.

Findings:

The data collected using questionnaires and that are distributed randomly to working adults in the Kangar town area, it is analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Three types of analysis were carried out to examine the data obtained, reliability analysis, regression analysis and correlation test was done.

Reliability analysis is used to help determine the extent to which a scale produces consistent results if the measurements are repeated.

The first variable is social cynicism. The Cronbach's Alpha for social cynicism is 0.632 as shown in Table 1 below. The alpha being 0.632 indicates that the data collected for the social cynicism part in the questionnaire is acceptable and reliable.

Table 1:

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.632	.633	5

The second variable tested for reliability is the social complexity variable. Table 2 below shows the Cronbach's alpha for the social complexity variable is 0.687, indicating that the data for social complexity is acceptable and is reliable.

Table 2:

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.687	.694	5

The third variable is reward for application. Table 3 shows the performance of the data collected for reward for application variable that is analyzed and measured using the Cronbach's alpha. The results show that the alpha for this variable is 0.820; indicating that the data collected is not only acceptable but it is also a good data.

Table 3:

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.820	.824	5

The fourth variable is religion. The Cronbach's alpha for religion is 0.639, making the data collected acceptable and reliable. Table 4 shows the results of the reliability test.

Table 4:

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.639	.638	5

The fifth variable is fate of control. Table 5 shows that the Cronbach's alpha for fate of control. The result shows 0.635, signifying that the data collected is acceptable.

Table 5:

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.635	.634	5

Table 6 shows the final variable, which is the conflict management variable, which is the dependent variable in this research. 0.733 show that the data is good and reliable.

Table 6:

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.733	.738	5

The variables in the research are all tested for its reliability and all the six variables are acceptable achieving the Cronbach's alpha that is more the 0.6. Out of the six variables tested, reward for application has the highest alpha among the variables and the variable with the lowest alpha value is social cynicism. Although this variable is the lowest, it is still acceptable as the alpha is more than 0.6.

The correlation analysis finds that there are three independent variables that indicate significant relationship with the dependent variable, conflict management. Social complexity, reward for application and religion have significant relationships with conflict management. The relationship is considered related with the level of significance that is investigated. From table 7, it is seen that cynicism does not have any significant relationship with conflict as the significance level is 0.531, which is higher than the intended level of 0.05. Fate of control does not have any significant relationship with conflict management as well for the significant level is exceedingly high at 0.897.

Social complexity has a significant relationship with conflict as the significant level is 0.001 and is lower than 0.05. Reward for application also has a significant relationship with conflict management as the significance level for reward and conflict is 0.000, which is seen as significant. Religion is also has a significant relationship to conflict management as it has a significance level of 0.000. Table 7 below shows the results of the correlation test.

Table 7:

Correlations							
		Cynicism	Complexity	Reward	Religion	FOC	Conflict
Cynicism	Pearson Correlation	1	-.083	-.107	.083	.250**	-.053
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.325	.204	.326	.003	.531
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142
Complexity	Pearson Correlation	-.083	1	.005	.184*	-.193*	.268**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.325		.953	.028	.021	.001
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142
Reward	Pearson Correlation	-.107	.005	1	.021	.094	.305**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.204	.953		.807	.266	.000
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142
Religion	Pearson Correlation	.083	.184*	.021	1	-.169*	.337**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.326	.028	.807		.044	.000
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142
FOC	Pearson Correlation	.250**	-.193*	.094	-.169*	1	.011
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.021	.266	.044		.897
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142
Conflict	Pearson Correlation	-.053	.268**	.305**	.337**	.011	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.531	.001	.000	.000	.897	
	N	142	142	142	142	142	142

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The regression analysis shows that summary of the relationship between the independent and dependent variable, which is the social axiom and conflict management. The coefficients table shows the relationships between the variables and if the relationship is significant or not. Table 8 lists out the substantial relationship

among the independent variables and the dependent variable, conflict management. The value that is targeted is the significance value is less than 0.05 and 0.000 being the most significant value.

Table 8:

Model		Coefficients ^a					Collinearity Statistics	
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
		B	Std. Error	Beta				
1	(Constant)	.817	.562		1.454	.148		
	Cynicism	-.033	.072	-.036	-.457	.649	.905	1.105
	complexity	.241	.090	.207	2.672	.008	.935	1.069
	reward	.171	.059	.220	2.894	.004	.973	1.028
	religion	.327	.072	.354	4.543	.000	.925	1.081
	FOC	.111	.088	.102	1.264	.208	.866	1.155

a. Dependent Variable: conflict

From the table above, it can be derived that religion has the most significant relationship with conflict management at 0.000, followed by reward for application at 0.004 and social complexity at 0.008. The other two independent variables do not have significant relationships with conflict as their significant value has exceeded the target value of 0.05. Social cynicism has the value of 0.649 and fate of control has the value of 0.208.

Conclusion:

From the results of the analysis, the first hypothesis is rejected as there is no significance discovered between social cynicism and conflict management in an individual. Both the correlation analysis and the regression analysis yield results where the significant levels are very much higher than the intended level of 0.05 at 0.649 for regression analysis and -0.053 for correlation analysis. The second hypothesis suggesting the influence of social complexity towards how an individual manages conflict is accepted. The hypothesis is accepted as the significant levels for both test are less than 0.05. The significant level for correlation analysis is 0.001, which is lower than the targeted level and 0.008 for the regression analysis. The third hypothesis is also accepted as both analysis shows results where the significant levels are at 0.004 for the regression analysis and 0.000 for the correlation test. The fourth hypothesis is also accepted as it has yield results that are less than 0.05 for both tests. The correlation analysis shows the significant level between religion and conflict management at 0.000 and regression analysis shows the same level of significance as well. The fifth hypothesis regarding the influence of fate of control is rejected as there is no significant relationship between fate of control and conflict management. Out of the five hypothesis investigated, it can be concluded that there are significance between three independent variables and the dependent variable. It can be assumed that religion affects how a working individual in Kangar, Perlis manages a conflict. Social complexity, meaning the belief that there is more than one method or solution for every issue, also affects how an individual manages conflict. It is safe to say that there is a relationship between social beliefs and conflict management. Even though two independent variables are discovered to have no significant relationship with the dependent variable, three variables are identified to have relationship with the dependent variable, conflict management. Conflict management, is the disagreement between two parties, where they are not able to reach an agreed settlement or goal. Then managing this situation, there are several factors playing an important role in determining how the conflict is resolved. The study finds that social complexity or flexibility is very much significant to the managing of conflict. This indicates that the people in Kangar believe that there is more than one solution into solving a problem and they adopt a more accommodating style when managing conflict. Religion plays an important role. In this situation, individuals in Kangar are motivated to resolve a conflict based on the teachings of religion and to use them as a guide. Religion often teaches people to share and give in. It can be assumed that the respondents will opt for a collaborative style when managing disputes. Rewards are also a great motivator for individuals. The study shows that individuals are motivated to manage the conflict, steering to the solution where the reward given is attractive.

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