

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT AND ITS MANAGEMENT AMONG KVK SCIENTISTS**G. K. Bhabhor¹ and S. R. Patel²**

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ABSTRACT

Conflict is a natural, everyday phenomenon in all private and working spheres. It is an interactive process manifested through incompatibility, disagreement or dissonance within or between social entities i.e. individual, group, organization etc. Like any other organization, Krishi Vigyan Kendra also can be no exception to the fact of existence of conflicts among their scientists. For effective functioning of the KVK, there is a need to know the interpersonal conflict existing among its scientists and its management styles adopted by them. For this investigation, all the 30 KVKs of Gujarat were purposively selected and 3 to 5 scientists from each KVK were selected randomly making total sample of 120 scientists for the study. Majority of them had medium to low level of interpersonal conflict with their superiors and colleagues; while with their subordinates they had medium to high level of interpersonal conflict. Overall extent of interpersonal conflict was medium to low. Collaboration and accommodation were found to be the dominant conflict management approaches among the KVK scientists. Gender, working zeal, attitude towards working in rural area, achievement motivation, self-esteem and interpersonal communication had negatively significant and perception of workload had positively significant correlation with the extent of interpersonal conflict.

Keywords: interpersonal, conflict, management approaches, relationship, KVK, scientist

INTRODUCTION

KVK acts as an institutional innovation for application of agricultural science and technology on the farmers' field with the help of a multidisciplinary team of scientists (Yeragorla *et al.*, 2021). Activities include on-farm testing to identify the location specificity of agricultural technologies under various farming systems, frontline demonstrations to establish the production potential of improved agricultural technologies on the farmers' fields, training of farmers and extension personnel to update their knowledge and skills. Besides, KVK works as a knowledge and resource center of agricultural technologies for supporting farmers in improving their agricultural production and livelihood. In recent years, KVK has also been used as a launch pad of many extension programmes i.e. CFLDs, NICRA, ARYA, Seed Hub, ASCI, NAARI, Farmer first etc.

In order to carry out these major mandatory and additional tasks effectively, it is quite essential that dysfunctional conflict among the employees shouldering above responsibilities should be minimized. This means that the conflict which the employees face with one another i.e. interpersonal conflict, particularly which can lead to dysfunctional output should be reduced for better performance. In the organizational context, interpersonal conflict inclusive of both- affective as well as substantive aspects of conflict is

of major concern and is quite natural among the employees. In other words, interpersonal conflict comprising task conflict (related to task or function or process) as well as relationship conflict (related to personality or emotional issues) existing among the employees is of vital concern for the organization. Hence it was realized that the extent of interpersonal conflict existing among employees i.e. KVK scientists should be systematically studied.

Further, interpersonal conflict management also assumes a great significance because healthy relationship and thereby productive organizational environment depends upon proper selection of conflict handling approaches. Keeping all such things in mind, an investigation entitled "Interpersonal conflict and its management among scientists of Krishi Vigyan Kendras of Gujarat" was carried out with following objectives.

OBJECTIVES

- (1) To find out the extent of interpersonal conflict among KVK scientists
- (2) To study different conflict management approaches adopted by KVK scientists
- (3) To study the relationship between the extent of interpersonal conflict and profile of KVK scientists

METHODOLOGY

The intention of the investigation was to study interpersonal conflict and its management among scientists of Krishi Vigyan Kendras of Gujarat, for which all the 30 KVKs of Gujarat were selected. To have a representative sample for study, 3 to 5 scientists from each KVK were selected randomly making total sample of 120 scientists for the study.

The extent of interpersonal conflict among the scientists working in KVKs at all three levels was measured using the scale developed by Patel *et al.* (2009), while conflict management approaches were studied using scale developed by Rahim (1983). The data were gathered through personal/mail questioner and then assembled, tabulated, and analyzed to obtain adequate answers for the specific objectives of the study using various appropriate statistical tools. The relationship was determined and tested with the help of Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Extent of interpersonal conflict among KVK scientists

Conflict is a natural part of everyday life. Interpersonal conflict comprising task conflict as well as relationship conflict existing among the employees is of vital concern for the organization. Hence, it was thought worthwhile to study the extent of interpersonal conflict existing among scientists of Krishi Vigyan Kendras of Gujarat at three levels: interpersonal conflict with their superiors, colleagues and subordinates. The results in this regard have been given in below Tables.

Interpersonal conflict with superior

The information pertaining to interpersonal conflict among KVK scientists with their superiors/ senior scientist & head is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of the KVK scientists according to their interpersonal conflict with superior

(n=120)

Sr. No	Interpersonal conflict with superior	Frequency	Per cent
1	Very low (up to 14.40)	04	03.33
2	Low (14.41 to 20.80)	33	27.50
3	Medium (20.81 to 27.20)	44	36.67
4	High (27.21 to 33.60)	29	24.17
5	Very high (above 33.60)	10	08.33

It is apparent from the data depicted in Table 1 that 36.67 per cent of the KVK scientists had medium level interpersonal conflict with their superior, followed by low (27.50 per cent), high (24.17 per cent) and very high (8.33 per cent) extent of interpersonal conflict with their superiors. Only 3.33 per cent of them had very low interpersonal conflict with their superiors. Conclusively it can be said that majority (64.17 per cent) of the scientists had medium to low level of interpersonal conflict with their superiors. This finding is in line with that reported by Patel *et al.* (2016) and Chauhan and Patel (2020).

Interpersonal conflict with colleagues

The data in respect of interpersonal conflict among scientists of KVK with their colleagues are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of the KVK scientists according to their interpersonal conflict with colleagues

(n=120)

Sr. No	Interpersonal conflict with colleagues	Frequency	Per cent
1	Very low (up to 16.20)	25	20.83
2	Low (16.21 to 23.40)	35	29.17
3	Medium (23.41 to 30.60)	39	32.50
4	High (30.61 to 37.80)	20	16.67
5	Very high (above 37.80)	01	00.83

As it is evident from the Table 2, nearly one-third (32.50 per cent) of scientists had medium level of interpersonal conflict with their colleagues, while 29.17 per cent, 20.83 per cent and 16.67 per cent of them had low, very low and high level of interpersonal conflict with their colleagues, respectively. Only one respondent (0.83 per cent) was observed with very high interpersonal conflict with colleague. Thus, it can be inferred that majority (61.67 per cent) of the scientists had medium to high level of interpersonal conflict with their colleagues. This finding derives partial support from that of Patel *et al.* (2017).

Interpersonal conflict with subordinates

The data in respect of interpersonal conflict among scientists of KVK with their subordinates are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Distribution of the KVK scientists according to their interpersonal conflict with subordinates

(n=120)

Sr. No	Interpersonal conflict with subordinates	Frequency	Per cent
1	Very low (up to 14.40)	13	10.83
2	Low (14.41 to 20.80)	20	16.67
3	Medium (20.81 to 27.20)	53	44.17
4	High (27.21 to 33.60)	32	26.67
5	Very high (above 33.60)	02	01.66

The perusal of Table 3 makes it clear that slightly more than two fifth (44.17 per cent) of the KVK scientists had medium interpersonal conflict with subordinates, followed by 26.67 per cent, 16.67 per cent and 10.83 per cent of them with high, low and very low interpersonal conflict with subordinates, respectively. Only 1.66 per cent of them were found in the category of very high interpersonal conflict with subordinates.

The results lead to conclude that majority (70.84 per cent) of the KVK scientists had medium to high level of interpersonal conflict with their subordinates. Thus the level of interpersonal conflict with subordinates is comparatively higher than with superiors or colleagues as discussed earlier in Table 2 and 3. As it was revealed through discussion that subordinate staff was very less in number and hence might not be able to satisfy/support the work related aspects of all the scientists in KVK, resulting in more interpersonal conflict. This finding is in line with that reported by Patel *et al.* (2016).

Overall interpersonal conflict

The data regarding overall conflict level of KVK scientists are depicted in Table 4.

Table 4: Distribution of the KVK scientists according to their overall interpersonal conflict

(n=120)

Sr. No.	Overall Interpersonal conflict	Frequency	Per cent
1	Very low (up to 45)	10	08.33
2	Low (46 to 65)	40	33.33
3	Medium (66 to 85)	48	40.00
4	High (86 to 105)	21	17.50
5	Very high (above 105)	01	00.84

It is clear from Table 4 that exactly two fifth (40.00per cent) of the KVK scientists had medium level of overall interpersonal conflict, while 33.33 per cent and 17.50 per cent of them had low and high extent of overall interpersonal conflict, respectively. Only 8.33 per cent and 0.84 per cent of the scientists were observed with very low and very high extent of overall interpersonal conflict, respectively. Thus it can be concluded that majority (70.33 per cent) of the scientists had medium to low level of overall interpersonal conflict. This finding gets partial support from the finding of Patel *et al.* (2016). Rao (2014), Mukolwe and Ogucha (2016) and Hasanati *et al.* (2018).

Different conflict management approaches adopted by KVK scientists

Interpersonal conflicts among the employees can be resolved by adopting different types of conflict management approaches. Five conflict management approaches, in general, are avoidance, accommodation, collaboration, competition and compromise, the data in respect of which were collected from the scientists and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Conflict management approaches adopted by KVK scientists

(n=120)

Sr. No	Conflict management Approach	Mean score of approach with			Overall mean score	Rank
		Superior	Colleague	Subordinate		
1	Avoidance	2.43	2.29	2.18	2.30	III
2	Accommodation	2.59	2.56	2.49	2.55	II
3	Collaboration	2.69	2.70	2.71	2.70	I
4	Competition	2.14	2.24	2.55	2.31	V
5	Compromise	2.22	2.27	2.21	2.23	IV

The data depicted in Table 5 reflect that the maximum adopted approach by the KVK scientists to overcome the interpersonal conflict with superior was collaboration with mean score of 2.69 followed by accommodation, avoidance, compromise and competition which stood second, third,

fourth and fifth with mean score of 2.59, 2.43, 2.22 and 2.14, respectively. Similar trend was observed in case of the interpersonal conflict with colleagues, to resolve which, collaboration was resorted maximum (2.70 mean score), followed by accommodation, avoidance, compromise and

competition in descending order.

However, in case of handling interpersonal conflict with subordinates, the trend of usage of conflict management approaches by the scientists was little changed. Here, collaboration, of course, was resorted maximum (mean score 2.71), but it was followed by competition, accommodation, compromise and avoidance with mean score of 2.55, 2.49, 2.21 and 2.18 respectively.

The overall picture makes it clear that maximum adopted approach of conflict management was collaboration with first rank, followed by accommodation, avoidance, compromise and competition which stood second, third, fourth and fifth, respectively. The dedication of scientists towards KVK work might have helped them to keep the organizational interest above all and thus despite their difference in opinions in work related matter or certain interpersonal issues, they might have preferred to resolve such issues with open mind through consensus to the maximum extent possible. This might be the reason why collaboration ranked first as the conflict management approach. This finding is in line with the findings of Munduate *et al.* (1994), Sirivun (2001), Lee (2003), Lam (2004), Thomas (2004), Suppiah (2006), Chaudhary *et al.* (2008), Patel *et al.* (2016). Enver *et al.* (2009) and Chen *et al.* (2012).

Relationship between the extent of interpersonal conflict and profile of KVK scientists

The interpersonal conflict felt by the KVK scientist is not independent itself, but is rather a complex process which may be governed by certain personal, psychological, organizational and other attributes. It was in this context felt necessary to study the relationship between the extent of interpersonal conflict and profile of KVK scientist of Gujarat, i.e. their personal, psychological and organizational variables. The results of which are presented in the Table 6.

As evident from Table 6, among the five personal variables, gender was found to have negative and significant correlation with extent of interpersonal conflict, while age, caste, cadre experience and training exposure had no significant correlation with extent of interpersonal conflict. In case of psychological variables, perception of work load was had positive and significant correlation, while working zeal, attitude towards working in rural area, achievement motivation and self-esteem had negative and significant correlation with extent of interpersonal conflict. Variables like empathy, self-confidence and job satisfaction could not establish correlation with extent of interpersonal conflict up to the level of significance. Among organizational variables, interpersonal communication had negative and significant

Table 6: Relationship between the extent of interpersonal conflict and profile of KVK scientists

(n=120)

Sr. No.	Independent variable	Correlation coefficient ('r' value)
I	Personal variables	
X ₁	Age	- 0.063
X ₂	Gender	- 0.201*
X ₃	Caste	- 0.103
X ₄	Cadre experience	- 0.077
X ₅	Training exposure	- 0.078
II	Psychological variable	
X ₆	Working zeal	- 0.264**
X ₇	Attitude towards working in rural area	- 0.254**
X ₈	Achievement motivation	- 0.272**
X ₉	Job satisfaction	0.032
X ₁₀	Perception of work load	0.436**
X ₁₁	Empathy	- 0.141
X ₁₂	Self confidence	- 0.172
X ₁₃	Self esteem	- 0.348**
III	Organizational variable	
X ₁₄	Interpersonal communication	- 0.242**
X ₁₅	Decision-making ability	- 0.153
X ₁₆	Co-ordination ability	- 0.129

* Significant at 0.05 per cent level of probability

** Significant at 0.01 per cent level of probability

correlation with the extent of interpersonal conflict, while decision-making ability and co-ordination ability were not significantly related with the extent of interpersonal conflict. This finding is in line with that reported by Patel *et al.* (2016) and Rao *et al.* (2014).

CONCLUSION

From the investigation it can be conclude that majority of the KVK scientists had medium to low level of interpersonal conflict with their superiors and colleagues; while with their subordinates, majority of them had medium to high interpersonal conflict. Overall extent of interpersonal conflict was medium to low. Collaboration and accommodation were found to be the dominant conflict management approaches among the KVK scientists. Hence the results would serve as guidelines for policy makers, planners and administrators to chalk out the strategy for managing interpersonal conflict of KVK scientists to have better and better output. The variables such as gender, working zeal, attitude towards working in

rural area, perception of workload, achievement motivation, self-esteem and interpersonal communication were found to have significant correlation with the extent of interpersonal conflict of KVK scientists. Such variables, wherever and whichever possible, may be manipulated in a way as to manage the extent of interpersonal conflict and establish congenial work atmosphere for better output.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest among researchers.

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