



Overcoming Workplace Conflicts in Multicultural Organizations: Conflict Factors and Resolution Strategies

Haider Rifaat Hussain¹, Ji Young Kim²

Department of Mass Communication, Glorious Vision University, Ogwa, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: Ji Young Kim, E-mail: jkim22@hawaii.edu

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Abstract

In today's globalized society, working environment has become diverse and organizations face both, opportunities and challenges based on the cultural differences of their workforce. The U.S. is one of many countries experiencing expansion in workplace diversity. In 2019, a majority of new hires in the U.S. were people of color between the ages 25 to 54 (Long & Damn, 2021). The report shows that the Latin population may constitute 20% of America's workforce by the year 2028 (Long & Damn, 2021). Also, Blacks and Asians constituted 19% of the total labor force of the U.S. in 2020 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). This workforce diversity increases our attention to the cultural differences experienced in workplace settings and its impact organizational communication and performance. Employees experience many cultural challenges, and without proper cross-cultural adjustment, their level of work stress may increase (Chen, 2019). Also, cultural diversity can lead to intercultural conflicts in the workplace. Scholars defined intercultural conflict as "different expectations concerning appropriate or inappropriate conflict behavior in a conflict scene" (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 1). Organizations try to manage those conflicts through effective communication and cultural trainings (Shahid, 2022). The purpose of this study is to unearth causes of workplace conflicts through in-depth interviews of employees across culturally diverse organizations in the United States, and to identify ways to reduce these cultural gaps and increase intercultural understanding among employees. Findings of this study will bridge existing gaps in literature and help organizations prepare and implement a course of action that builds a harmonious and collaborative workplace culture.

Keyword: *Organizational Communication, Workplace Conflict, Intercultural Communication; Conflict Management, Conflict Resolution*

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INTRODUCTION

Intercultural Communication in Workplace

Cultural intelligence is people's ability to understand others through cultural learning and interaction (Inkson & Thomas, 2011, p. 22), and people develop their cultural knowledge and cross-cultural skills to successfully adopt them into a new environment when interacting with others from different norms and beliefs (i.e., Early & Ang, 2003).

Scholars defined intercultural communication competence as "the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviors to elicit a desired response in a specific environment" (Chen & Starosta, 1998, p. 28). When individuals have higher intercultural communication competence, they will make better collaboration and engagement with others (David, Nigoti, & Singh, 2025). This is why intercultural communication is important in a workplace setting.

Kegeyan (2016) stated that intercultural communication played a critical role in helping a workplace run smoothly and effectively to ultimately produce better outcomes. Scholars addressed that ignoring cultural diversity in the workplace can result in decreased work ethics (Toomey & Oetzel, 2001) and emotional crisis among employees (Ting-Toomey, 2009).

Scholars highlighted the role of effective communication in addressing and overcoming intercultural conflicts. Intercultural conflict is defined as "the experience of emotional frustration" between parties from different cultures when their values or goals are incompatible (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 17). Salvation (2019) found that miscommunication can lead to increased workplace conflict, a decline in employees' confidence and turnover.

Intercultural Conflicts: Cultural Factors

Previously, scholars have studied various factors and sources of intercultural conflicts, including cultural dimensions (e.g., individualism vs. collectivism) (i.e., Brew & Cairns, 2004; Suthipiyapathra, 2009). In a higher individualistic culture such as the U.S., people tend to communicate explicitly and give direct instruction to others in conflict management process, while people in higher collectivistic culture such as Singapore or Thailand prefer more contextual and indirect communication (Brew & Cairns, 2004). Suthipiyapathra (2009) also found that Japanese put more value in building relationships with colleagues in the workplace than Americans. Moreover, people identify "ingroup" with individuals who share similar backgrounds and values with them, and "ingroup" receives more positive support than an "outgroup" in an organization (Giles & Giles, 2013; Joshi, Liao, & Jackson, 2006).

Scholars also addressed that insensitivity towards different cultures and ethnocentric attitudes can cause serious intercultural conflicts (Hswen et al., 2021; Horse, Jeung, & Matriano, 2021; Hinner, 2017; Washington, 2013). After the President labeled the coronavirus as the "Chinese virus," hate incidents toward Asians increased (Hswen et al., 2021; Horse, Jeung, & Matriano, 2021). When a leader of a group holds a biased attitude toward certain groups (minorities, for example), other individuals imitate this behavior, resulting in greater intercultural conflicts (Hswen et al., 2021; Horse, Jeung, & Matriano, 2021).

Hinner (2017) described intercultural conflicts as a very complex phenomena including "culture, perception, identity, ethnocentrism, relationships, building trust and conflict management as well as intercultural communication competence" (p. 885). Washington (2013) also addressed that ethnocentrism is a huge barrier for business organizations to achieve intercultural harmony and accommodation (p. 24).

Conflict Resolution

The responsibility to foster intercultural harmony rests with organizations where intercultural conflicts are seen as an issue. Appropriately managing these conflicts can result in

team building, increased workplace performance and intercultural understanding (Bernardin & Alvares, 1976). Scholars proposed different conflict management strategies including forcing, compromise and confrontation (i.e., Blake & Mouton, 1964; Bernardin & Alvares, 1976).

Chan and Goto (2003) examined the perceived social distance among Hong Kong employees and found that it depended on several factors, including how participants viewed conflict situations, attributed responsibilities, and approached conflict resolution. Perceived social distance is defined as “how close and intimate one feels toward another person or group” (p. 445). Hong Kong local employees felt psychologically closer to Hong Kong Chinese managers in comparison to the U.S. and Mainland China.

The first step of conflict resolution is to prepare an environment where smooth negotiation can occur. Scholars suggested that mutual goal-directed communication and mutual understanding will enhance a cross-cultural dialogue among employees (Ting-Toomey, 2009; Shonk, 2021). To foster mutual understanding, the role of a leader is critical. König and colleagues (2020) found a correlation between a CEO’s empathy and organizational success. An empathetic CEO will demonstrate sound judgment from a mutual position, considering socio-emotional factors in a workplace (p. 18). Hener (2010) also emphasized a learning process (know yourself and know others) to create mutuality and collaboration (p. 137).

Research Questions

This study proposed the following two research questions to explore effective conflict resolution communication strategies in a workplace:

RQ1: How do employees in a multicultural organization perceive causes of workplace conflicts?

RQ2: What resolution strategies can employees in multicultural organizations suggest to overcome workplace conflicts?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Interview

A qualitative interview method was used to study factors and resolution strategies for workplace conflicts in multicultural organizations. Employees’ perceptions about a conflict situation affects how the conflict can be resolved (Chan & Goto, 2003). Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted online via Zoom to answer the two research questions.

Samples

A total of 15 participants were recruited for this study. Among them, two managers from the human resources (HR) were included in addition to 13 non-admin employees. HR managers are assumed to have a better knowledge about conflict resolution and play key actors in managing a conflict situation. All participants have work experience at an organization consisting of employees from different cultural backgrounds; the respondents worked at least six.

Procedures and Analysis

Virtual interviews were conducted over Zoom. Each interview took approximately 15-40 minutes to complete. Each participant signed a consent form before the interview. Respondents were attributed fake names such as “Person A”, “Person B”, etc. considering research ethics. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to recruit them.

Interview questions were open-ended for richer, more nuanced responses. We used probing words such as “what” and “how” to expect detailed responses from the participants.

Intercultural conflicts are deeply personal experiences that require good listening skills with empathy (Lavee & Itzchakov, 2021).

A thematic analysis was used to identify themes (i.e., Murphy, 2021; Rajashekar & Jain, 2024) from the interview transcripts to identify how employees and managers perceived conflicts and what they believed were most effective ways to approach conflicts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

All 15 respondents were citizens of the United States and had diverse ethnic/racial backgrounds. Some also mentioned their other country of origin. They have working experience between 6 months to more than 20 years and their organizations are located in 11 different U.S. states. Summary of participants is listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Participants

Person	Job Title	Length	Ethnicity/Race	States	Citizenship
A*	HR Specialist	2 years	Hawaiian Chinese, etc.	Hawaii	United States
B*	Senior HR Generalist	1 year	Japanese Portuguese, etc.	Hawaii	United States
C	Case Manager	2 years	Khmer	California	Cambodia United States
D	Curriculum Developer Art Teacher, etc.	1.5 years 2 years	Japanese	Florida Texas California	United States
E	Program Specialist	3.5 years	White	Washington D.C.	United States
F	HR Specialist	8 years	Hispanic African-American	Florida	United States
G	Seller Support	2 years	Filipino	Washington	United States
H	Sales Engineer Systems Validation Engineer	1 year 4 years	Pakistani	Pennsylvania Indiana	Pakistan United States
I	College and Career Advisor	8 months	Caucasian	Texas	United States
J	Customer Service Associate, etc.	7 years	North African Amazigh White American	Illinois	United States

K	Summer Institute Coordinator	Almost 3 years	White	Iowa	United States
L	Records Retrieval Specialist	6 months	Black	California	United States
M	Software Engineer	3.5 years	Taiwanese	New Jersey	Taiwan United States
N	Permanent Substitute Teacher	6 months	Appalachian American	Tennessee	United States
O	Community Manager of Development, etc.	Almost 20 years	Japanese	Hawaii	United States

*HR managers

Themes: Causes of Workplace Conflicts

Most interviewees described that workplace conflicts in multicultural organizations are caused by different cultural values and perceptions among the employees. From the interviews, we found three main themes that cause workplace conflicts: relationships, work styles, and traits. With two sub-themes in each category, we identified six different causes of conflicts (see Table 2).

Table 2. Theme of causes of conflicts

Themes	Sub-themes	Descriptions
Relationship	Interpersonal manner	How people treat others
	Power differences	How people view the relationship with leaders
Work style	Communication	How people share their views with others
	Responsibility	How people implement and complete a task or duty
Traits	Personality	Distinguished characteristics of individual
	Ethnic stereotypes	Perceived characteristics of ethnicity or race

Interpersonal mannerisms

While some behaviors are highly respected in one culture, they may not be considered acceptable in others. Sometimes, cultural practices can reflect in the work ethics of individuals. The inability to understand these cultural practices can result in conflicts among employees.

For example, in Japanese work culture, *san*—Mr./Ms. in English—is a title given to a person to show respect. A respondent, not belonging to Japanese culture, sent out an email to someone without mentioning “*san*.” His manager very politely explained why it was important to address people with “*san*” and provided a resource for him to learn in-depth about Japanese culture. The interviewee took that experience as a learning curve and did not feel that the incident involved conflict, although he was immersed in a work environment comprising of people from a dominant culture.

Similarly, if being direct and straightforward are held as workplace norms, those behaviors can come across as rude to Japanese employees. Another respondent with Japanese ethnicity/race suffered mostly because of the nature of communication at her workplace. Direct communication did not align with her personally because of her Japanese culture.

Other respondents shared that use of culturally insensitive terminologies and manner of verbal communication resulted in intercultural conflicts particularly in regards to interaction between white Americans and minority groups. Another interviewee, who was black, heard a white employee overtly say the “N” word in a professional, legal work environment. Many non-black employees observed the respondent and her black colleague’s reaction to the “N” word. While the interviewee clearly froze in the moment, her colleague, who was also black, continued the conversation and laughed off the matter as if nothing derogatory was said. This behavior normalized innuendos and racist remarks targeted towards a minority group in an organization.

Power differences

An age gap among employees at work was considered a cause of conflict. Younger, newer employees with innovative ideas may clash with seniors who have served the organization longer. Conflicts occurred when professional values, shaped by personal and cultural experiences, clashed with each other.

An employee experienced that her seniors’ work ethics are quite different from her own, and that affected business at work. Although she is disagreeing on some levels, she refrained from making comments because she felt that it was not her place to overstep leadership. Then, she realized that the senior took that as a sign of her poor leadership. The respondent further added how easily people would talk over or disregard a Persian colleague at her workplace because of her quiet and gentle nature. These power dynamics, witnessed in different workplaces, subconsciously caused workplace conflicts, especially between employees holding positions of authority versus the subordinates working under them

Communication

The two human resources managers were asked to provide their interpretations of intercultural conflicts. They defined the term as “miscommunication.”. For example, one saw intercultural conflict as differences between two or more cultures to which conversations cannot occur, or people cannot come to agreements or compromises to the viewpoints and to the actions of individuals in each of those cultures

Miscommunication and failure to adjust to a diverse work environment were perceived as causes of cultural friction between students from India and Pakistan during a two-week cultural exchange program in the United States. What made the conflict between the students more pronounced was their conflicted, shared history of partition.

“I think there were some growing pains, some real differences between a few of the participants who really struggled to be in that space. It was a diverse, and you can certainly argue that it was a very privileged space.”

In this study, participants mentioned unique cultural differences between Hawaii and the U.S. mainland. While being direct and straightforward about problem-solving at work are held as norms in the U.S. mainland, passive aggressiveness and indirect interaction are seen as appropriate ways of approaching workplace issues in Hawaii.

Responsibility

Individuals may perform tasks differently based on their work ethics that are shaped by their unique personalities and/or cultural factors. In this study, differences in working styles were also seen as triggers of cultural conflicts. For example, a participant stated that the work ethic of her Indian and Costa Rican counterparts varied because of their personalities shaped by their work culture. Indian coworkers were more accustomed to a fast-paced work environment, which did not culturally align with white employees, according to a participant. In another study, participants shared another cultural difference at work; while white Americans valued punctuality, Latino employees took time to build relationships with coworkers before heading to work. These varied communication/behavioral styles, shaped by culture and traditions, can likely cause cultural friction between employees.

While accomplishing tasks in a timely manner is a workplace norm in American culture, hospitality is considered an equally essential part of South Asian culture. One of the respondents mentioned that it was rude of her organization to not offer refreshments to Indian and Pakistani participants. Additionally, foreign employees may come across situations where someone's curious nature, especially coming from Americans, may come across as harassment to others, according to an interviewee from South Asia.

Personality

The above example of power differences is also related to personality differences. An employee who experienced a conflict with her seniors having different work styles and work ethics said that her personality (partly shaped by her cultural background) is perceived unfairly at the workplace. She said that her gentle and quiet personality is sometimes easily disregarded and negatively viewed by others. Personality differences that do not align with a more dominant, more expressive group can result in cultural friction where the less dominant group can be otherized or be seen as an outgroup. The same can be said about less expressive groups not wanting to engage with more expressive, confident groups.

Ethnic stereotypes

Many respondents felt that white American culture held more importance in an organization than minority cultures. Some common intercultural conflicts are largely based on the struggles between whites and others (e.g., Blacks, Latinos, Muslims, etc.). A participant disclosed that her African-American coworker, who co-led the Diversity and Inclusion initiative for Hawaii and the Pacific, deemed one of leaders of the organization as racist. The respondent and her Filipino-Hawaiian colleague felt that their African-American coworker was biased towards white leadership.

Another respondent shared that some of her Latino and African-American colleagues were seen as janitorial or valet staff based on their ethnicities. Stereotyping people based on their appearance and cultural differences can stir further cultural conflicts. Similarly, a woman of color was perceived as "hood" (someone who comes from a poor family/neighborhood) when she disclosed that she was from Los Angeles. These cultural misnomers, rooted in American history, end up creating further divisiveness at work.

"Conflict comes in when there is a certain power dynamic at play or maybe people from one cultural background have historically had more power than people from other

cultural backgrounds. There is perhaps a lack of respect for other people's cultural understandings of the world."

During the month of Ramadan, a fasting season for Muslims, organizations were unsuccessful in providing employees a flexible schedule and accommodating their personal needs during a day of fasting. The management was planning an event to show their knowledge of the Muslim world yet completely negated a very important part of Muslim culture in reality.

Themes: Resolution Strategies

The second research question asked what resolution strategies are suggested from the employees at a multicultural organization to overcome the workplace conflicts. Respondents mainly recommended four strategies: learning, process, leadership, and status quo. With sub-themes, total seven resolution strategies were identified (see Table 3).

Table 3. Theme of resolution strategies

Themes	Sub-themes	Descriptions
Learning	Observation	Learn about others from verbal and nonverbal cues
	Training	Learn about others from seminars and workshops
Process	Policy making	Prepare guidelines and policies to follow
	Application	Apply the policies and norms with confidence
Leadership	Mutuality	Have a mutual party involved
	Diversity	Have culturally diverse leadership at workplace
Status quo		Accept conflict situations, withdraw from resolution, or move forward without changes

Observation

Gathering employees over work-related talk stories or a coffee hour provides organizations the opportunity to observe how people behave and react. Observing verbal and nonverbal behaviors that are shaped by cultural upbringing, learned behaviors and/or emotional responses, can help employees adapt and change their communications styles with their coworkers in the future to avoid conflicts.

A respondent, an HR specialist, interacts with employees every day and observes their body language and behavioral patterns based on the way that employees present themselves.

"It is just a matter of adjusting. I think people just typically adjust on their own or realize that this is how a person talks; this is how they work. So, moving forward, we kind of have an idea about how people work, and we just have to adjust."

One way of diffusing cultural conflicts is to focus on the abilities and strengths of individuals from two different cultures. One employee shared that he focused on what made Indian and Pakistani students unique writers in a U.S. exchange program. That was a way of building a cohesive work environment and seeing people differently. Employees can also develop sharp awareness of different cultures by asking more questions and having supportive superiors tell them about the available resources that can guide them about other cultures.

Even in the hiring process, human resources seek certain qualities in potential candidates for a job that prepares them for a fast-paced, collaborative work environment. Qualifications and prior work experience were considered most important. Respondents shared that HR looks for the most fitting candidate for a role considering his or her qualifications, merit and previous work experience.

“We look at their (job applicants’) professional background, what they understand in terms of the field of work and then we look at their experience. So, where have they worked? What have they done in their past positions? That constitutes them being a qualified candidate for the position.”

Training

Cultural trainings were recommended to build a more collaborative work environment and to foster intercultural harmony among employees. Respondents emphasized that an organization should invest in trainings that address the importance of working with diverse groups of people. This institutional practice can reduce intercultural conflicts in the future. To address intercultural conflict, it is critical for organizations to ensure a tolerant workplace for all employees. To meet this goal, organizations should maintain a work environment that is free of discrimination. Seminars and workshops designed for communication, adapting to different cultures and learning styles were recommended. Prioritizing socially acceptable workplace behaviors was another way of ensuring intercultural harmony.

A respondent stated that her company offers seminars and workshops to employees to help them understand about different communication, coaching and learning styles. Another employer participant also revealed that his organization asks questions such as: how do employees engage in conversations? How do they talk to one another? These open conversations allow employees to think and reevaluate their future interactions with coworkers.

A participant suggested that leadership and team leads should take ownership and cultivate intercultural relationships between and among employees through celebratory and/or cultural events. Companies need to have an acculturation process in place for employees to adapt to the culture of an organization. Participants stated that an organization should invest in an active Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiative that can help employees understand one another and practice what they learn.

Policy making

Having important resources on the dos and don'ts of a particular culture can help reduce potential intercultural conflicts. If organizations claim to be diverse, the decisions taken should be cross-checked for cultural competence. A participant mentioned that one of his organizations established affinity groups comprising of Asians, South Asians, Arabs and African-Americans. These groups helped employees acknowledge their cultural differences and develop a sense of belonging in a shared workplace. Companies bear the responsibility of building social cohesion along the lines of religion, gender and different kinds of ethnic groups. These factors combined can have a positive impact on a workplace.

To avoid potential cultural conflicts at work, anti-resolution steps were recommended. An anti-resolution process involves corrective measures to put an end to a practice or a certain behavior at work. For example, a respondent stated that employees' cultural behaviors may not necessarily reflect at work because they have to comply with a set of behavioral standards to work collaboratively. If they are unable to comply, the organization will enforce those standards. Moreover, organizations should implement a conflict resolution policy to reduce

intercultural conflicts between and among employees, especially in a culturally diverse work environment.

Application

A respondent suggested meeting with employees, identifying root causes of a conflict, and addressing problems step by step. Disciplinary and remedial actions can be taken if the problem fails to resolve or employees start to behave unprofessionally. He revealed that his organization maintains a conflict resolution process by meeting with employees individually and learning about their perspectives. Organizations should have a conflict resolution process and this process should apply uniformly to all, regardless of culture.

Many respondents had unique ways of coping with intercultural conflicts. Adaptation, silence, withdrawal and openness were a few suggested strategies. The first step to resolving intercultural conflict is to reevaluate a situation. During intercultural conflicts, employees may opt for silence withdrawal, or have an open conversation with others, such as HR.

Mutuality

When a conflict occurs, employees would try to understand if their frustration was a result of their perspectives or if the insult was simply one-sided. Then, during intercultural conflicts, employees may opt for silence withdrawal, or have an open conversation with others.

A respondent said that the best practice is to involve someone, such as HR or a supervisor, who is levelheaded, trustworthy and neutral, to step in and diffuse conflicts among employees. A respondent suggested trainings for upper management teams including supervisors, managers or anyone in the executive management so that they can play as a middleman and maintain their mutual stance during conflicts.

HR is bipartisan and works to ensure that all perspectives are understood to foster collaboration. HR practitioners across the board should be fairly consistent in providing the exact same answers to all the questions. If they cannot, this inconsistency needs to be addressed, both by HR and the organization.

Diversity

According to our participants, leaders from culturally diverse backgrounds can see through multiple perspectives and better regulate conflicts among employees. Having a diverse group of individuals lead an organization can reduce cultural conflicts. A stronger, more diverse HR team plays an important role in managing cultural conflicts at work.

Many participants noticed inconsistencies between what their organizations stated in terms of diversity versus reality. For example, an interviewee felt that HR is more driven by profits and work performance, not by diversity or factors that make a workplace toxic. Another respondent was put off by microaggressions and hypocrisy at the hands of white leadership that boasted about workforce diversity. The organization claimed to be diverse but the leadership was full of white Americans. Her superiors stated having 50% women working in the organization, which was far from true.

“I am looking up there on the hierarchy chart. Like, where are the women? They are all down here. I feel like it is very hypocritical to say we are diverse, but then there is no diversity within the leadership.”

Status quo

When employees felt that there were no means of resolving cultural conflicts at work, they would withdraw from the resolution process, do nothing, or resign. Participants would keep silent if they felt there is no established conflict resolution process in their organizations. One said he felt uncomfortable sharing his complaints with HR.

“Anyone who has worked in corporate America long enough understands that HR is there to protect the company, not necessarily the people. I think a lot of people find that out the hard way.”

Another participant stated that she could not do anything to regulate intercultural conflicts. She felt that immigrant employees on H-1B work visas did not want to cause drama because they wanted to work long-term in the United States.

“I knew that what I say will not make a difference.”

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study highlight how workplace deviance resulted in intercultural workplace conflicts. The cultural differences among the employees affect their perceptions and expectations for others in terms of the relationship (interpersonal manner, power difference), work style (communication, responsibility), and traits (personality, ethnic stereotypes). Understanding those factors is a critical process to manage workplace conflicts. To solve a problem, people should understand how the issue started, developed over time, and who the problem was shared with.

Three main themes represent individuals' personal, professional, and relational aspects of the communication factors. Previous scholarships explored some of those factors in different organizational communication contexts (i.e., Brew & Cairns, 2004; Suthipiyapathra, 2009). This study confirms those critical causes of conflicts based on employees' perception of different organizations and suggests a holistic view of the factors.

Many prior scholarships investigated cultural differences in terms of the ethnic/racial differences. Ethnicity and race affects people's judgement on the ingroup and outgroup, and usually they put more favorable emotion and assessment toward the ingroup (i.e., Bowns and Abrams, 2003; Brewer, 1999; Hammond & Axelrod, 2006). Our results also highlighted that a lack of understanding or miscommunication can trigger conflicts in organizations.

To overcome cultural conflicts, this study highlights the importance of mutual understanding in an organizational setting as it can enhance cultural learning, employee relationships, and performance (i.e., Salvation, 2019). Organizational collaborative environment contributes to understanding, and leaders play a critical role to form the ground (i.e., König et al, 2020). Employees' expectations on whether they will be treated equally or whether they will solve the problems depends on their perception of the leaders. Cultural conflicts produce emotional and psychological difficulties for employees, and company leaders' empathetic attitude may result in positive changes (i.e., König et al, 2020).

Participants of this study mostly showed strong motivations to learn about others and to seek solutions when a conflict arises. They are seeking practical and goal-oriented outcomes. Policy making is necessary but the more important part is to train human resources to lead the process (leadership) and to change employees' perception of the process (e.g., policies and resolutions will be applied as planned). One of the interviewees suggested a strategy to train

supervisors, managers and anyone in the executive position to be the middleman and maintain a neutral stance if multiple employees were involved in intercultural conflicts.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study provide useful tips for practitioners working in multicultural organizations to overcome cultural conflicts. First, organizations need to have a well-developed organizational policy that addresses intercultural conflicts and remedies to foster an ideal workplace environment for all employees from different backgrounds. For example, organizations need to be clear about the values and behaviors they consider acceptable and unacceptable.

There is a dire need for organizations to focus their time, energy and efforts on intercultural dialogue to promote intercultural harmony among employees. Employees suggested different types of learning opportunities from their daily interactions in informal settings (e.g., coffee talk) to formal trainings or workshops. Practitioners may also need to prepare a training exercise for leaders of the organization to increase their cultural sensitivity and cultural intelligence.

Many respondents in this study felt that organizations prioritized work performance over employees' well-being. They failed to acknowledge and resolve factors that created a work environment toxic. One of the respondents stated that a diverse group of leaders can better identify and resolve intercultural conflicts. If organizations claim to be diverse, the decisions they ultimately take should be cross-checked for cultural competence. Employees should also be part of an acculturation process to get familiar with the culture of an organization. Based on these recommendations, especially resolution steps outlined throughout the paper to minimize intercultural conflicts, can inspire organizations to implement a cultural policy that promotes intercultural harmony and tolerance for all cultures.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to learn what causes workplace conflicts in multicultural organizations and how to overcome these conflicts. Our findings reflect conflict experiences provided by employees who have worked/are working at multicultural organizations. We analyzed their perceptions, expectations, and insights through a thematic qualitative approach and found six causes of conflicts and seven resolution strategies.

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