Relationship between the attitude toward change and conflict management styles of Tabriz petrochemical managers

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research is to determine the relationship between the attitude toward change and conflict management styles of Tabriz petrochemical managers. The methods of research are descriptive-correlative and the data was collected using field collection. The statistical population included the whole Tabriz petrochemical managers (N=79). The statistical sample of this research equaled the statistical population which ultimately 75 managers answered the questionnaires completely. Dunham's questionnaire (1989) was used for evaluating the attitude toward change and Putnam's styles of conflict management questionnaire (1991) was used for evaluating the conflict management styles. After determination of reliability and stability of the above mentioned questionnaires, they were distributed in the sample and collected. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used for data analysis. The results of test hypotheses showed that: there is a significant direct relationship between the attitude toward change and competing conflict management styles in Tabriz petrochemical managers (p< 0.05). There is a significant inverse relationship between attitude toward change and the avoiding conflict management styles in Tabriz petrochemical managers (p< 0.05). There is no significant relationship between the attitude toward change and the accommodating conflict managementin Tabriz petrochemical managers (p> 0.05). There is a significant direct relationship between the attitude toward change and the compromising conflict management in Tabriz petrochemical managers (p< 0.05), and there is a significant direct relationship between attitude toward change and collaborating conflict management in Tabriz petrochemical managers (p< 0.05).

Keywords: Attitude toward change, conflict management, petrochemical manager
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INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic society that includes nowadays organizations, this is not an appropriate question to ask whether the change will happen or not.The change will happen, and it is a fact of life, and the managers of organizations must have the ability to develop styles for planning, directing and controlling the change [1]. Change is the process of transforming attitudes, structures, policies, objectives or outputs happening in the units of an organization [2-3]. Change happens in three levels of cognitive, affective, and behavioral, and the easiest kind of change is change in the cognition (cognitive). Change in the affective level could be related to the rate of interest or love to change. Finally, it is behavioral change which is significantly harder and more time consuming [1]. During performing any

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changes, there are some inducer and inhibitor forces. Inducer forces such as motivation and competition which lead to starting and continuing the change and inhibitor forces such as indifference or hostility lead to weakening or eliminating the change, and organizations encounter problems such as inability or unwillingness of the employees to learn new techniques because of difficulty or disruption and on the other hand ineffectiveness of the old techniques. These mentioned cases are respectively the inhibitor and inducer forces [1-4].The managers' attitudes toward change have an impact on the rate of change programs [5]. There is a significant relationship between the leadership features and change in the organization, and some managers do not have the adequate skills for making changes. The change happens successfully when the involved factors in the change find their benefits in it. Paying attention to the employees' role in the change leads to their acceptance of change programs and the employees' functionality of whose managers have attitudes toward higher change is higher than the employee's functionality of whose managers have attitudes toward lower change[6-7]. The research results showed that employees of organizations show resistance toward change because they do not know about the change programs and they have not participated in the setting of change programs [8]. On one hand, resistance toward change leads to the stability of the organization [9].On the other hand, this stability leads to inability of the organization to adapt themselves with the outside changes [10].Ignoring the resistance toward changes leads to making conflicts. Conflict is an inseparable part of life and is considered as requirements of social life [9]. Putnam (1991) defines conflict in this way: People who have interactions and have disagreements in main goals, sub-goals and values and they consider others as an obstacle to achieving their objectives [11]. There are 5 stylesfor managing conflicts: Competing style (paying attention to your own demands and not the others'), avoiding style (not paying attention to your own demands and the others'), accommodating style (not paying attention to your own demands but the others'), compromising style (paying attention to some part of your own demands and others'), and collaborating style (paying attention to your own demands and others') [12]. Successful people who have high performance use more the collaborating style based on trust on conflict management. Using the collaborating style is a sign of constructive use from the conflict, while using the competing style (based on force), and avoiding style in conflict management will leave a negative effect, and they are signs of destructive use from conflict. Accommodating and compromising styles have mixed effects. Research results showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between the collaborating and compromising styles with the performance, effectiveness, and the organizational health. Also, the researches of Canary &Spitzberg (1989) showed that there is a negative significant relationship between a person's competency and the avoiding style, and Waren's research (2004) showed that there is a positive significant between the collaborating style and change-oriented leadership. The main reason of managers' fear of conflict is because of their unawareness about the nature of conflict. Conflict should not be considered as a destructive matter. But through proper human relations it should be used for advancing the organization objectives [13-14]. The proper and effective use of conflict requires complete cognition about its nature and gaining skills in directing and controlling it, which nowadays is considered as one of the best skills in management [9]. Since the organizations are run by managers, and this a difficult and complex task, hence solely the technical skills are not enough, and managers should have perceptual skills (the ability to understand the complexities of the whole organization), and also human skills in order to gain the employees' cooperation. So not paying attention to the employees in making a change, and poor management of change, have a negative effect on the organizations. In the present world, petroleum and petrochemicals products have a very special place in the life of human societies. The extent demand for petrochemical products leads to the increase of amount and expansion of these organizations. Interactions between the organizations and competitiveness in domestic and international fields lead to weakening the position of some of the petrochemical companies. Lack of modern technology, lack of qualified personnel, and poor management and some other factors can play an important role in this descending trend. So, all of these issues and problems need reflection, review, and making constructive changes in these organizations. Managers of these organizations should change the type of planning and investment in various sectors. Obviously some people for various reasons do not cooperate with these changes and perhaps they are opposed to these changes, and this leads to the conflict between the organization employees. Improper conflict management is one of the factors that results in the failure of organizational changes. So, the issue before this research is that what is the relationship between attitude toward the change with the strategies of conflict management of company managers and Tabriz Petrochemical organizations?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is a descriptive-correlative research, conducted using field collection. The statistical population of this research is the managers and supervisors of the units of Tabriz petrochemical company in year 1391 (N=79).The statistical sample of this research equaled the statistical population, and ultimately 75 people participated in this research (n=75). The tool for collecting data in this research was questionnaire of evaluating attitude toward change

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(Dunham, 1989) which has three dimensions of cognitive, affective and behavioral, and the scale is (0-4) likert. The conflict management questionnaire (Putnam, 1991) had five styles of competing, avoiding, accommodating, compromising, and collaborating, and the scale is (0-4) Likert. Reliability of the mentioned questionnaires was approved by five management experts. Internal stability of the questionnaires were obtained using the Cronbach's Alpha for the questionnaire of attitude toward change and conflict management and the amount was respectively 0.84 and 0.78, and stability over time of the questionnaires were measured 0.81, using the reexamination for attitude toward change questionnaire and conflict management questionnaire was measured 0.76. After approving the reliability and stability, with presence of the research tools, the mentioned questionnaires were distributed among the research samples and they were collected.

RESULTS

The single group t-test was used for comparing the experimental and theoretical mean of the attitude toward change. The scores were between 0-4. So, the theoretical mean amount is 2, which is considered as the average amount of the variable. If the variable mean was more than 2, it would show that the level of attitude toward change is high. Results show that cognitive domain of change, affective domain of change, behavioral domain of change, and attitude toward change among the managers of the Tabriz petrochemical is significantly higher than the average (mean more than 2 and $p<0.05$).

Table 1: The t-test for comparing the experimental and theoretical mean Attitude toward change

Statistic Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	sig
Cognitive dimension	75	2.98	0.54	15.74	74	0.000
Affective dimension	75	2.70	0.48	12.54	74	0.000
Behavioral dimension	75	2.94	0.39	20.89	74	0.000
Attitude toward change	75	2.88	0.30	25.11	74	0.000

The single group t-test was used for comparing the experimental and theoretical mean of the conflict management styles. Scores were between 0-4. So, the theoretical mean amount is 2,which is considered as the average amount of the variable. If the variable mean was more than 2, it would show that the level of attitude toward change is high, and if it was less than 2, it would show that the attitude toward change is low. Results show that the competing conflict management style among the managers of Tabriz petrochemical is in average level ($p>0.05$). Avoiding style and accommodating style among the managers of Tabriz petrochemical is significantly lower than the average (mean less than 2 and $P<0.05$). Compromising style and collaborating style among the managers of Tabriz petrochemical is significantly higher than the average (mean more than 2 and $P<0.05$).

Table 2: The t-test for comparing the experimental and theoretical mean of the conflict management styles

Statistic Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	sig
Competing	75	1.94	0.48	-1.01	74	0.313
Avoiding	75	1.67	0.64	-4.35	74	0.000
Accommodating	75	1.69	0.71	-3.65	74	0.000
Compromising	75	2.42	0.51	7.12	74	0.000
Collaborating	75	2.73	0.63	10.02	74	0.000

According to the reached significance levels, we conclude that all of the variables of the attitude toward change and conflict management have normal distribution ($p>0.05$). Thus, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used.

Table 3: Results of Kolmogorov–Smirnov test for checking the normal distribution of scores

Statistic	Cognitive dimension	Affective dimension	Behavioral dimension	Competing	Avoiding	Accommodating	Compromising	Collaborating
N	75	75	75	75	75	75	75	75
Z-KS	0.79	0.77	0.94	0.83	0.98	0.88	0.76	1.01
sig	0.54	0.58	0.33	0.48	0.28	0.41	0.60	0.25

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Table 4: Pearson's correlation coefficient between attitude toward change and conflict management styles

Attitude toward change	Conflict management styles				
	Competing	Avoiding	Accommodating	Compromising	Collaborating
Cognitive dimension	0.035	0.015	-0.121*	0.096	-0.025
Emotional dimension	0.082	0.113	-0.210*	0.019	-0.033
Behavioral dimension	0.031	0.117	-0.248*	0.057	-0.092
Attitude towards change	0.28	0.069	-0.251*	-0.009	-0.119

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to the fact that no research was conducted about the relationship between the attitude toward change and conflict management styles, so inevitably the researcher should compare the results of the current research with researches conducted separately about each research variables.

Attitude toward change in the management world is a systematic attitude based on the process. The process starts somewhere and ends somewhere. In a general attitude it could be said that the process of change consists of levels which their infrastructures are software and hardware infrastructures, but in fact the main infrastructure of every change in organizations are humans. Research results of Cinite(2009) showed that the attitude tends to change and attitude resistant to change form two endpoints of a continuum in attitude toward change [16].

The research results showed that the attitude toward change variable and its components (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) among managers of Tarbriz petrochemical were significantly higher than the average. These results do not match with the research results of Bazargan (2001) which reported the low level of attitude toward change among the training managers. The significant change in organizations happens when the change factors (officials and managers) find their benefits in it [17]. The research results showed that organizations which have links to values such as teamwork, cooperation, commitment, and high level of competence will embrace the change with enthusiasm, but on the contrary, the organizations that have elite organizational culture, meritocratic, orleadership valued structures, have a negative attitude toward change. Nowadays it could be said that the necessity of change acceptance from the organizations is considered as an appropriate tool for efficient managers, and in the competitive and changing conditions of todays, the organizations should show rapid right reactions toward the changing markets and these reactions are exactly that changes which should take place [9]. According to the important role of change in competitive environment of nowadays, there is again a need to strengthen the attitude toward change among the managers of Tabriz petrochemical [9].

In the case of conflict management styles variable among Tabriz petrochemical, the results were as mentioned: competing style in average level, avoiding and accommodating style significantly lower than the average level, compromising and collaborating style significantly higher than the average level. Successful people who have high performance use more the collaborating style based on trust on conflict management.Using the collaborating style is a sign of constructive use from the conflict, while using the competing style (based on force), and avoiding style in conflict management will leave a negative effect, and they are signs of destructive use from conflict. Accommodating and compromising styles have mixed effects. Although competing style is a sign of destructive and non-effective use from the conflict, this style is necessary for making rapid changes for survival and effectiveness of the organization, and also it can be appropriate against the people who benefit from the non-competing behaviors and conditions [18-19]. It seems that the results of using collaborating and compromising (because of their constructiveness) cover the negative effects of competing style. Yet, in this style only the benefits of one involved party (manager) is met, and the other party (subaltern) will lose his/her benefits. So, there is a need to decrease the competing style.

The need for change and detection and the management of people whom this change will be affective on is one of the most important levels of change [1]. On the other hand there will be resistance against the changes which could lead to contradiction or conflict in the organization [9]. Therefore, the managers are forced to make changes in the organization and they must manage this change between the organization and their conflicts. The results of this research showed that there is a positive significant relationship between the attitude toward change with competing, compromising, and collaborating styles of managers of Tabriz petrochemical. Regarding the fact that change is one of the managers' objectives, and in competing, and collaborating styles the manager's objectives are completely obtained and in compromising style the manager's objectives are relatively obtained, this relationship seems logical.

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However in collaborating and compromising style, the employees' objectives are concerned too but in competing style the employees' objectives are ignored. Maybe one of the reasons for using the competing style is to break the employee's resistance toward starting the change. Also, the results showed that there is no negative significant relationship between the attitude toward change with the avoiding style and no significant relationship with the accommodating style. In avoiding and accommodating styles the manager ignores his/her objectives. Regarding the necessity of change and the results that showed the level of attitude toward change of the Tabriz petrochemical managers is medium to high; this inverse relationship looks inevitable.

Ricker's (1999) findings showed that a successful organizational change needs long-term planning. Planned and comprehensive external communications with the external stakeholders is an important component of change. Sadeghi (2002) believes that if the manager considers the important role of staff in change, probably they will accept the change programs too. Also, the change program will be successful if the manager sees the organization as a whole and makes the staff to participate in the change [6]. Taheri (2002) had a research with the title of surveying the resistance toward the change in the staff of ministry of industries, and reported such kind of differences in the managers' and staff's views [8]. Results of several researches show that all of the organizations around the world need to adapt with changes and they have experienced lot of changes during the past decades. Managers have an important role in the staffs' tend toward change, and managers' behaviors have a high impact on the staff, and effective changes only take place with the close cooperation of managers and staff. Due to the importance of a successful change, managers should have necessary skills and staff should support their managers in all of the process steps too [20].

Acknowledgment

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