

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEGOTIATION AND COMMUNICATION STYLE: AN EMPIRICAL EXPLORATION

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ABSTRACT

Negotiation plays an important role in achieving career success through moving up the professional hierarchy. There could be many possible reasons for this phenomenon among which communication style is one. There were two engineering graduates who started their professional career at the same time. However, in due course of time one got a higher designation with a significantly higher salary package and another one could not and used to manage his career with so many difficulties. In an interview with both the engineering graduates, the author of the present research paper found that it was their communication style that affected the negotiation style of both graduates which eventually impacted their professional success (higher designation with significantly higher salary package) in career. This finding motivated the author of the present research to explore the empirical relationship between negotiation and communication style in a sample of 118 students who are pursuing a PGDM course from a reputed business school in south India. Data has been collected through questionnaire based surveys and correlational analysis has been carried out with the help of SPSS (version 25). Results have been discussed in the light of relevant management theories followed by conclusions and implications.

Keywords: Career, Professional Success, Negotiation, Communication Style.

INTRODUCTION

There were two engineering graduates who started their professional career at the same time. However, in due course of time one got a higher designation with a significantly higher salary package and another one could not and used to manage his career with so many difficulties. In an interview with both the engineering graduates, the author of the present research paper found that it was their communication style that affected the negotiation style of both graduates which eventually impacted their professional success (higher designation with significant higher salary package) in career. This is not the single case in the given context but we can find many similar cases in the real world of different professions where people claim that there is no correlation with higher education and career success in terms of higher designation and salary. To some extent this claim is true because when you're not capable of communicating your demands and professional potential, people on the other side consider you in a lighter mode and you lose many monetary and non-monetary benefits which you really deserve. In order to corroborate this claim, I would not hesitate to quote a recent incident which happened with one of the research scholars who holds PhD and masters from a reputed university of India. When this scholar faced his first interview for a faculty position in a business school, he was demotivated by the panelists in the selection room with the statement 'you are a fresher and do not have any teaching experience and therefore we cannot offer the salary which you expect.

As a result, the scholar ended the interview in a submissive manner and accepted the minimum salary offered for the position of assistant professor. On the other hand, there was another research scholar for the same interview who defended his professional potential despite his PhD and masters from a non-reputed university of India, through appropriate communication style and negotiated well and eventually got a job offer with better salary as compared to the previous one. These two contradictory cases show the importance of communication and negotiation style and therefore it is worth examining the empirical relationship between the two.

Problem Formulation

Historically, cases have proven that the process of negotiation depends on the choices available. In a weak labour market, employers happen to play stronger roles in dictating terms, but not in potentially stronger markets, (Mago et al. 2024). The outcomes of negotiation determine not only the nature or even the mere need for negotiation. In this context, the success or failure depends on the negotiation ground that allows or restricts the process.

Factors such as the potential the candidate has, the attractions that are available other than monetary benefits, the prior experience or expertise the candidate possesses, the expectations with reference to future prospects, and the opportunity for growth and further development, make the employee/candidate side either stronger or weaker. Studies have proved that students do not know what salary they should expect from their jobs and they hesitate negotiating a salary offer. Along with these aspects, the location and the level of the candidate's education also are impacting their success in the interview, (Seawright & Stanton 2024).

Assumptions based on which the Research Idea was Generated

Assumption-1 deals with the factors that are people-blound other than money and their role in impacting the process or outcomes of negotiation. Individuals differ in what they value. They tend to make their decisions based not only on what they desire, but what kind of purpose that they can experience from what they are getting. The mindset of the negotiators also plays a significant role in the way in which the process of negotiation takes place. Fixed agreement mindset takes an essential seat in determining the negotiators' role and behavior, Friedman et al (2019). The cardinal, central and secondary traits of personality (Allport 1936) play a big role on how one approaches the process of negotiation or avoids it. For instance, fear of failure, sense of self-belief and desire to achieve are some personality traits that have a direct impact on one's negotiated agreements. Added to it, experts are of the opinion that conscientiousness matters more than personality traits when it comes to negotiation. They also determine the decision such as to approach or avoid negotiations. Perceived sense of self-worth vis-a-vis perceived dependance on others such as family members, friends and colleagues (Huang et al. 2022; Bourabain & Dounia 2024), also plays a significantly impactful role on how one prepares for negotiations. The need for money plays a stronger role in how one is inclined to know the other aspects of a negotiation. The capacity to negotiate too many things at a time determines the strength of the negotiators especially in terms of their knowledge and experience in getting things done on their terms.

Assumption-2 deals with the process-bound factors that play a significant role on the effectiveness and success of the negotiation process. Here, the process of negotiation involves the way in which the tools such as agreement, communication, venue and relationships, context, parties involved, tactics, sequence, stages, (Gelfand et al. 2006; Knee 1998) are used or established in favor or otherwise for a negotiation.

Assumption-3 deals with Substances such as the agenda, the issues, the options and the (dis)agreement also play prominent roles in impacting the process and the outcome of a negotiation, (Savage et al. 1999).

Communication in Negotiation

Any negotiation would require certain essential elements to confirm the process of the same. To claim a negotiation process that has taken place in a scientific and non-compromising state, the elements such as informal elements, contracting elements, relationship elements, technical elements and creative elements should be considered with utmost care. Thus, all these elements of any negotiation process involve proper communication. Informality negates the fear of communicating to a stranger; contracting necessitates the scientific aspects of the negotiation so that there is no issues of subjectivity; relationship elements make the essence of the deal especially when the negotiation happens between humans at both the sides; technical elements takes care of legal and process related aspects and creative elements pave the way for currency and innovative approach, Peleckisa (2014).

In this background, the present study looks into how the communication styles of the parties involved in negotiation plays an impactful effect on the success of the process. The context of the study is the impact of communication style on salary negotiation.

Theoretical Background

The present study throws light on which type of negotiation skill and which type of communication go hand in hand and how the parties involved shall focus on strengthening their respective positions in any negotiation context. Hence, the background is set upon the theories of negotiation and theories of communication abilities.

Purpose, Audience, Language, Message, and Structure (PALMS) theory consists of the purpose, the audience among whom the negotiation takes place, the content that has been transformed from one to the other, and the structure in which the entire process is carried out.

Relational Dialectics theory of communication encompasses certain specific essentialities of a negotiation process. They are the contradictions that oppose the members involved in negotiation, the totality in which both opposing poles unite, the process in which the entire negotiating relationship survives and the praxis due to which though the parties are in contradicting terms, they sustain for certain essential needs. It involves major dialectics such as openness versus closeness, certainty versus uncertainty, and connectedness versus separateness.

Entity theory of abilities believes in the non-improvable nature of certain entities that play a major role on any type of decisions that people take. Incremental theory of abilities believes that there is always the possibility to impact certain qualities and human nature if tried scientifically, (Chiu et al. 1997; Elliott & Dweck 1988). Based on these theories of communication and abilities, the negotiating styles and communication ability have been taken into consideration to establish how they impact each other.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intercultural negotiation can be successful using innovative approaches and help the negotiating parties in understanding of other cultures, other languages, knowledge of the negotiation context, possession of legal knowledge, etc. Experts opine that there is a significant difference between men and women negotiating for salary raise, (Gerhart & Rynes 1991), but it is not the same with reference to commercial settings, (Craver 2002; and Pradel

et al. 2006). Stuhlmacher and Walters, (1999) have opined that there are observable differences in the outcome of negotiations that are attributed to behavioral, perceptual, situational differences and the difference in communication style. Power situation (Watson, 1994; Eagly 1983) plays a significant role in negotiation. Women tend to be more cooperative than men and thus, they generally use open communication patterns and listen carefully to take full advantage of the process, (Coulmas 1997; Lakoff 2001). As a result, they interrupt the other party either very less or nil; they are patient until the other party finishes the conversation, but it is in contrast to men, (Swacker 1975; Vine & West 1978). A sum of studies shows that there is a significant relationship between an individual's personality traits and effective communication that is crucial for successful collaborations and negotiations, (Barry & Friedman 1998). During negotiation, employees/candidates tend to communicate certain signals based on which employers discriminate against them in their wage offers, (Bolton & Werner 2016).

Although there is a rising interest among scholars to explore the antecedents and consequences of negotiation style we do not find any study that examines the empirical relationship between negotiation style and communication style of students of management professions. Therefore, this section develops some hypotheses based on the authors' experience vetted by experts in the area of communication and negotiation.

Hypotheses Development

For instance, the authors of the present research paper has experienced that in any professional meeting either in academia or corporate, there are some employees who are very active communicators and do not hesitate in airing their views with an aggressive attitude. The eventual outcome of such meetings may be positive or negative but the point here is that active communicators have less tolerance and therefore follow an aggressive style of negotiation. With this backdrop, the first hypothesis is:

H₁: There is a significant and positive relationship between active communication style and aggressive negotiation style.

We can also find employees in the organizations who are the hard followers of some life related theories, for instance mutual respect and democracy and thereby never bring conflict in their conversations with other employees. Such kind of employees try to avoid or compromise the professional situations in the place of their personal theories of life and therefore, the second hypothesis is:

H₂: There is a positive and significant relationship between theorists' style of communication and avoidance or compromising style of negotiation.

Many times you will find the employees who have a very clear purpose related to their profession and if required they do not hesitate to collaborate with others. Such employees customize their communication messages and styles so that they can win the collaborative deal. These kinds of employees are called purposeful communicators. In most of the organizational contexts, such kinds of employees are given complex negotiation tasks that require a purposeful communication style. Therefore, third hypothesis is:

H₃: There is a positive and significant relationship between purposeful communication style and collaboration style of negotiation.

Conflict is an integral element of any organizational development process and therefore we cannot subdue the conflicts among employees. However, to make the conflict

functional we need some employees who can work as connectors and put a bridge between conflicting parties. Such kind of connectors are valuable employees in any organization and their primary job is to settle the conflicting issues through compromising dialogues between two or more than two conflicting parties. These employees are expected to apply a connecting style of communication in order to fix a reasonable compromise in any professional or business deal. With this backdrop, the fourth hypothesis is:

H₄: *There is a positive and significant relationship between connecting communication style and compromising style of negotiation.*

METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of the present research is to explore the empirical relationship between negotiating styles and communication styles of professionals who have some kind of business awareness. For this purpose, a sample of 118 students has been selected by applying a convenient sampling method. These students are well-versed in English; therefore, a standard questionnaire (English version) has been selected for measuring communication (Hasson 2019) and negotiating style Rai (2017) of the respondents. Analysis has been carried out by applying correlational analysis with the help of SPSS (version 25).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

		Aggression	Active
Aggression	Pearson Correlation	1	.173
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.061
	N	118	118
Active	Pearson Correlation	0.173	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.061	
	N	118	118

Table 1 shows a positive relationship between aggression style of negotiation and active style of communication. Although the value of correlation coefficient (0.173) is low and insignificant, this result is in line with the first hypothesis i.e., There is a significant and positive relationship between active communication style and aggressive negotiation style. Therefore, H1 is partially accepted. The possible reason for such a result may be understood from the perspective of human behavior which argues that when people actively communicate in the organization with their peers and supervisors they sometimes invite conflicts which eventually results in aggressive behavior during the negotiation process. However, low sample size and biased responses may be the reasons for insignificant relationship between the mentioned variables i.e., aggression style of negotiation and active style of communication.

		Avoidance	Compromise	Theorist
Avoidance	Pearson Correlation	1	-.296**	-.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.524
	N	118	118	118
Compromise	Pearson Correlation	-.296**	1	.512**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.000
	N	118	118	118

Theorist	Pearson Correlation	-.059	.512**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.524	.000	
	N	118	118	118

Table 2 shows that there is no correlation between compromise style of negotiation and theorist style of communication. However, this table shows a low and insignificant relationship between avoidance style of negotiation and theorist style of communication which is not in line with the second hypothesis i.e., There is a positive and significant relationship between theorists' style of communication and avoidance or compromising style of negotiation, (Ten Velden et al. 2007; Van Beestet al. 2005). Therefore, H₂ is completely rejected. The possible reason for such kinds of results may be attributed to the fact that when people become too theoretical, they often believe in a compromise and avoidance kind of behavior in order to make a distance from conflicting situations.

		Purposeful	Collaboration
Purposeful	Pearson Correlation	1	.029
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.756
	N	118	118
Collaboration	Pearson Correlation	.029	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.756	
	N	118	118

Table 3 indicates a positive relationship between purposeful style of communication and collaboration style of negotiation. Although the value of correlation coefficient (0.029) is low and insignificant, this result is in line with the second hypothesis i.e., There is a positive and significant relationship between purposeful communication style and collaboration style of negotiation. Therefore, H₃ is partially accepted. The most plausible reason for such a result may be understood from the perspective of opportunistic behavior of employees, Such kind of opportunistic employees are always in search of collaboration with a specific purpose in mind and there is nothing wrong in it because of rising professionalism among peers or between supervisor and subordinate.

		Connector	Compromise
Connector	Pearson Correlation	1	.345**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	118	118
Compromise	Pearson Correlation	.345**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	118	118

Table 4 indicates positive and significant relationship (0,345**) between connector style of communication and compromising style of communication which is in line with hypothesis 4 i.e., There is a positive and significant relationship between connecting communication style and compromising style of negotiation. Therefore, H₄ is fully accepted. The possible reason for this kind of result may be that in any organization there are some employees who play the role of connector and most of the time they are given the task of making a compromise between two conflicting employees or a group of employees.

CONCLUSION

Negotiation as a technical process used with an artistic mind takes place in many business and management contexts. Dealing with employees' return on labor, the factor of labor cost is a crucial aspect for which there is a need for proper negotiation interventions and thus the decisions in terms of wage fixation and benefits finalization are taken scientifically. In case of screening potential candidates in any interview, the mutual take on salary/wage is crucial and plays as a determining factor of so many other aspects such as selection, induction and placement, and further retention of the chosen candidate. In such essential contexts of a business, the process of negotiation takes its pivot seat in the process of employee recruitment and selection. On the other side, a candidate also negotiates for his options of wage/salary and benefits and decides his critical decision of accepting or rejecting the offer. Hence, his/her skills and abilities to negotiate needs to be addressed with utmost care and proper training needs to be undertaken before approaching the interview panel. In this context, the study analyzed the various styles of negotiation the potential candidates would like to use in their future contexts of job interviews and salary negotiations. The results reveal that there are significant and positive relations between the communication styles and the negotiation strategy that one uses during salary negotiations.

Implications

The study thus has contributed to the academia, research and the field of human resources in terms of its outcomes and inferences regarding the need for communication style and negotiation style for a potential candidate in a job interview. The outcomes of the study gives an elaborate knowledge on how the styles of communication and negotiation would help a potential candidate in achieving what he/she wants in a job interview, especially in terms of salary and perks. It also throws light on how necessary training in developing communication and negotiation skills would significantly raise placements and better prospects of the learners, thus, institutions shall focus on them with utmost priority. It also contributes to the research body in terms of the possibilities of further research connecting the two major domains of skill development such as communication and negotiation skills. It also helps the business world in terms of policy making process in the development of youth and adolescents in employable age and their adequate learning and training.

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