



Critical Thinking in Resolving Conflict

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Abstract

The study focuses on investigating critical thinking ability in resolving conflict. A total of 399 millennial workers from various industries participated in the study. The results of the R-squared value of 0.141, F-value of .626, p-value of .682, and alpha of 0.05 do not account for much of the variability in the data. Further, the predictors do not significantly explain conflict-related variations in critical thinking. The data implies that the critical thinking ability of a beginning thinker is not statistically significant in resolving conflict. Nonetheless, enhancing one's CT abilities will help resolve conflicts better.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, Conflict, Intergenerational, Complexity

Introduction

Complexity in business is regarded as one of the biggest threats and has a significant effect (Orie, 2024) on an organization's long-term sustainability. The complexities of diversification, fueled by continuous innovation, creativity, digitization (Radulescu et al. (2018), and the ever-growing workforce intergeneration and competition, have led to numerous complications in managing an organization. Complexity takes on many forms, from organizational to operational, and despite companies' many strategies to outsmart these complexities, errors are still profound, placing a higher demand on employees to work and think harder.

Research suggests that having a mix of generations in a workplace with different social and cultural orientations (Urlick, 2017) promotes diversity and learning; however, it creates conflict that can harm individuals and organizations (Sirias et al., 2007, as cited by V. Srinivasan, 2012). Conflicts come from multiple interacting components that deter the company from performing better. Thus, management's challenge is navigating effective conflict management to lead the way to a more harmonious and productive work environment.

Ernest and Young (2019) discovered the many difficulties between older generations managing younger generations and the younger being handled by the older generations. According to E&Y, heightened tensions among the intergenerational workforce were the root of their discontent and anxiety due to misunderstanding (Michael J. Urlick, 2017). A workforce of all generations struggles to engage and collaborate due to individual variations and responses to specific situations. As a result, management is pressured to change its policies beyond HR performance metrics and analytics (Glinoga, 2017). Understanding the distinct features of every generation, values, work attitude, and style is crucial for reducing errors and improving workplace efficiency. This understanding enlightens us about the impact of generational differences on workplace efficiency. Older generations believe that experience holds more merit, while millennials and Gen Z are risk-averse, avoiding uncertainty regardless of potential payoffs. (Whitting, 2025). Demographic and psychographic differences in the workplace, as well as changes in labor laws, mismatches, and changing policies (Urlick. et al. 2017), create an imbalance in the workplace.

Critical thinking, as higher-level thinking that actively processes information and expands one's knowledge (Rutman, 2019), is an essential concept that significantly mitigates imbalances in a workplace and is crucial in improving individual and organizational performance. However, it presupposes that everyone is also bound to make mistakes and that not all conflicts can be resolved. Using critical thinking skills in conflict resolution is beneficial and provides

more explicit goals for employees and the organization. This study highlights CT's effectiveness in achieving the best possible outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

The major problem of the study is investigating critical thinking and its influence in resolving conflict.

Conceptual Framework

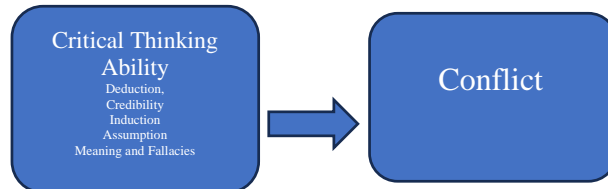


Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework used in determining the influence of CT skills in resolving conflict derived from the model of *The CEU-Lopez Critical Thinking and Kilman's Conflict Model*.

Related Literature

Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1980), Millennials (1981-1995), and Generation Z are the generations working side by side in an organization. Each generation, independent of their social and cultural background, was directly impacted by the drastic changes from remote to hybrid brought by COVID and the technological advancements resulting in various work expectations. (Lena Hall, 2018). Consequently, all four generations interact and hold different expectations from their employers. They interact and often interpret things differently, leading to disagreements (Urlick et al., 2017).

Confrontations arise because of the differing interests of the diverse workforce, resulting in a high employee turnover rate. Furthermore, employers must consider qualifications, compensation, fitness, and workplace behavior when hiring. (Koula, 2016). As a result, employers' rigid evaluation of the process starts from recruitment to employment. According to an HRP survey, Millennials and Gen Z are after promotions, work-life balance, flexible hours, leadership skills, and career advancements. Gen X and Baby Boomers find and enjoy comfort in their jobs. Gen Z is the digital generation that cannot function without access to the internet (Koula V., 2016). Their technology sophistication and preferences are challenges for employers.

Millennials are the majority of the workforce today, and the increasing number of tech-savvy millennials has changed business practices and methods (Suvodeep, 2019). Many millennials' demands are influenced by social, environmental, and technological elements such as the internet, cell phones, and other advanced gadgets (HRPA, 2016). Understanding these unique demands is crucial, as millennials, in their jobs, have many different concerns besides the usual compensation packages employers offer. A study in 2010 said that 41% of millennials turned down offers from employers, and 64.1% of those employed are quitting their jobs faster than other generations (HRPA, 2016). According to the HRP poll, millennials seek promotions, work-life balance, flexible hours, leadership abilities, and career advancement. Further, millennials are looking for promotions, work-life balance, flexible hours, leadership skills, and career advancements, according to an HRP survey. As a result, the different interests of this group frequently resulted in certain types of conflict with their co-workers in the organization. Employers can better prepare for and manage potential conflicts by understanding and addressing these unique demands, thereby creating a more harmonious and productive work environment.

Effective conflict management is crucial for enhancing employee performance and reducing social and economic costs by optimizing operations (TrainingFolks, 2018). A key tool in this process is critical thinking, which empowers employees to maintain focus and a clear mindset, enabling them to comprehend and navigate the complexities of business, including personal challenges at work. This is underscored by a study by Ricci (2014), which suggests that the ability to adapt and develop critical thinking skills is one of the most important characteristics to look for in new

hires (Budryk, 2013). Critical thinking is not just a skill but a powerful tool that can be honed to manage workplace challenges effectively.

In a scoping review conducted by Lopez et al. (2023), it was found that only 128 research studies were done in the Philippines from 1971 to 2017, and they focused on exploring critical thinking ability and disposition in curriculum and instruction, materials development, assessment, and test development. However, critical thinking has not yet been utilized for career enhancement or managing intergenerational conflicts that arise between different generations in the workplace due to differences in values, work styles, and communication methods). Conflicts are inevitable and are always present in almost all organizations. According to studies, multiple generations increase diversity (Urlick, 2017); however, it creates a negative notion due to varied understanding and dealing of different people in different situations. The differences, though, which can be an opportunity for learning and enriching competencies, are also a potential source of conflict.

Methods

The test was administered to 399 millennials employed from different industry sectors. The millennials who were alumni were given the two sets of tests. The CEU-Lopez- Critical Thinking Test, and the modified Conflict test. This study utilized descriptive correlation and multiple regression analysis to describe the relationship of CT in Resolving Conflict.

The study found a significant positive correlation between critical thinking skills and conflict resolution among millennials. The CEU-Lopez Critical Test and the Conflict Test were the instruments used. The CEU-Lopez Critical Thinking Test, consisting of 87 questions, is a multi-aspect general knowledge critical thinking tool. It has been rigorously validated and tested with five dimensions of critical thinking skills instrument listed under General-Content, Multi-Aspect Critical Thinking Test in the English-Language Critical Thinking Tests as the Critical Thinking Organization across the Discipline, U.S.A.

The CEU-Lopez Critical Thinking Test was developed and validated using the eight-phase test development model. This model involves test conceptualization, development of test plan, creation of test items, face and content validity checks, item revision, pre-tryout, actual tryout, and construct validation through verbal reports of thinking. The 87-item CEU Lopez Critical Thinking Test yielded an overall KR -20 Coefficient of .68, demonstrating its reliability. The test's validity was confirmed by experts from various fields, ensuring its credibility. Their suggestions on the test content were incorporated and validated by the Association for Informal Logic and Critical Thinking (AILACT).

Table 1
Placements of Critical Thinking Ability

Aspects of Critical Thinking	Placement	Total Number of Items
Deduction	1-19	19
Credibility	20-36	17
Assumptions	37-52	16
Induction	53-68	16
Meaning	69-87	19
Total		87

The Critical Thinking test is a multiple-choice type of test that includes the five dimensions of CT: deduction, which has 19 items; credibility, 17 items; assumptions, 16 items; induction, 19 items; and meaning/fallacies, which has 19 items. The test in each dimension is properly explained for proper testing and scoring of CT ability. The following are stated in the manual of the CEU-Lopez Critical Thinking test for guidance and proper administration of the test.

In deduction, 19 items of the test refer to several principles of critical thinking, such as the fallacy of affirming the consequent, the fallacy of division, the fallacy of bandwagon, modus ponens, contraposition, and post hoc fallacy. The test presents an argument where the respondents would decide on the given argument based on options: if the statement follows necessarily from the other statements, if the statement contradicts the other statement, or if neither follows nor contradicts the statement.

In the credibility judgment dimension, which consists of a 17-item test used criteria in the item construction for judging the credibility of sources and observation statements are expertise, lack of conflict of interest, agreement with other sources, reputation, careful habits, use of established procedures, ability to give reasons, minimal inferring involved, provisions of records, and corroboration. The test will have two characters who will present two conflicting observation statements, and respondents are requested to judge which of the two statements is credible.

The assumption, which consists of 16 items, is tested using presupposition, needed assumption, and used assumption. The character in the test makes a proposition that is taken for granted in a situation and that supports a conclusion. Three types of assumptions are tested: presupposition, needed assumption, and used assumption.

Induction focuses on the explanatory conclusions, specifically causal claims, and the characteristics of investigative activities such as designing experiments, including planning to control variables, seeking evidence and counter-evidence, statistical significance, and other possible explanations. Respondents will decide whether the given information supports the conclusion, goes against the conclusion, or is neither.

Last is the meaning and fallacies dimension, which consists of 19 items and deals with the difference between the use of necessary and sufficient conditions, language, judging provided definitions, negation, and double negation, such as logical words such as only, if, and only.

In addition, the CEU-Lopez Critical Thinking was developed and validated using the eight-phase test development model, which consists of the following: test conceptualization, development of test plan, development of the test items, face and content validity of the test, revision of the test items, pre-tryout of the test, actual tryout of the test, and construct validation of the test verbal reports of thinking.

Table 2
Interpretation of Norms of CT Ability as a whole (CT)

Range of Scores	Z-Scores	Range of Percentile Rank	Verbal Description
42 above	2.093 and above	98.17 and above	Master Thinker
35-41	1.012- 1.939	84.38- 97.38	Advanced Thinker
29-34	0.085- 0.857	53.59- 80.51	Practicing Thinker
22-28	(-)0.996- (-)0.070	15.87- 47.21	Beginning Thinker
16-21	(-)1.923- (-)1.151	2.74- 10.51	Challenged Thinker
Below 15	(-)2.696- (-)2.078	1.88	Unreflective Thinker

(Source: CEU-Lopez Critical Thinking Test Manual, 2012)

Conflict, on the other hand, is a modified test for its suitability purposes. The test has a reliability alpha of .96, the validity of which was made by experts and other researchers who expressed their level of agreement in each item of the Kilman Conflict test.

Results and Discussion

Data shows the dimension of CT per dimension; Deduction, Induction, Credibility, Assumption and Meaning and Fallacies

Table 3 Level of Critical Thinking Ability (Deduction)

Score	Frequency	Percentage	Interpretation
11 – 12	20	5.1	Master Thinker
9 – 10	63	15.8	Advanced Thinker
7 – 8	98	24.6	Practicing Thinker
5 – 6	141	35.4	Beginning Thinker
3 – 4	65	16.3	Challenged Thinker
0 – 2	12	3.0	Unreflective Thinker
Total	399	100.0	

Table 3 presents the level of CT Deduction, with 35.4 percent rated as Beginning Thinker. The beginning thinker result indicated that respondents lack a systematic approach and have not fully internalized the necessary standards in

evaluating the arguments. However, they have become aware of the essential role of critical thinking principles and criteria in assessing the statements and other propositions.

Table 4 Level of Critical Thinking Ability (Induction)

Score	Frequency	Percentage	Interpretation
11 – 12	16	4.1	Master Thinker
9 – 10	45	11.3	Advanced Thinker
7 – 8	90	22.5	Practicing Thinker
5 – 6	129	32.3	Beginning Thinker
3 – 4	102	25.6	Challenged Thinker
0 – 2	17	4.3	Unreflective Thinker
Total	399	100.0	

Induction is 32.3, and, similar to deduction, is a beginning thinker. The test focuses on explanatory conclusions, specifically causal claims, and involves investigative activities such as designing experiments, including planning to control variables, seeking evidence and counter-evidence. Respondents as beginning thinkers were able to assess whether the presented information supported or contradicted the conclusion

Table 5 Level of Critical Thinking Ability in terms of Assumption

Score	Frequency	Percentage	Interpretation
11 – 12	0	0.0	Master Thinker
9 – 10	1	0.3	Advanced Thinker
7 – 8	19	4.8	Practicing Thinker
5 – 6	75	18.8	Beginning Thinker
3 – 4	178	44.6	Challenged Thinker
0 – 2	126	31.6	Unreflective Thinker
Total	399	100.0	

Assumption received a 44.6 and is a challenged thinker. The challenged thinker is aware of their choices through cognitive processes, yet they must strengthen their CT abilities to appreciate the value of reason and logic. The challenged thinker is aware of the questionable and illogical conclusions drawn from the assumptions and conclusions made. Respondents recognized the inferences that did not follow from the evidence. This is the stage in which an individual becomes aware that there are criteria and principles that one should use in evaluating the arguments or propositions.

Table 6 Level of Critical Thinking Ability in terms of Meaning and Fallacies

Score	Frequency	Percentage	Interpretation
11 – 12	18	4.6	Master Thinker
9 – 10	40	10.0	Advanced Thinker
7 – 8	117	29.3	Practicing Thinker
5 – 6	130	32.5	Beginning Thinker
3 – 4	85	21.3	Challenged Thinker

0 – 2	9	2.3	Unreflective Thinker
Total	399	100.0	

Meaning and Fallacies dimension with 32.5 as beginning thinker indicates that respondents were able to assess the information and its relationship to one another.

Table 5 Summary Results of the Critical Thinking Levels

Critical Thinking Ability Dimensions	Percentage	Level
Deduction	35.4%	Beginning Thinker
Induction	33.3%	Beginning Thinker
Credibility	32.3%	Beginning Thinker
Assumption	44.6%	Challenged Thinker
Meaning and Fallacies	32.5%	Beginning Thinker

The respondents' CT ability indicates beginning thinkers for dimensions. *Deduction, Credibility, Induction, , Meaning, and Fallacies*, whereas Assumption is a challenged thinker. Beginning Thinker was the stage at which respondents evaluate the logic of arguments and concepts. (Lopez, 2012). As Beginning Thinkers, respondents recognize the value of reason and are starting to take control of their thinking processes; challenged thinkers acknowledge the value of thinking and understand that inadequate critical thinking skills may pose challenges and difficulties. In essence, the beginning thinker and challenged thinker with an understanding and acknowledgment of the CT have flaws that affect the ability to resolve conflict.

Table 6 Summary Results of Conflict Management

Conflict Indicators	Overall Mean	Interpretation
Competing	3.50	Very High
Collaborating	3.53	Very High
Compromising	3.52	Very High
Avoiding	3.48	Very High
Accommodating	3.72	Very High

Conflict in terms of competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating, as shown by Kilman's model of conflict, shows a very high score for almost all the indicators of resolving conflict. The accommodating is the highest weighted mean, which received a 3.72 overall mean score. In accommodating, most respondents neglect their concerns to satisfy the other person's concerns. Accommodating is unassertive and cooperative with an element of self-sacrifice. A weighted mean of 3.53 for collaborating means that respondents were assertive and cooperative and sought a solution with the other person about achieving an outcome as a priority. Collaborating is exploring any disagreement, knowing and learning from each other's perspectives, and recognizing similarities rather than imposing personal beliefs. (Kilman, 2010). Compromising has a weighted mean of 3.52, indicating respondents' assertiveness and cooperativeness to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution that satisfies both parties. Concerning addresses an issue rather than avoiding it, and compromising means seeking a quick middle-ground position to resolve conflict (Kilman, 2010). *Competing* received a rating of 3.5, which means understanding the rights and defending a correct position to arrive at a resolution. While *Avoiding* is the lowest, with a weighted mean of 3.48, it is unassertive and uncooperative. In avoiding this, there is no persistence of one's concerns or those of the other person. In short, the minds of individuals need not address any conflict or recognize any presence of conflict at all.

All indicators in handling conflict proved that very high ratings only show similar ways of handling or managing conflict among respondents. However, the overall description of conflict was found to be accommodating, showing a good attitude for someone in conflict.

Table 7

Regression analysis of Critical Thinking Abilities on Conflict management

Variables	Unstandardized		Standardized		
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	3.369	0.197		17.068	0
Deduction	0.001	0.015	0.016	0.073	0.943
Credibility	0.014	0.021	0.157	0.639	0.531
Induction	0.002	0.018	0.024	0.108	0.915
Assumption	0.018	0.02	0.221	0.889	0.385
Meaning and Fallacies	0.021	0.016	0.306	1.36	0.19

R-squared = .141
 F-value = .626
 p-value = .682
 alpha = 0.05

Table 7 shows that Critical Thinking Abilities and Conflict Management were regressed in the five independent variables. The results were Meaning and Fallacies with standardized coefficients beta of (0.306), Assumptions (0.221), Credibility (0.157), Induction (0.024), and Deduction (0.016). When critical thinking regressed on the five variables, data indicated .141 or 14% (F .626) of the variance in critical thinking abilities. Only the *Meaning and fallacies* significantly contributed to conflict management with scores (b=0.306 p <.682). While Assumptions, Credibility, Induction, and Deduction do not. This means that for every point increase in critical thinking meaning and fallacies, there was a .001-point increase in conflict management. The results of the R-squared value of 0.141, F-value of .626, p-value of .682, and alpha of 0.05 indicate that R-squared is relatively low, which does not account for much of the variability in the data. Since the p-value is more significant than 0.05, it suggests that the predictors do not significantly explain conflict-related variations in critical thinking. These findings provide valuable insights into the relationship between critical thinking and conflict resolution, thus enlightening the enhancement of CT among respondents. Resolving conflict as a Beginning thinker on all CT dimensions requires respondents to get information from involved parties and find the root causes of the disagreement. Though there is an awareness of the different concepts and points of view, beginning thinkers tend to agree or disagree, which may be difficult to resolve conflict. However, for a challenged thinker, respondents seemed to actively engage in critical thinking, with the excitement to resolve conflict. Beginning and challenged thinkers recognize the lack of a systematic plan and limited insights and that respondents of this study have yet to fully commit to resolving conflict.

Conclusion

Critical thinking in resolving conflict depends on the level of CT skills. As the level of CT skills increases, conflict resolution also enhances.

Recommendation

While the model could not capture all variability in resolving conflict, it only indicates further investigation employing other predictors to enhance critical thinking skills in conflict resolution. This suggests critical thinking skills can be honed to improve conflict resolution. Non-cognitive skills are another area to explore in conflict resolution.

These findings provide valuable insights into the relationship between critical thinking and conflict resolution, informing and enlightening future academic researchers and students to explore further.

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Notes

This study received no funding. Participants received and approved consent before participating in the study.

Participants in this study did not agree to have their data shared publicly. However, reasonable requests will be considered.

The author does not have a conflict of interest due to the study.

