

The Games People Play- Impact Of Transactional Analysis On Job Satifation Of Employees

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Citation: Rajita Mishra, et.al (2023). The Games People Play- Impact Of Transactional Analysis On Job Satifation Of Employees, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 29(4) 5761-5769
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v29i4.10756

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

With the increasing scope of Human Resource Management, today's corporate world is getting increasingly sensitive about improving workplaces. A tranquil working environment increases productivity and job satisfaction, increasing any organization's ability to retain promising talents. Nowadays, organizations are behaving like living being. They have culture and traits. Previously it was considered that these both are derived from top management policies. Still, with the increase in organization size and business expansion, employees are getting increasingly involved in every facet of work culture. Today it has been clear that not only policies but the policy implementors influence the working environment of any organization. With the increase in the number of employees, interlocutors, and stakeholders, their emotional involvement, the importance of transactional analysis has also increased. Every individual invested in their organization wants to be successful through control or manipulation. Hence games are being played overtly or covertly everywhere when there is either clash of motives or competition. This research paper studies the games employees play in organizations to uncover the reasons and fatalities to facilitate job satisfaction, conflict management, and healthy competition. This study was done on various organization employees working in the middle- and lower-level management.

Keywords: Conflict management style, Employees, Games, Job satisfaction, Transactional analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Renowned and eminent psychologist Dr. Eric Berne gave some of the most auspicious transactional analysis concepts. The transactional Analysis method uses popular terminology from everyday language to explain human personality and behavior. Transaction Analysis (TA) was developed by Eric Berne and has been popularized in recent years by the writings of Thomas Harris, Muriel James, and Dorothy Jongeward. Berne developed TA in the 1950s by watching people interact. He observed that as you watch and listen to people, you can see them change before your eyes. There are changes in vocabulary, facial expressions, gestures, and postures. Sometimes people act like children, at other times like adults, and at other times like parents. Berne noticed that sometimes people play communication games with each other and do not come off straight. He also observed transactions in which people communicated smoothly through complementary behavior. At other times they crossed communication by working against each other. The transaction consists of a stimulus by one person and a response by another, which may become a new stimulus for the other person to respond to. It is a unit of social interaction. The analysis aims to discover which part of each person – PAC (Parent, Adult, Child) originates each stimulus and response. The clues to identify these are words, tone of voice, body gestures, and facial expressions. The transactions may be verbal or nonverbal. The transactions may be (1) open or complementary, or parallel, (2) Blocked or uncomplimentary or crossed, (3) Ulterior or hidden or disguised transactions. When a series of transactions are sequenced in a pre-defined manner, they are called games. Many parts of a game are always guessable and are started by one type of ego- state mainly child and parent. Adults are primarily able to understand the wiring and exit it. There are only certain particular games that can be played in the office. Almost all the games are for acquiring position and power in the organization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With the increasing use of technology and competition among organizations, organizations are increasingly living. Once they join the organization, employees are expected to spend the next 25-30 years in it, with 8 hours on average daily. Also, with the increasing culture of switching the organization, employees work heavily on making acquaintances with other employees and their friends. Offices today are like a second home. Therefore, people are also emotionally involved and invested in their organizations. This leads to the making and breaking transactions interpersonally and intra-personally, forcing people to play games to prove their point or satisfy their ego-state.

Transactional Analysis

Transactional analysis is a system of behavioral psychology based on the idea that one's behavior and social relationships reflect an interchange between different ego states and aspects of personality established early in life. (Oxford Dictionary). This theory has the following major subject heads:

Structural analysis, transactions, life positions, strokes, stamps, time structuring, games, script analysis.

This paper mainly considers the games people play at work; however, to understand the games, it is necessary to understand ego states. There are mainly three ego states: Parent (protective), Adult (analytical), and Child (naive). (Berne Eric, 1961) These three ego states transact with each other in three different ways:

Complimentary transactions- In a complementary transaction, person A communicates from one ego state and invites a response from a complementary ego state. (Tomlinson Ian, 2013)

Crossed transactions- In a crossed transaction, the response to the communication is from an ego state other than the one that has been expected. (Tomlinson Ian, 2013)

Ulterior transactions- According to Berne, people communicate on two levels. There is the social message (what we say) and the psychological message (what we mean). Sometimes the two things do not match. Such transactions are called ulterior transactions. For example- sarcasm. (Tomlinson Ian, 2013)

Eric Berne did not write directly about organizational performance; his comments about efficiency referred to psychotherapy groups and healing. However, he was a man of great curiosity and a scientist who left us a theory of organizations (Berne, 1963), one inspired mainly by Kurt Lewin (1951) and other systemic practitioners of his time and supported by his observations and experience in hospitals and different organizational settings. (Moreau J, 2005). Hence analysis of transactions done in organizations may help in correcting the organizational interpersonal and intra-personal behavior.

Strokes

Strokes are the fundamental unit of social action. (Berne Eric, 1961). A stroke can be physical, verbal, or non-verbal. When it comes to throwing and getting strokes in an organization, most employees use a series of repetitive & insentient patterns – never thinking about what they are executing. In an organization, strokes are mainly related to authority, institutional power, influence, and orientation. Strokes are primarily involved (directly or indirectly) in everything a person does. When a person gives conscious or unconscious strokes to another person sequentially, it gives birth to games in the organization.

Pastimes

A pastime is defined as an engagement in which transactions are straightforward. (Berne Eric, 1961). A pastime is a ritual that proceeds familiarly. However, the contents are not programmed so strictly as that of practice. It is indeed a series of transactions that are complementary (reciprocal) to each other, semi-ritualistic, and intended as a time-structuring activity. Pastimes have no covert purpose and can be performed only between employees of the same wavelength. They are light and inoffensive. (Newton C, 2023). With employees who are in their adult ego- state and are happy individuals, pastimes are the social activities of enjoyment and bringing satisfaction to the organization. Existentially, a pastime is a way of warding off guilt, despair, or intimacy, a device nature or culture provides to ease the quiet desperation. More optimistically, it is something enjoyed for its own sake, and at least it serves means of getting acquainted in the hope of achieving the longed-for relationship with another colleague. (Berne Eric, 1961).

Games

As explained by Eric, when catabolism enters the situation, the pastime becomes a game. According to Berne, Games are nothing but a set of ulterior transactions which are repetitive, superficially plausible, with a well-defined primary or secondary payoff, or more colloquially, a series of moves with a catch. These repetitive, tricky transactions are principally intended to obtain intended strokes from other employees. However, instead, they reinforce negative feelings, doubt, and self-concepts and mask the straight expression of views and emotions. (Newton C., 2023). Games are generally played for primary gains (ex-satisfaction), secondary gains (ex-promotion), and social gains (ex-influence). (Berne Eric, 1961). Games do involve saying one thing and doing another to achieve gain, but resulting in an underpinning of a negative people have about themselves.

Games Formula- Berne has given a formula $G: C + G = R > S > X > P$

Con + Gimmick = Response > (then can pull) Switch > (which causes) X Cross up > (then both can claim their) Payoff

It goes as follows:

Step-1- An opening con (C), an invite from person A to person B into the game, has to hook person B's gimmick (G).

Step-2- When B responds (R), the game is on.

Step-3- With B hooked, person A can pull the switch (S), which sends person B into complete confusion or cross-up (X).

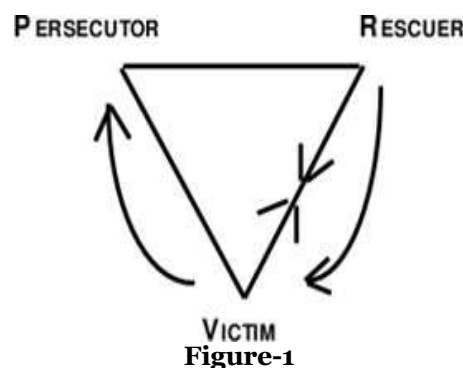
Step-4- Once the cross has happened, both parties can claim their payoff (P).

The social dimension of games forms Bernian basis for the analysis of social or organizational game forces at work. The line separating the social psychiatry or interpersonal breakdown of games and the social dynamics or intragroup breakdown of games is a thin one. The major difference is that in the interpersonal breakdown, the focus is on what occurs from the point of view of "it," that is, "it" characterizes one person's view of the game, whereas, in the intragroup breakdown, the focus is on what goes on within the group and what is visible to group members. (Summerton O, 1993). Out of the three ego states, it is intended that everyone should behave in their adult state, but it is not the case. An employee may conduct in a child state because the manager acts in the parent state or vice-versa. This is done to make others feel undermined, withdraw, procrastinate, and blindly obey to please, to achieve some gain. (Kline, 1994).

The Drama Triangle

The drama triangle shows what goes inside a person in any social setting. (Karpman, 1968). It is important to understand his inner ego-state to understand the role he is perceiving himself to play in the group in the organization. Once the employee himself or the group members understand the role the other person is playing in the drama triangle, he can instantly remove the switch to bring the employee out of it and choose an alternative way to respond to him.

Games in organizations may be analyzed transactionally, at other times using The Drama Triangle, and always with the goal of facilitating executives and management to deal with the situation. (Summerton O, 1993)



The Victim: The Victim in this model does not represent a real victim, but rather someone feeling or acting like a victim. He seeks to convince himself and others that he cannot do anything to save himself and that all attempts are useless, in spite of trying hard.

The Rescuer: The Rescuer says "Let me help you." A Rescuer feels guilty if he does not go to the rescue and eventually becomes angry (and might become a Persecutor) as their help fails. The Persecutor: (Villain) The Persecutor says, "It's all your fault." The Persecutor is regulatory, blaming, critical, repressive, angry, controlling, rigid, and feels superior.

The Game Pentagon

The Game Pentagon classifies the organizational and cultural scopes of games. The game pentagon talks about the group dynamics going on at the covert level where every employee is playing a specific role. The Game Pentagon offers a new kind of game breakdown, and hence names of the five roles are summarized: Stage Manager, Spectator, Savior, Sniper, and Scapegoat. (Summerton O, 1968)

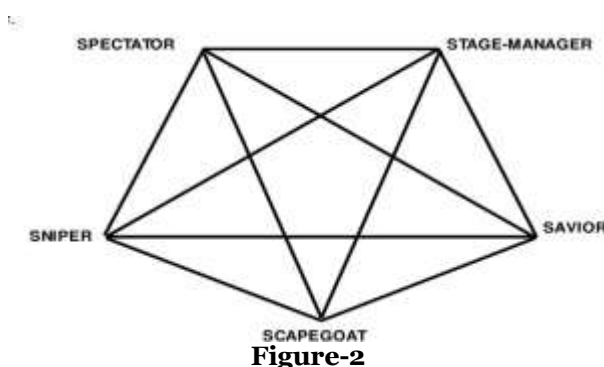


Figure-2

Spectator- these are the employees who are part of the group but are not going to participate by acting overtly.

Stage-manager- these are senior officers/ admin who is going to handle who game in the group by facilitating the participant. He may also switch the roles.

Sniper- He is the villain who will corner the scapegoat to fulfilling his plans.

Scapegoat- he is the victim who either by will or by the situation is unable to help himself. Savior- he is the one who narrows the game of sniper for enabling the scapegoat to help himself.

When doing game analysis in organizations, the difference between intrapsychic and intragroup games is vital in connection to intervention strategies so that employees are not scapegoated in organizational games and organizational games are not dominated by personal dynamics.

As an employee's opportunistic behavior gets known to his fellow competitors, they become unable to repeat such a stroke again and again in future situations. Fresher employees will keep safeguards such as making agreements before investing themselves in HRD initiatives for player employees. Thus, future opportunities become limited for employees with questionable reputations. This will lead to developing a dynamic strategy of infinitely repetitive games. (Pandey & Chermack, 2008). However, if an employee stays or can control his adult state, he can use respectful tones and appreciate and listen to his colleagues. This will help him to consider all alternatives, have a long-term view, and be delighted in his office. (Kline, 1994) .

Workplace games- The most commonly played games in workplaces are:

See what you made me do/ I was trying to help- It is a game in which A tries to make another person responsible for any mistake he made. It is an escape door for him to put the responsibility on others for all situations. They will delegate their responsibility otherwise and blame another person if something goes wrong. On the other hand, the person offering help is, on the contrary, trying to control the situation by providing support and getting irritated when the service is not accepted. (Eric, n.d.)

Why this always happens to me- It is a game in which A tries to provoke others to show that they are misfortunate or weak by saying precisely the opposite until he transgresses the limits and forces them to oblige. They will display themselves as unlucky and helpless. It is played to earn sympathy and support. However, there is a positive part to this in which well-adapted people reap the rewards and successes beyond their expectations. Here this game leads to personal growth as well. (Eric, n.d.)

Why don't you..... Yes, but- According to Berne, it is a group game in which many players may participate. This game is played for ulterior purposes, where A gives a stroke by stating a problem and inviting solutions. However, he will not agree to any of the solutions and will ultimately try to prove that his situation is miserable and will gratify & reassure the Child. Being a complimentary transaction, this child will eventually move the rest of the participants in the Parent state, thereby making them feel caring and responsible for solutions that will not be accepted. Such types of games help A to gain sympathy in the group and will force others to take care. (Eric, n.d.)

Now I got you- It is a game in which A is always on his mission to get hold of another person for every mistake. The aggression he shows for the situation is not required, but to justify himself without giving grounds to others for their justification, helps him play the victim- Aggressor game. In many cases, A can forget the original stroke and will start concentrating on the rage only. The person only wants to prove correct in every stroke or life position and is not concerned about any other outcome. (Eric, n.d.)

Degree of games- The stages of a game shows the intensity with which it is played. These stages are distinguished as follows:

First Degree Game is communally acceptable.

Second Degree Game is one from which no permanent, irreversible damage is done, but which the person would rather hide from the public.

Third Degree Game is played for keeps and ends in the surgery, the courtroom, or the morgue. (Eric, n.d.)

Conflict Management- conflicts occur during circumstances where there is an interface between two or more employees of an organization involving clashing opinions. These views may be regarding any particular decision or task within the organization. Organizational conflict, in simpler terms, implies the outcomes of the human interface that originates with the declaration of an employee of the organization that his ethics, attitudes, or goals are not well-suited with the attitude, ethics, or goals that have been set by the organization and desired to be followed by the employees of the organization (Siira, 2012). The mismatch of opinions may arise between two employees of the organization either in same group, between two groups of employees in the organization, or within a person who is an employee of the organization. Organizational conflict may also arise from conditions where the goals that are set by the bosses are not met by the employees who work under them (Bhat et al, 2013). A condition at the office that includes misinterpretation or miscommunication among the employees due to the actual or the seeming contradiction of the needs, interests, and ideals may be referred to as organizational conflict. The main reason of organizational conflict is the disruption of communication, and the lack of accountability on the part of the members (Marion & Gonzales, 2013).

According to Thomas, K.W., and R.H. Kilmann, there are five conflict management styles:

Accommodating- This is when one collaborates to a high degree. It may be at one's own cost and in fact work against own goals, objectives, and anticipated outcomes.

Avoiding- This is when one simply avoids the issue. They aren't helping the others reach their goals, and aren't assertively following their own.

Collaborating- This is when one partner/pairs up with the other party to achieve both of their goals. It's how one breaks free of the "win-lose" paradigm and seeks the "win-win."

Competing- This is the "win-lose" paradigm. One acts in a very forceful way to achieve his goals, without seeking to liaise with the other party, and it may be at the cost of the other party.

Compromising- This is the "lose-lose" situation where neither party really gets what they desired. This involves a moderate level of insistence and teamwork.

As games are actually played at conscious and sub-conscious levels and may be known and unknown to the player, any of these above conflict management styles which are actually practically applicable at the organizational level may not be successful at the individual level.

As games are more related to the ego-state and individual goals, the part of a conflict due to the game which is related to goals and values may be managed by either avoiding or collaborating conflict management style, but the ego-state part still needs to be addressed to stop the game. Hence in any game avoiding may be an instant solution but not a complete solution. However, collaboration may facilitate communication but with an expert only who can establish clear communication lines. For this need to use conflict management strategies as coined by Kenneth Cloke and Joan Goldsmith. Following are the eight conflict resolution strategies:

Strategy One: Change the Culture and Context of Conflict. **Strategy Two:** Listen Actively, Empathetically, and Responsively.

Strategy Three: Acknowledge and Integrate Emotions to Solve Problems. **Strategy Four:** Search Beneath the Surface for Hidden Meaning.

Strategy Five: Separate What Matters from What Gets in the Way. **Strategy Six:** Stop Rewarding and Learn from Difficult Behaviours.

Strategy Seven: Solve Problems Creatively, Plan Strategically, and Negotiate Collaboratively. **Strategy Eight:** Explore Resistance, Mediate, and Design Systems for Prevention and Resolution.

Although, all the above strategies are very practical for organizations but in the context of games in an organization communication is the key. Through proper communication ego-state as well as conflicting goals can be managed and hence Strategy Two and Strategy Four can be the best ways to remove the communication barriers, especially at an intra-personal level to bring employees to the adult ego-state and allow them to bring their feelings in a straight forward manner and avoid gaming with fellow employees.

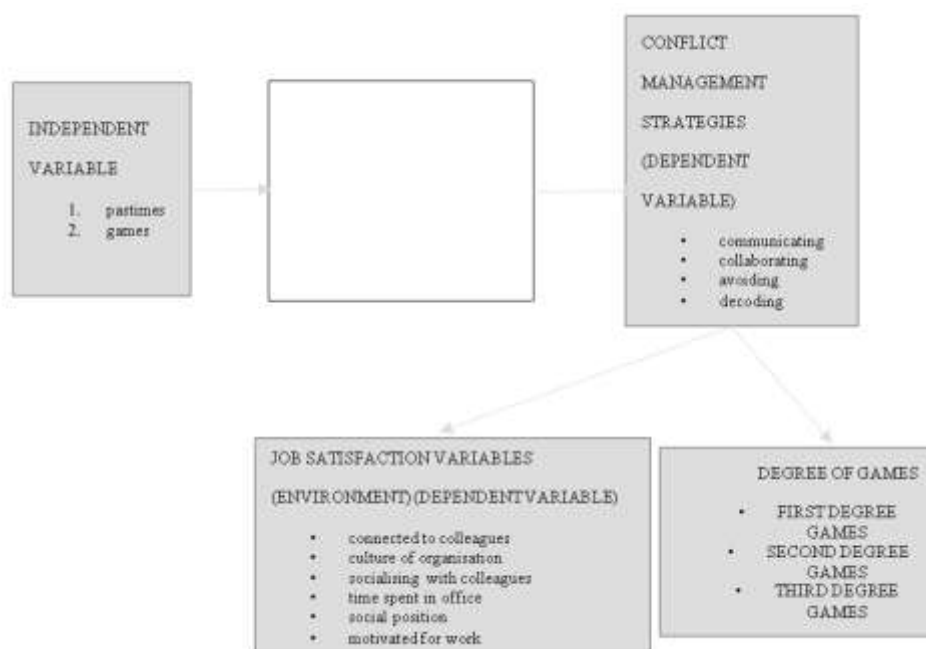
Job satisfaction- job satisfaction can be defined as a gratifying or positive emotional state received from the appraisal of one's job or job practices. (Edwin A. Locke, 1976). Lofquist and Davis (1991), defined job satisfaction as "an individual's positive affective reaction of the target environment as a result of the individual's appraisal of the extent to which his or her needs are fulfilled by the environment". Job is a central part of almost everybody's life. Employees devote almost all of their awakening time to the office as career growth makes up almost 70% of all human progressive tasks. Hence it is vital that the employees feel a sense of gratification with their job or else it might lead to foiling, irritation, and even depression. The pressure to execute at their best all the time generates a lot of stress for the employees, known as job stress. Job stress can lead to games in organizations in order to prove oneself too competitive by fooling others. Hence in today's world job satisfaction is a lot linked to the work environment. Hoppock offered one of the initial

definitions of job satisfaction in which he described the paradigm as being any number of psychological, physiological, and environmental circumstances that leads a person to show fulfillment with their job. Smith et al. (1969) defined job satisfaction as the feeling an individual has towards his or her job. Hence, if negative games are avoided and positive games are encouraged in the organization then the chances of job satisfaction may increase. This may also create an amicable environment in the organization to make employees feel good and reduce brain drain and absenteeism.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research attempts to understand and find out the relation between games people play at the workplace as a moderating strategy to attain various gains including job satisfaction. Hence it was descriptive research. The questionnaire was designed on 5- point Lickert scale and had 37 questions with similar responses. The questionnaire was distributed to employees of various Public and Private Organizations. A sample size of 50 was taken. The questionnaire had 3 parts that were not distinctly marked so that the respondent don't get biased and filled in his true responses. Specific questions related to the games played, degree of games, conflict management strategies, and their overall impact on job satisfaction of employees with this context only were studied through separate relevant questions. The responses of each individual were analyzed. For this weighted mean was used to summarize the level of agreement of the respondents and standard deviation of responses were also recorded to understand the disagreement level of the respondents.

Conceptual Framework



Objectives

The following are the objectives of the study:

To find out whether employees play transactional games within organizations.

To find the type of transactional games that employees mostly play with their colleagues.

To find out the correlation between transactional games and conflict management strategies.

To evaluate the impact of transactional games on employees' job satisfaction

Hypothesis

H₀: Employees do not like to play transactional games with other staff in the organization.

H₁: Employees like and play a significant number of transactional games with other staff in the organization.

H₀: The degree of games played by employees in organizations with other staff is not specific.

H₁: Employees predominantly play second-degree games in organizations with other staff in the organization.

H₀: There is no relationship between workplace conflict management strategy and transactional games.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between workplace conflict management strategy and transactional games.

H₀: Transactional games do not impact the job satisfaction of employees in an organization.

H₁: Transactional games have a significant impact on the job satisfaction of employees in an organization.

Sample details

A sample size of 50 respondents was taken from various Public & Private Sector Organizations i.e. banks, public departments, and insurance companies, for the study.

Analysis and Findings

The questionnaire had 37 questions out of which 2 questions were general in nature to make respondents comfortable. 23 questions were regarding games people play at the workplace, 8 questions were regarding conflict management strategies and 7 questions were regarding job satisfaction due to environmental interactions. The chosen 35 questions had similar responses on 5-point Lickert scale. The responses were quantified by giving weights to them as below:

Always-5, Often-4, Sometime-3, Rarely-2 and Never-1.

H₀: Employees do not like to play transactional games with other staff in the organization.

H₁: Employees like and play a significant number of transactional games with other staff in the organization.

To study this, employees were asked 2 direct questions regarding their affinity towards pastimes and games during free hours in the office. Apart from these 23 questions regarding the most common game were asked. Both the sections tried to find their likely hood of games with their colleagues whether they are participants in a group activity or not.

Column Head	pastimes	games
pastimes	1	123
Column Head	pastimes	games
games	0.430936093	1

Table-1

Pearson correlation of pastimes and games is found to be moderately positive and statistically significant with $r = 0.430936093$, $p < 0.001$.

Out of the total four games taken in this research, the following are results represented in pie-chart form. Clearly from the chart, What you made me do/ I was trying to help is the most commonly played game in offices, followed by Now I got you.

What you made me do/ I was trying to help

Why this always happens to me

Why don't you.... Yes but

Now I got you

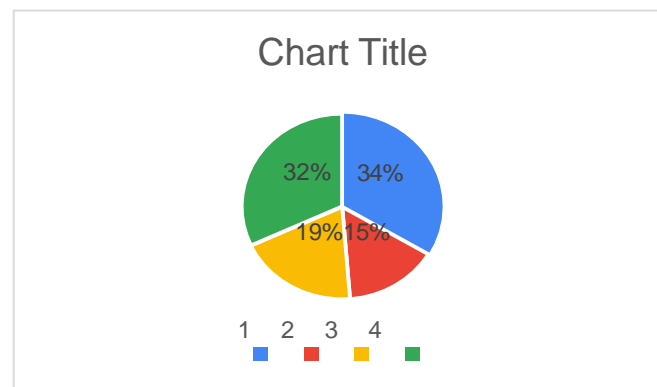


Figure-3

Both the results prove that employees like to play transactional games in workplace and What you made me do/ I was trying to help is the most common game.

Hence, the hypothesis is tested and the alternate hypothesis is found correct.

H₀: The degree of games played by employees in organizations with other staff is not specific.

H₁: Employees predominantly play second-degree games in organizations with other staff in the organization.

To study the degree of the games played 5 degree-related questions were asked to find out whether they would like to come in front and give their stroke or will give covert actions by hiding their true intentions.

q1	q2	q3	q4	q5	Weight Average Mean	Std Deviation
3.48	2.47	3.06	3.15	2.77	2.99	0.38

The weighted average mean is 2.99 whereas the standard deviation is 0.38 which shows that the employees tend to play second-degree games at the workplace/organizations. Hence tested alternate hypothesis is found correct.

H₀: There is no relationship between workplace conflict management strategy and transactional games.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between workplace conflict management strategy and transactional games.

To study this relationship, the respondents were asked to reply to 8 questions related to the strategy they would follow to handle strokes given by their colleagues. The responses were then analyzed by Chi-square test to find out the relation.

	communicating	avoiding	collaborating	decoding
What you made me do/ I was trying to help	150 (101.85) [22.76]	50 (80.09) [11.30]	100 (95.99) [0.17]	65 (87.06) [5.59]
Why this always happens to me	100 (80.93) [4.50]	50 (63.63) [2.92]	90 (76.27) [2.47]	50 (69.17) [5.31]
Why don't you.... Yes but	100 (125.57) [5.21]	100 (98.74) [0.02]	100 (118.35) [2.84]	150 (107.34) [16.95]
Now I get you	15 (56.65) [30.62]	87 (44.54) [40.47]	54 (53.39) [0.01]	47 (48.42) [0.04]

Table-2

The chi-square statistic is 151.1876. The p-value is < 0.00001. The result is significant at $p < .05$. Hence, there is significant relation between the transactional games and conflict management strategies used by employees in an organization. Thus, alternate hypothesis is accepted.

H₀: Transactional games do not impact the job satisfaction of employees in an organization.

H₁: Transactional games have a significant impact on the job satisfaction of employees in an organization.

To study this relation, 7 questions were asked of respondents. These questions were basically related to the satisfaction derived from environment and group activities which can bind them to their organization for spending office hours happily and continuing with their organization.

Report

games		connected	culture	socialising	time	position	motivated	Total
dont like to play games	Mean	4.10	3.90	4.20	2.90	3.40	4.20	3.78
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10.00
	Std. Deviation	0.994	0.876	0.789	0.876	1.075	0.919	0.92
like to play games	Mean	3.93	4.05	4.13	3.40	3.58	4.45	3.92
	N	40	40	40	40	40	40	40.00
	Std. Deviation	1.023	0.714	0.966	0.871	1.107	0.815	0.92
Total	Mean	3.96	4.02	4.14	3.30	3.54	4.40	3.89
	N	50	50	50	50	50	50	50.00
	Std. Deviation	1.009	0.742	0.926	0.886	1.092	0.833	0.91

Table-3

The test is done by using SPSS 29.0.0.0 software. Responses for various job satisfaction variables related to the environment were found to analyze the data. From the table, it can be seen that the weighted average mean of all the factors is near to 3.89 whereas standard deviation is 0.91 which shows a positive relation between transactional games and job satisfaction related to environmental factors. Hence hypothesis is tested and alternate hypothesis is found correct.

CONCLUSION

This paper attempted to view interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships in an organization from a more psychological level in order to facilitate the building of a more amicable environment for employees so that they will feel devoted to their work not only for professional reasons but also for satisfaction reasons. By taking views from respondents from various organizations, it is noticed that the principal benefit of games in the workplace apart from uncovering data on what is happening and creating options for strokes, the employees

can modify their behavior to reduce conflict and maximize job satisfaction. The major benefit offered by game analysis is freeing individuals from inner games and facilitating the group by gathering the information needed to minimize non-productive/ destructive games. All this inturn leads to better conflict resolution and increased job satisfaction related to environmental factors.

LIMITATION

This study focused on the most common organizational games as suggested by various authors. However, as per Berne there are hundreds of games and they may also be studied. There are further theories of conflict management that may be studied with reference to games. Job satisfaction is not only linked to environment and friendliness and hence future scholars may include other factors to study this factor further. With the advancement and introduction of new concepts in HRD, there is immense scope for further studies by introducing new and varied factors

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

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