# Omega Graduate School

# Dissertation Research Prospectus Template (Proposal Presentation)

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# Problem Statement

The problem is among employees within the school system because ultimately, a workplace was systemically infected with conflict resulting in a hostile work environment, poor performance, health problems, and a high employee turnover rate (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2020). Improved interpersonal communication skills resulted in fewer conflicts. (Horila, 2019; Kindler, 1994, 1996, 1998; Lewin, Gollan, et. al, 2016; McKibben, 2017)

# Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between interpersonal communication skills, interpersonal conflict and turnover intention among the cafeteria staff within the school nutrition services (SNS) department in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School System (CMS) in Charlotte, North Carolina.

# Background of the Problem (1-2 pages)

In many organizations, the typical manager may spend 25% of his time dealing with conflicts

(Bass & Bass, 2009). The costs of conflict included the apparent expenses of legal fees and

settlements and costs of lost customers, employee turnover, and damage to the organization’s

reputation and brand name (Raines, 2020). Individuals joined organizations for several reasons,

from physical to protection, social, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1954). Whatever the

individual did within the organization, the goal was to meet the various needs mentioned above.

While conflict arose if an organization's climate changed, or the goal was not accomplished

(Dubi, Bawuro, & Tahir, 2015), an organization's leading cause of conflict was the lack of

interpersonal communication skills ( Lasater & Stiles, 2019; Ringer, 2019; Salvation, 2019).

Given a shared workplace and task, individuals worked together to accomplish given tasks.

Communication was necessary for the completion of the task. As Lewin, Gollan, et. al (2016)

noted, “Researchers have found that high-quality supervisor-employee relationships are

characterized by mutual trust, respect, and open communication. Unfortunately, this type of

relationships are often the exception and not the rule. Instead, ‘armed truce’ may be an accurate

term for describing many of these relationships” (xi).

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# Improved communication skills were critical in the reduction of workplace conflict. In

# addition, improving interpersonal communication promoted a less stressful environment.

# Enabling workers to maintain an increased focus on the tasks, improved perception of well-being, and an improved sense of career advancement. As Horila (2019) observed, “competence in communication has been linked with numerous positive outcomes, such as individual career success, reduced levels of stress, and an increase in well-being, as well as satisfaction” (abstract).

# Since working with Charlotte Mecklenburg School System for almost 12 years, conflict was

# observed and heard from cafeteria staff, peers, managers, support staff, school staff, and school leaders. However, it was essential to note that conflict also affected various cultures, diverse races, and different religions within the workplace; therefore, conflict reduction requires the participation of all employees.

# Conflicts at work are challenging. Some conflicts arose when employees argued with each other due to work absence or task performance. In cases where managers used leadership positions to intimidate employees, conflict arose. Conflicts happened in the workplace, whether within the school system, on Wall Street, or as an entrepreneur. However, not all conflict was by nature, negative. McKibben (2017) suggested positive conflict management helped resolve conflicts. When a conflict was resolved effectively and beneficially, it was considered positive. The use of positive conflict management was used to assist organizations in resolving workplace conflicts. Each side of a conflict understood that when there was a disagreement, there was a need to develop skills to locate a mutually beneficial solution. In addition, a positive conflict resolution held the potential to inspire employees to think differently about problems, ultimately improving workplace performance and results. This research aimed to provide a method of reducing conflict within the workplace so that employees were willing to communicate individual concerns without causing negative conflict.

# Significance

This study will contribute to the gap in research of conflict by identifying when conflict develops

negatively, communication can be used to shape and maintain employees‘ perceptions, which

will help guide conflict behaviors (Folger, Poole, & Stutman, 2016, p. 24). Conflict is normal,

healthy, and it highlights the importance of understanding and managing conflict properly.

(Folger, Poole, & Stutman, 2016, p.1). The significance of this research will provide resources

which will help change and challenge the mindset of working adults involved in conflict. While the goal is to reduce conflict in the workplace, it is also vital for employees to feel safe in their work environment. With these goals in mind, employees want to know that they will be supported by the people who hired them to do a job. Employees should believe they can have a life full of joy, peace, and hope within the workplace. The significance of the research is to get participants who can relate to how conflict starts and ends within the workplace. It is also important to note that resolving conflict is a win-win for everyone. No matter how conflict starts it can always be resolved with effective communication to ensure that employees are on the same page.

# Research Questions

RQ1: What is the relationship between interpersonal conflict and turnover intention within the workplace in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School system with the cafeteria staff?

RQ2: What is the relationship between interpersonal conflict and interpersonal communication within the workplace in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School system with the cafeteria staff?

RQ3: What behaviors exist when interpersonal conflict occurs in the workplace in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School system with the cafeteria staff?

RQ4: How do childhood behaviors affect adults in the workplace when it comes to interpersonal conflict in the workplace in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School system with the cafeteria staff?

RQ5: What effect does childhood trauma have on interpersonal communication in the workplace in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School system with the cafeteria staff?

# Research Methodology

This study will utilize quantitative methodology because the hypotheses derived from research questions which will be tested using statistical analysis.

# Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

This study is framed by the job satisfaction theory and the judgement and decision-making theory.

The job satisfaction theory is an important factor that affects turnover intention because ‘quite a few studies show that employee job satisfaction has significantly negative influence on turnover intention (Esra, Umit, Serhat, & Kultigin, 2013); Faris, Mary, Scott, & Joyce, 2014); that is, higher job satisfaction is associated with lower turnover intention. There has been a variety of achievements by theoretical studies into job satisfaction and turnover intention and their correlation. However, there remain some limitations.’(Lee, X., Yang, B. and Li, Wendong, 2017, p. 698-699) Liu studied the job satisfaction of employees in private enterprises and found that “training and development”, “top management”, “department” and “customer service” have a rather large influence on employees’ job satisfaction, whereas “direct manager”, “salary and welfare”, and “work objectives and performance” have almost no influence on job satisfaction.”( Lee, X., Yang, B. and Li, Wendong, 2017,p. 699)

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# Instrumentation

Validated survey instrument that measures interpersonal conflict (quantitative) and turnover intention.

This study will utilize the Interpersonal Conflict at Work scale (ICAWS) instrument which measures conflict with other people at work and the Turnover Intention scale (TIS-6) instrument which measures the employees’ intentions to leave an organization. (Randhawa, G., 2007, p. 149-159)

# Research Design

This quantitative study will utilize a correlational design because it will examine the relationship

between interpersonal conflict and interpersonal communication, and interpersonal conflict and

turnover intention among cafeteria staff in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School system in

Charlotte, NC.

# Population and Sampling

The target population for this study will be cafeteria staff at least 18 years of age at various

elementary, middle, and high schools in the Charlotte, NC area.

# Hypotheses (Quantitative Only)

Correlational:

H01: No statistically significant relationship exists between interpersonal conflict and interpersonal communication among cafeteria staff at CMS in Charlotte, NC.

Ha1: A statistically significant relationship exists between interpersonal conflict and interpersonal communication among cafeteria staff at CMS in Charlotte, NC.

H02: No statistically significant relationship exists between interpersonal conflict and turnover intention among cafeteria staff at CMS at Charlotte, NC.

Ha2: A statistically significant relationship exists between interpersonal conflict and turnover intention among cafeteria staff at CMS in Charlotte, NC.

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# Data Analysis Plan

Quantitative:

This study will test data for normality and relevant assumptions of appropriate statistical

procedures. If data do not meet assumptions for parametric procedures (results apply to

the population), nonparametric procedures (results apply only to the sample) will be

utilized. This study will utilize Pearson’s Product Moment of Correlation (parametric) or

Spearman’s Rank Correlation (nonparametric) to test the hypotheses for statistically significant

relationships.

Dissertation Outline

Title Page

Abstract

Acknowledgements

Dedication

Table of Contents

Lists of Tables and Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Background

Problem Statement

Purpose Statement

Research Questions

Hypotheses (Quantitative)

Scope and Delimitations

Operational Definitions

Summary

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Literature Search Strategy

Identification of Gap in Literature

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Topical Review of Literature

Background of Instrument and Variables

Faith Integration Perspectives