

Empowering Indonesian Women Migrant Workers in Singapore: the Role of Conflict Management Training and Personality-Based Communication for Migrant Workers Community



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ABSTRACT: The present study focuses on a community service project designed to evaluate the efficacy of conflict management training and personality-based communication strategies on Indonesian female migrant workers in Singapore, who are also students at the Open University of Indonesia. The project's primary objective was to aid participants in comprehending themselves and their coworkers more effectively, and to develop practical skills for resolving conflicts and communicating effectively in diverse work environments. Conflict management training encompasses case studies, role-playing, and group discussions, enabling participants to acquire knowledge regarding different conflict management styles and effective communication techniques based on personality types. The post-training evaluation revealed a significant improvement in the participants' comprehension of personality types and their capacity to manage conflicts. This study highlights the significance of incorporating personality aspects into conflict management and communication training, and the advantages of such training in enhancing interpersonal relationships and productivity in the workplace, as well as managing conflicts between individuals and organisations.

KEYWORDS: personality, conflict management, migrant, Indonesia, female

INTRODUCTION

The migration industry in Indonesia has undergone significant changes since the 1997 crisis, particularly in terms of the formalisation of the recruitment process and the central role of informal sponsors, which have influenced the gender patterns of migrant workers' mobility (Lee et al. 2012). The differences in capital and debt flows in the recruitment of male and female workers reflect the dynamics of an increasingly competitive global labour market, especially for female domestic workers. Despite efforts to centralise state control over migration, local fragmentation of labour management and informal intermediaries continue to play a significant role in facilitating the movement of Indonesian migrant workers across national boundaries.

Female Indonesian migrant workers living in Singapore face challenges in managing interpersonal conflicts and fostering effective communication in their workplaces because of their diverse backgrounds and different personalities (Lam and Yeoh 2018). Conflicts in the workplace often arise from differences in personality traits. For example, individuals with dominant personality traits may communicate more assertively and directly, whereas those with introverted personality traits may avoid confrontation. These differences can lead to misunderstandings, tensions, and conflicts, if not managed effectively. Moreover, an individual's personality type can also influence their communication style. Some individuals may be more outgoing and talkative, whereas others may be more reserved and introverted. These contrasting communication styles can create barriers to building harmonious and productive working relationships, especially in complex work settings, such as those experienced by Indonesian female migrant workers in Singapore (Silvey 2006). Although pre-departure training is provided, it often fails to address the impact of personality traits on conflict management and communication, an important aspect that deserves further attention. Many migrant workers struggle to handle conflicts and communicate effectively, particularly when interacting with colleagues or supervisors with different personality traits. Effective conflict management and clear communication are essential for individuals in any work environment.

The importance of these skills is even greater for Indonesian female migrant workers in Singapore, as they face additional challenges, such as cultural differences, language barriers, and the absence of a close support network (Lam and Yeoh 2018). Research has shown that personality traits significantly influence an individual's approach to resolving conflict and communicating (Floyd and Sakellariou 2017). A study conducted by Holt and DeVore investigated the relationship between personality traits and conflict resolution strategies in different cultural contexts (Holt and DeVore 2005). The results indicated that individuals with higher levels of extraversion and openness to experience tended to prefer collaborative and compromising conflict-resolution strategies, while

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those with higher levels of neuroticism tended to adopt avoiding and competing strategies. This study highlights the importance of incorporating personality traits into conflict management training programs.

Another study by Bruck and Allen (Bruck and Allen 2003) examined the role of personality traits in predicting workplace conflict and stress. The findings showed that individuals with higher levels of conscientiousness experienced less conflict and stress, whereas those with higher levels of neuroticism reported more conflict and stress. The authors suggest that understanding the relationship between personality traits and conflict can help organisations design targeted interventions to reduce workplace conflict and improve employee well-being. A study conducted in Taiwan on Indonesian female migrant workers pursuing higher education at open universities aimed to explore their experiences and the challenges they faced in resolving conflicts and maintaining effective communication (Pasariibu 2021). This study emphasises the need to develop culturally sensitive training programs that cater to the specific needs of this population. The authors recommend incorporating elements of personality assessment and tailored communication strategies to enhance the effectiveness of these programs.

These studies highlight the importance of considering personality traits in conflict management and communication training, particularly for female Indonesian migrant workers living abroad. One way for organisations to support employees with personality traits that may make them more vulnerable to workplace challenges is to develop training programs tailored to their individual needs. By doing so, organisations can equip workers with the necessary skills to overcome these challenges, reduce conflict, and improve their overall well-being and job performance. This approach can also contribute to creating a more harmonious work environment (Rahma Safitri, Omar K. Burhan, and Zulkarnain 2014).

METHOD

Conflict management and communication training that incorporates personality types begins with a personality assessment, where participants complete a reputable and reliable personality test, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) or the Big Five Personality Test. The results of the personality tests were analysed to determine each participant's personality type, which was then introduced by the training facilitator. The facilitator provided a comprehensive overview of the common traits associated with each personality type, including strengths, weaknesses, and preferred communication styles. Participants were encouraged to understand their own personality types and to recognise the personality types of their colleagues. Additionally, the facilitator helped participants understand different conflict resolution strategies, such as competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. Participants also learned about the relationship between personality type and preferred conflict management style.

To apply the knowledge gained from this understanding, participants were presented with case studies of workplace conflicts involving characters with different personality types. Participants were then divided into small groups and engaged in role-playing exercises that focused on conflict management and effective communication skills based on the personality types involved. After the role-playing session, participants engaged in group discussions to share insights, challenges, and strategies for managing conflict with individuals of different personality types. The facilitator guided the discussion and provided constructive feedback. The facilitator then introduced effective communication strategies for each personality type, including preferred and avoided communication styles. Participants practiced adapting their communication styles to interact more effectively with colleagues of different personality types. During the training, participants were asked to create a personal action plan that incorporated strategies for managing conflict and improving workplace communication based on their understanding of the different personality types. The plan should include specific goals, steps, and a timeline for implementation. After the training, facilitators followed up with the participants to assess their progress in applying the conflict management and communication strategies they had learned. Evaluations were conducted to assess the effectiveness of the training and to identify areas for improvement in future training sessions. By following these steps, conflict management and communication training based on personality type can be implemented to equip Indonesian female migrant workers with a better understanding of themselves and practical skills for resolving conflicts and communicating effectively in diverse workplaces.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On 25 February 2024 a group of 10 Indonesian female migrant workers living in Singapore who were enrolled as undergraduate students at the Open University successfully completed a conflict management and personality-based communication training program at the YMCA Community Center in Singapore. The trainer for this program was a lecturer from the Communication Science Postgraduate Program at the University of National Development, Veteran East Java. The training program aimed to provide participants with increased self-awareness and understanding of their colleagues as well as practical skills for resolving conflicts and promoting effective communication in diverse work environments. Training began with personality assessment using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). The results revealed a variety of personality types among the participants, with the majority being ISFJ (introversion, sensing, feeling, and judgment) and ESFP (extraversion, sensing, feeling, and perception). The facilitator then described the common characteristics associated with each personality type, including their strengths, weaknesses, and communication preferences.

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During the conflict management sessions, the participants learned about different conflict management styles, including competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. The relationship between personality types and preferred conflict management styles was also explored. Participants with the ISFJ personality type were more likely to avoid conflict, while those with the ESFP personality type tended to prefer collaborating to solve problems. In the role-playing exercises, the participants were divided into small groups to practice conflict resolution and communication strategies using specific scenarios. One scenario involved a conflict between an employee with the ISFJ personality type and their manager who had the ENTJ (Extraversion, Intuition, Thinking, Judging) personality type. The participants learned how to adapt their strategies to effectively resolve conflicts based on differences in personality types.

During group discussions, participants shared the challenges they faced in managing conflicts in the workplace. One participant, who had an ESFP personality type, expressed frustration with her introverted colleagues' reluctance to communicate openly. The facilitator provided suggestions on how to adopt a gentle, non-confrontational approach in order to encourage introverted colleagues to share their thoughts. By the end of the training program, participants had developed individual action plans to implement the conflict resolution and communication strategies they had learned. A participant with an ISFJ personality type planned to work on assertiveness skills and adopt more collaborative approaches to conflict resolution. Participants with the ESFP personality type committed to being more considerate of the needs of their introverted colleagues and adjusting their communication styles accordingly.

Post-training evaluations showed significant improvements in the participants' understanding of personality types and their ability to manage conflicts. Participants expressed increased confidence in their ability to address workplace challenges and apply strategies learned during training. Conflict management training and personality-based communication provide valuable insights for Indonesian female migrant workers, who are also Open University students. By gaining a better understanding of themselves and their colleagues, they become equipped with practical skills to resolve conflicts and communicate effectively in diverse work environments. This training is expected to contribute to their personal and professional growth and help them overcome the challenges they face as migrant workers and students, ultimately improving their overall well-being.

During group discussions, participants learned about effective communication strategies tailored to the different personality types identified by the MBTI. They discovered that each personality type had distinct preferences and communication styles, and by understanding these differences, they could adapt their communication approaches to improve their interactions with others. Individuals with the Extraversion (E) personality type tend to be more outgoing and communicative, while those with the introversion (I) personality type prefer more introspective and reflective communication. Additionally, individuals with the Sensing (S) personality type tend to focus on concrete facts and details, whereas those with the Intuition (N) personality type are more interested in abstract concepts and ideas.

Participants found that individuals with the thinking (T) personality type typically adopted a logical and objective approach to communication, while those with the feeling (F) personality type tended to emphasise the importance of emotions and values in their messages. Moreover, individuals with the Judging (J) personality type prefer a structured and organised communication style, whereas those with the Perceiving (P) personality type are more flexible and spontaneous in their communication approach. By learning about the communication preferences of each personality type, participants could adapt their communication styles to ensure that their messages were conveyed effectively. For example, when communicating with colleagues of the ISTJ personality type, participants should focus on facts, details, and practical solutions. In contrast, when interacting with individuals of the ENFP personality type, participants should recognise the importance of exploring new ideas and delivering messages with enthusiasm. Participants were also reminded to use inclusive language and to avoid perpetuating stereotypes based on personality type. They acknowledged that while the MBTI can provide valuable insights into individual preferences and tendencies, it is essential not to limit or categorise individuals based solely on their personality type. By using a combination of personality type awareness and effective communication strategies, participants were better prepared to handle a variety of communication scenarios in both their professional and personal lives. They recognised the importance of being adaptable and flexible in their communication approach, understanding that each individual is unique and may exhibit a range of traits from different personality types.

The analysis of communication strategies based on the MBTI personality type was beneficial for participants, as it enhanced their self-awareness and understanding of others. As a result, Indonesian migrant women are expected to improve their interpersonal relationships and productivity, both in their work and as Open University students. Overall, the additional insights gained from this discussion on communication strategies complement their conflict-management skills. Furthermore, the insights gained from exploring communication strategies can help these women navigate the challenges of living and working in a foreign country. By understanding their own communication preferences and those of others, they can more effectively adapt to different cultural norms and expectations. This adaptability is crucial for building strong relationships with colleagues, employers, and fellow students from diverse backgrounds.

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Moreover, the enhanced self-awareness and communication skills can contribute to the personal growth and empowerment of these Indonesian migrant women. As they become more confident in their ability to express themselves and understand others, they may feel more equipped to advocate for their rights and needs, both in their professional and academic pursuits. Overall, the additional insights gained from this discussion on communication strategies complement their conflict-management skills. By combining effective communication with the ability to manage conflicts constructively, Indonesian migrant women can foster more harmonious and productive environments in their workplaces and educational settings. This, in turn, can lead to greater success and fulfillment in their personal and professional lives as they navigate the challenges and opportunities of living and working abroad.

CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of conflict management and personality-based communication training for female Indonesian migrant workers in Singapore who are also Open University students, has been demonstrated to enhance their understanding of themselves and their colleagues and equip them with practical skills to resolve conflicts and communicate effectively in diverse workplaces. Using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), participants can identify their personality types and gain insight into the traits, strengths, and weaknesses associated with each type. This enables them to better understand individual differences in communication styles and conflict resolution approaches.

During the training program, the participants learned about different conflict management styles and practiced applying strategies appropriate for different personality types through case studies, role-playing, and group discussions. Additionally, they were taught effective communication strategies tailored to the preferences of each personality type. Post-training evaluations revealed significant improvements in the participants' understanding of their personality types and their ability to manage conflicts. Participants expressed confidence in their ability to address workplace challenges and effectively apply strategies learned during training.

This study highlights the importance of considering personality traits when teaching conflict resolution and communication skills, particularly for Indonesian female migrant workers who face unique challenges in the workplace. By gaining self-awareness and understanding of others as well as acquiring effective conflict management and communication skills, participants are expected to improve their interpersonal relationships, productivity, and success in both their academic and professional lives. This research demonstrates the benefits of using a personality-based approach to conflict management and communication training, which can be particularly beneficial for female Indonesian migrant workers. These findings provide valuable insights for designing more comprehensive and impactful training programs. Overall, the study offers important recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of training programs for Indonesian female migrant workers.

Conclusion

This paper discusses a community service project aimed at evaluating the impact of conflict management training and personality-based communication strategies on female Indonesian migrant workers in Singapore. The project aimed to help participants better understand themselves and their coworkers as well as develop practical skills for resolving conflicts and communicating effectively in diverse work environments. Conflict management training involves case studies, role-playing, and group discussions, enabling participants to learn about various conflict management styles and effective communication techniques based on personality types. A post-training evaluation revealed significant improvements in the participants' understanding of personality types and their ability to manage conflicts. The study underscores the importance of considering personality aspects in conflict management and communication training, and the benefits of such training in enhancing interpersonal relationships and productivity in the workplace, as well as managing conflicts between individuals and organisations.

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