Which factors do determine the effect of leader´s third-party conflict behavior in subordinates´ conflict?

A qualitative study

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Abstract

Supervisors often intervene as third-parties in conflict among subordinates. Because interpersonal conflict at work can negatively affect employees (in terms of well-being, job satisfaction and performance) and organizations, past research focused on best practices for supervisors to intervene in employees´ conflict. What has been less examined thus far is under which circumstances supervisorial third-party conflict behaviour affects conflict consequences. In this study we examine which role contextual factors (such as conflict issue, duration and initiative taking) and individual needs and expectations of employees play regarding the effects of supervisor´s third-party behaviour. We conducted semi-structured interviews among 22 clients and employees of a training and organization consultancy agency in the Netherlands. Results show that it is anchored in the employees´ psychological contract whether the supervisor should act as a third-party. Furthermore, we found that employees differ in their liking to call the leader in and that the supervisor´s way of intervening determines employees´ satisfaction of the conflict outcome. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Samenvatting

Leidinggevenden acteren vaak als derde partij in conflicten tussen hun medewerkers. Inter-persoonlijke conflicten op het werk kunnen de medewerker negatief beïnvloeden in termen van gezondheid, tevredenheid en prestaties en daardoor de organisatie schaden. Voorafgaande onderzoeken hebben zich daarom primair beziggehouden met richtlijnen voor leidinggevenden die beschrijven hoe deze het best kunnen ingrijpen bij conflicten tussen medewerkers. Er werd nauwelijks onderzoek gedaan naar omstandigheden waarin derdepartij conflict gedrag van leidinggevenden de consequenties van conflicten beïnvloed. In deze studie onderzoeken wij de rol van contextuele factoren (zoals conflict kwestie, conflict duur en het nemen van initiatief) en individuele behoeften en verwachtingen van medewerkers op de effecten van derdepartij gedrag van leidinggevenden. Hiervoor zijn semigestructureerde interviews afgenomen bij 22 cliënten en medewerkers van een Nederlands trainings- en adviesbureau. De resultaten laten zien dat de verwachting ten opzichte van het leiderschapsgedrag in conflicten in het psychologische contract bij medewerkers verankerd is, namelijk over hoe en wanneer de leidinggevende in zou moeten grijpen. Verder blijkt dat ondergeschikten verschillen in hun mate waarop de leidinggevende in geschakeld wordt en dat de manier van ingrijpen de tevredenheid van de ondergeschikte qua conflict uitkomst beïnvloedt. Theoretische en praktische implicaties worden besproken.

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1. Introduction

Imagine you and your colleague Peter work on an important project which has to be finished in two month. There are no other team members. The project started six month ago and you both are responsible for the outcome. Since one month, Peter has been ignoring deadlines and this causes problems in your part of the work. Although you tried to talk to Peter about this several times, he does not give an inch. He said that you worry too much about everything and that you have to stop overacting. You have no idea how to solve the problem and you recognize that the project will not be finished on time if nothing changes. You arrive at the decision to call your supervisor in. But what do you expect exactly from your supervisor?

Such work-conflict occurs daily (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008; Wall & Callister, 1995). Van de Vliert (1997) stated that a conflict exists when an individual is "obstructed or irritated by another individual or a group and inevitably react to it in a beneficial or costly way" (p.5). In the above mentioned scenario you finally seek help from your supervisor and want him or her to act as a third-party. Pruitt and Kim (2004) defined a third-party as a person that is external to the dispute between two or more people and tries to help them end their conflict. As Nugent (2002) pointed out, supervisors frequently act as third-parties. Such managerial third-party help can be distinguished from other, more formal third-parties (Sheppard, Saunders, & Minton, 1988; Pinkley, Brittain, Naele, & Northcraft, 1995) and it should be classified as "informal" rather than formal (Pinkley et al., 1995). First, informal third-parties tend to be personally interested in the actual dispute. For supervisors, an effective and efficient conflict resolution is important because they depend on the good functioning of their employees (cf. Emerson, 1962). Past research found that conflicts can negatively affect employees in terms of well-being (e.g. anxiety, frustration and tension; Spector, Chen, & O´Connell, 2000, or psychic and physical exhaustion; De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008), job satisfaction and job performance (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003) and, therefore, the organization itself (Spector & Bruk-Lee, 2008; Pruitt, 2008). In contrast, formal third-parties, like judges, tend to be personally disinterested in the disputes because they are external to it and do not depend on the disputants. Second, supervisors have an ongoing relationship with their employees. Thus, it is likely that they are not impartial (e.g., Emerson, 1962; Pinkley et al., 1995; Deutsch, 2006). On the contrary, it is preconditioned that formal third-parties (cf. judges) are neutral in conflicts. Third, managers are likely to interact with the disputants in the future and may resolve future disputes. However, the disputants´ relationship with the

formal third-party is likely to end after the intervention (Pinkley et al., 1995). Kressel (2006) made the same distinction in a similar manner but labeled it "emergent mediation" instead of informal third-party help. Unfortunately, past research concerning third-parties is predominantly focused on formal intervention (e.g., LaTour, Houlden, Walker, & Thibaut, 1976; Wall, Stark, & Standifer, 2001) while informal third-party research is rare (Goldman, Cropanzano, Stein, & Benson, 2008).

Despite the relative lack of research, it is confirmed that leaders´ third-party help can be a successful conflict management strategy to prevent and buffer negative outcomes of interpersonal conflict in organizations (Giebels & Janssen, 2005). But third-party involvement is not a "panacea" (Pruitt & Kim, 2004; McGrane, Wilson, & Cammock, 2005) and does not necessarily have a buffering effect (Römer, Euwema, Giebels, & Rispens, 2010). For example, negative effects of conflict on conflict-related stress were amplified when a leader used forcing behavior or avoiding behavior while intervening in their subordinates´ conflict (Römer et al., 2010). In addition, Nugent (2002) found that managerial third-parties often make errors while intervening in subordinates´ conflict (i.e., unnecessary, inappropriate or avoided intervention).

A guideline which guarantees a successful third-party intervention is still not found. A possible explanation could be that previous informal third-party research - predominantly focused on best practices for supervisors to intervene in employees´ conflict (cf., Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Sheppard, 1983; Nugent, 2002; Pruitt & Kim, 2004) - has examined less thus far under which circumstances supervisorial third-party conflict behaviour affects conflict consequences, and which role contextual factors (such as conflict issue, duration and initiative taking) as well as individual needs and expectations of employees play regarding the effects of supervisor´s third-party behaviour.

In this qualitative study we focus on the employees´ perspective regarding their supervisors´ third-party help. We employed 22 interviews and asked the respondents to describe a conflict situation with a colleague. In order to identify the employees´ needs and expectations regarding supervisorial third-party help, we asked them about their supervisors´ conflict behavior in the given situation and which behavior they would have preferred. With this study we hope to contribute to the discussion of leaders as third-parties from their subordinates´ viewpoint.

In the following part, we will discuss conflicts which emerge in organizational settings and its effects.

1.1 Conflicts in organizational settings

Jehn (1997) distinguishes between three types of conflicts in organizational settings, namely relationship, task and process conflicts. A relationship conflict emerges when employees perceive personal incompatibilities with a colleague, amongst others tension, animosity and annoyance (Jehn, 1995; 1997). Task conflicts exist when employees discord about the contents and goals of the tasks being performed (Jehn, 1995; 1997). Process conflicts exist when employees disagree about how to complete a task, as well as responsibilities and delegation (Jehn, 1995; 1997).

Next, we will discuss supervisors as third-parties.

1.2 Supervisors as third-parties

As already mentioned, supervisors are informal third-parties (Pinkley et al., 1995). Leaders intervene in conflicts among subordinates either because they are invited by one party or they take initiative themselves in interest of the organization (Pruitt & Kim, 2004). To be invited four conditions have to be met (Pruitt & Kim, 2004). First, the disputants have to be motivated to resolve the conflict and second, they have optimism that it can be done peacefully. Third, their cultural norms encourage them to seek their supervisor´s help. Fourth, they cannot resolve the dispute on their own.

Nugent (2002) defined six third-party intervention approaches for managers. These can be summarized into three distinct categories which use the degree of executed outcome and process control by a manager as indicators. In formal and informal third-party literature (cf. Sheppard, 1983; Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Nugent, 2002) outcome control, also known as decision control is defined as "control over the final outcome" and process control as "control over presentation and interpretation of arguments". The first category contains of "approaches based on little or no control over either the outcome or the process" (i.e., non-intervention and providing impetus). Here, the manager avoids intervention, for example because he/she thinks that the subordinates can handle the conflict on their own or because the conflict is not important. Nugent´s second category consists of "approaches based on high outcome control and high process control" (i.e., autocratic and arbitration). Here, the manager exerts forcing behavior and imposes a solution. The third category covers "approaches based on high process control and low outcome control" (i.e., facilitating bargaining and collaborative problem solving). Here, the manager attends his or her subordinates in searching a conflict resolution and does not force an outcome.

Nugent´s threefold classification of managerial third-party strategies conform to Horney´s conflict management styles for disputants. Horney (as cited in Van de Vliert, 1997) identified three styles: moving towards (negotiated agreement), moving against (aggressive competition) and moving away (nonconfrontation). The conformance becomes even more apparent with Putnam and Wilson´s redefinition of Horney´s styles (as cited in De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). They labeled them "collaborating" (solution orientation), "contending" (control) and "avoiding" (non-confrontation).

According to De Dreu and Van Vianen (2001) Horney´s distinction is still up-to-date and has the advantage that it includes the response "avoiding" which is often neglected (e.g., Deutsch, 1973; 2006 a) in theories about disputants´ conflict management styles. This neglect can also be found in research concerning third-party conflict management styles where arbitration (i.e., third-party makes binding decision) and mediation (i.e., third-party helps disputants to reach voluntary agreement) received a lot of attention (e.g., Wall & Callister, 1995; Wall, Stark, & Standifer, 2001; Shestowsky, 2004; Goldman et al., 2008).

In this study we adopt Römer et al.´s terms (2010) and label supervisors´ conflict management styles "problem solving", "forcing" and "avoiding". Problem solving - corresponding to Nugent´s first category, moving towards others, and collaborating- is about finding a solution that fits all concerns. To do this, a leader has to identify the underlying concerns of party A and party B. Disputants are likely to perceive it as attention for his or her interest (Giebels & Yang, 2009) and thus, a feeling of (process) control. Problem solving was found to decrease employees´ stress levels in relationship conflicts (Römer et al., 2010). Forcing corresponds to Nugent´s second category, moving against others, and contending. Here, a settlement which reflects the concern of one party (i.e., leader, party A or party B) is imposed to end the conflict. Forcing was found to amplify the negative effects of conflict on conflict-related stress, irrespective which type of conflict (Römer et al., 2010) and is negatively associated with perceptions of fairness (e.g., Karambayya, Brett, & Lytle, 1992). We adopt the term avoiding which corresponds to moving away from others and Nugent´s third category and which is identical with the concept of Putnam and Wilson. The aim of avoiding is trying not to get involved in the conflict by minimizing the importance of the conflict issue and by suppressing thinking about them (De Dreu & Beersma, 2005). Avoiding behavior was found to amplify the level of stress employees experienced during task conflicts (Römer et al., 2010) and seems to clash with leadership skills (e.g., Brion, 1996 a, b; Guirdham, 1990; Epitropaki & Martin, 2004).

1.3 The focus of this study

Although supervisors´ third-party help becomes more and more relevant, little is known about the employees´ perspective in respect of their supervisors´ third-party conflict behavior, that is how they perceive their supervisors´ actual intervention, what they view as an ideal intervention, what they do need of and expect from their supervisor, as well as what makes intervention successful. That is, under which circumstances employees prefer avoiding, forcing or problem solving? To gain insight into supervisors´ third-party conflict behavior from the employees´ perspective we formulated the research question as: Which factors do determine the effect of leaders´ third-party conflict behavior in subordinates´ conflict? In other words: Under which circumstances does leader´s third-party conflict behavior affects conflict consequences? We want to examine the influence of contextual factors (conflict issue, duration and initiative-taking) and individual needs and expectations of employees on conflict consequences.

In the following part we will shift the attention from conflict and its management to the employees´ perspective of their supervisors´ third-party help.

1.4 Supervisors as third-parties from the employees´ perspective

As already mentioned, the aim of this study is to explore the employees´ perspective concerning supervisors as third-parties. To do so, we distinguish between employees´ perception of the actual intervention and their conception of an ideal intervention. With the aid of existing conflict theory we will give expectations what may characterize an ideal intervention. First, we will address whether employees expect their supervisor to act as a third-party in conflicts among colleagues. Second, we will discuss employees´ tendency to call their leader in. Third, we will address how a supervisor should intervene according to subordinates contingent upon circumstances.

1.4.1 Should a supervisor intervene in conflicts among subordinates?

Generally, leading and managing conflicts are, amongst others, important interpersonal skills which managers should have (e.g., Brion, 1996 a, b; Guirdham, 1990). However, the employee´s belief whether their supervisor should intervene as a third-party can deviate from this general description of the manager´s scope of duties, especially in situations in which they play an active role as conflict party.

Whether a supervisor should intervene or not may be anchored in the employee´s psychological contract which refers to "individual beliefs in a reciprocal obligation between

the individual and the organization" (Rousseau, 1989). Because the expectations that operate between employees and managers are unwritten (e.g., Argyris, Levinson, Schein as cited in Rousseau, 1989; Inksen & King, 2010) and highly subjective plus the fact that parties to a relationship need not agree (Rousseau, 1989) a psychological contract can pose problems. For example, a manager can be unaware of the employee´s expectations and can fail to fulfill the obligation (i.e., violation of the psychological contract). The violation can have negative consequences, such as dissatisfaction, frustration and disappointment and can signal damage in the relationship (i.e., trust) (Rousseau, 1989). This is the reason why we want to accentuate which obligations employees perceive.

Next, we will address why we expect that employees differ in their tendency to ask their supervisor for help when they are in a conflict with a colleague. We will justify our expectations with the following theories: The manager´s role comprises of expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Ross, 1977), and face-saving theory (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998; Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, Masumoto, Yokochi, Pan, Takai, & Wilcox, 2001).

1.4.2 Employees´ liking to call their supervisor in

Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) states that people will be motivated to perform a certain behavior when they believe that their behavior will lead to wanted outcomes. That is, employees will call their supervisor in when they believe that this third-party help will facilitate conflict resolution. To be motivated three conditions have to be fulfilled: employees must belief that they are able to perform the given behavior (expectancy), they must desire the outcome (valence) and they must belief that the given behavior will result in a particular reward (instrumentality). We expect that these conditions determine the employees´ liking to ask for supervisorial third-party help. Concerning the expectancy, it is possible that employees equate calling their supervisor in (e.g., because they cannot resolve the conflict on their own) with personal failing. Heider (1958) found that people use attributions to explain the causes of behavior. Personal attribution refers to internal characteristics of an actor, such as ability, personality and effort. In contrast, situational attribution is concerned with factors external to an actor, such as other people and luck. Accordingly, employees may fear that their supervisor makes a fundamental attribution error (i.e., tendency to use personal attribution to explain other people´s behavior and to ignore the impact of situations; Ross, 1977) arrives at the same conclusion. Because people are concerned with one´s own image and want to save face in conflict situations (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998; Oetzel et al.,

2001) (i.e., they want to be considered as someone who can resolve conflicts independently), we expect that these employees avoid calling their leader in or alternatively postpone it. With regard to valence, we expect that employees will desire conflict resolution more strongly and will be more likely to ask for third-party help from their supervisor if the conflict is long-lasting and has negative impact on the employee´s well-being and on work. Respective the instrumentality, we expect that employees will be more likely to call their leader in to intervene as third-party if they believe that the leader´s intervention can help to resolve the conflict. Furthermore, we expect that they will be more likely to ask for intervention if they believe that the leader´s decision will be in their favor.

Next, we will discuss how a supervisor should intervene as a third-party. We expect that the supervisor´s way of intervening will influence employee´s perception of conflict outcome. Implicit leadership theory, as well as notions of justice, fairness and face seem to be important determinants in judging the supervisor´s third-party performance. First, we will discuss the underlying theories and then, we will connect them with supervisor´s third-party intervention.

1.4.3 How should a supervisor intervene as a third party?

How a supervisor should intervene as third-party may be anchored in the employees´ implicit leadership theories (ILT). ILT´s are personal assumptions about the traits and abilities that characterize an ideal business leader. These assumptions are determined by prior experience with leaders, exposure to social events and interpersonal interactions (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). Consequently, the leader´s actual behavior is compared with our own assumptions (Rush & Russel as cited in Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). Thus, it seems that employees have in advance a clear idea what defines ideal third-party help.

Furthermore, there are several forms of justice in organizational settings, namely distributive, procedural and interactional justice (Bies & Moag, 1986; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001) which may play a role in employees´ perception and effects of supervisor´s behavior. Distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness of outcomes received. This is examined by first assessing an input-output ratio of contributions made and rewards obtained and then comparing one´s own ratio with ratios of relevant others (Adams, 1965). Procedural justice is concerned with the individual´s judgment of fairness of the procedures that determine the outcomes. To be perceived as fair, procedures should generate information and decisions that fulfill Leventhal´s six criteria (as cited in Colquitt et al., 2001): procedures have to be consistent, unbiased, accurate, correct,

representative and ethical. Deutsch (2006) gives similar criteria (i.e., unbiased, accurate, consistent, reliable, relevant, competent and valid). Interactional justice refers to interpersonal and informational aspects of procedural justice (Bies & Moag, 1986). That is, being polite, honest, dignified, and respectful in carrying out the procedures (Bies & Moag, 1986; Deutsch, 2006). Based on earlier research Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp (2001) summarized that employees highly value fairness and justice because both satisfy their need of control (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler, 1987), need for inclusion within a group which is important for their self-worth and identity (Lind & Tyler, 1988) and their need to be treated respectfully (Folger, 1998). Generally, when people perceive injustices and feel disadvantaged (i.e., they lose control, inclusion and respect), they want to "get even" (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). All forms of injustice are related to satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior (Colquitt et al, 2001; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001), commitment (Colquitt et al, 2001) as well as trust and negative emotions such as mood and anger (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001).

Face is a social image we present to others and can be enhanced or threatened in any uncertain social situation (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998; Oetzel et al., 2001; Novak, 2009). Thus, face influences conflict behavior (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998; Novak, 2009). To regulate self-face (i.e., the concern for one's own image) and to support or threaten other-face (i.e., the concern for another's image) people use communicative behaviors named facework (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Facework can be done preventive (i.e., prevent loss of face) or restorative (i.e., repair damaged or lost face) (Brown, 1977; Ting-Toomey & Cole, 1990).

We expect that the aforementioned aspects can be transferred to supervisorial third-party help because employees have an ideal conception of a business leader and want to save face. It is likely that employees take these aspects into account while judging their supervisor´s third-party conflict behavior. Therefore, we expect that the supervisor´s way of intervening will influence employee´s perception of the conflict outcome. First, we expect that employees will be satisfied with the conflict outcome if their supervisor´s third-party conflict behavior matches their implicit leadership theory. Second, we expect that employees´ notion of distributive justice is not primarily concerned with being right after all, but with conflict resolution itself. Past research found that people tend to reason that fair procedures lead to fair outcomes (Deutsch, 2006) and are more likely to accept unfair outcomes if the procedure is perceived as fair (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997; Deutsch, 2000). The latter is consistent with the finding of Thibaut and Walker (1975) that disputants are more willing to pass on decision control if they keep process control (to get the possibility to present own arguments in an appropriate manner and time). That is, employees are primarily concerned

with the possibility to present their point of view and not to lose face. For example, consider an intervention in which the supervisor conducts conversations with the disputants separately after party A asked him or her to help. Imagine that the supervisor tells party B everything what party A said confidentially. It seems obvious to conclude that party A would prefer being present while the supervisor confronts party B in order to save face. One the other hand, according to Novak (2009), "it may be easier to maintain face using an indirect approach than a direct one". Supervisors´ third-party help can prevent direct confrontation of the disputants which means that they can make concessions without losing face. To pick the aforementioned example up, the conclusion would be another: to save face party A would prefer a separate conversation with the supervisor. By means of our interview we want to explore what employees perceive as procedural fair when their supervisor acts as third-party.

1.5 Overview expectations

Taken together, based on the literature, we expect the following:

E1:   Whether a supervisor should act as a third-party is anchored in the employee´s psychological contract.

E2:   Employees differ in their liking to call the leader in.
   a) Employees who equate asking their leader for help with failing tend to avoid or alternatively postpone it in order to save face.
   b) If the conflict is long-lasting and has impact on the employee´s well-being and work, the employee will desire conflict resolution more strongly and is more likely to call the leader in.
   c) Employees who believe that third-party help will lead to conflict resolution are more likely to call their supervisor in.
   d) Employees who believe that the supervisor´s decision is in their own favor are more likely to call their leader in.

E3:   The supervisor´s way of intervening determines employee´s satisfaction of the conflict outcome.
   a) Employees will be satisfied with the conflict outcome if their supervisor´s third-party conflict behavior matches their implicit leadership

theory.

   b) Employees prefer procedural fairness / process control over distributional justice / decision control.

2. Method

This research is done in collaboration with a PhD candidate within the framework of his dissertation. He developed the interview scheme, the coding scheme and conducted the interviews which I wrote out. The transcripts were labeled separately (see 2.5 Labeling). Then, I analyzed the labels with regard to the aforementioned expectations.

2.1 Respondents

Of the 49 contacted persons 22 actually participated in our interviews (response rate = 44.9%). One reason for non-response was that the interviewer asked them to participate for the short term. Eight persons mentioned that they did not have time and wanted to delay participation which was not possible due to time constraints. Three persons mentioned that they did not want to participate at all. Keeping this in mind the rate of people who were willing to participate was at least 61.2%

Of the 22 conducted interviews five were removed from analysis. Reasons were that the recording of one interview failed and that four interviews did not fulfill the criterion that the recalled situation(s) were conflicts with a colleague under the same supervisor. From the remaining 17 interviews 23 conflict cases fulfilled our criterion and were analyzed.

The respondents were either clients (n=14; 82.4%) or employees (n=3; 17.6%) of a Dutch training and organization consultancy agency. The clients did not attend the planned training yet. Eight were female (47.1%) and 9 were male (52.9%) (see Appendix A for more detailed overview of the respondents´ characteristics). Their age ranged from 21 to 57 years (mean = 37.2; SD = 10.9). The respondents came from different organizations and different sectors. The average tenure with position was 4.8 years (SD = 4.7) and with the organization 6.8 years (SD = 6.3). Sixteen interviewees were Dutch (94.1%) and one interviewee was Indonesian (5.9%). A total of 41.2% of the respondents had a university-degree, 29.4% had higher vocational training and the remaining 29.4% had an intermediate vocational training.

The average contractual workload was 36.4 hours (SD = 5.5). The teams had an average size of 9.3 members (SD = 4.8). The respondents were enrolled for different trainings.

2.2 Procedure

The interview scheme (Appendix B) was developed following the suggestions of Rubin & Rubin (2005) and was pre-tested in three pilot interviews. The pilot interviews were primarily used to develop a clear and coherent introduction of the interviews in order to clarify the purpose of the study, as well as to design a logical order of the interview questions.

The respondents were contacted via telephone call. During the telephone call the purpose of the study was explained and it was assured that the interview would be anonymous, confidential and independent of the training. The interviews were conducted at the head office of the agency at the day of the client´s goal setting interview.

2.3 Interview procedure

The interviewer conducted open interviews following the constructed interview scheme (Appendix B). He began the interviews with a short introduction in which he clarified his position and the purpose of the interview. He assured that the interview would be confidential. Because the respondents were connected with a Dutch training and organization consultancy agency, he accentuated that he did not have information about them besides contact details and that the interviews were independent of the training. The interview was recorded via a dictating machine. He affirmed that the recording would be deleted after analysis. Before the interview started the interviewees had the possibility to ask for clarification.

During the actual interview the interviewer used the scheme as a guideline and adjusted the questions individually. First, he asked the respondents to report a situation about a conflict they experienced. They were told it could be either a dispute in a business meeting, a dispute about the room temperature, or a long lasting conflict. When they recalled such a situation they were asked about the issues of the conflict (e.g., what was the conflict about); who were the disputants (e.g., who was the other party and relationship with the other party); the consequences of the conflict in terms of thoughts, emotions, behavior and physical reactions; and actual third-party conflict behavior displayed by the supervisor. The following question concerned which third-party conflict behavior the respondent expected and what they needed in this particular situation. Then, the interviewer asked the respondents to illustrate the perceived and desired third-party intervention by means on the figure

Visualization of differences in power (Appendix C). The figure was developed by the interviewer for this study because research indicates that graphical measures which depict spatial relations can be used additionally to verbal measures in order to assess a person´s subjective experience of social events (Schubert & Otten, 2002).

The interview ended with some general questions about the demographics of the employee; age, gender, what kind of job they have (in terms of sector, function and tasks), how many years of work experience they had, ethnical background, educational level, how many hours per week they worked, how many team members they had, and which training they were going to follow. Furthermore, the interviewees could give their email-address in order to get information about the results of the study.

2.4 Data-analysis

A coding scheme (Appendix D) was used to analyze the transcripts. The analysis steps were guided by following the suggestions of Baarda et al. (2009). The coding scheme was divided into six constructs.

1. Conflicts. The construct addressed the conflict issue (i.e., content and type conflict), the other party (i.e., who was the other party, relationship with him/her) and the duration of the conflict.

2. Reaction. This construct focused on the respondents´ reactions to the conflict in terms of thoughts, emotions, behavior and physical reactions.

3. Initiative taking. This construct was aimed at respondents´ calling in behavior and the respondents´ relationship with the supervisor.

4. Supervisor´s actual third-party intervention. Here, it was addressed whether / how the supervisor intervened, whether the respondent was comfortable with the intervention and which consequences the intervention had.

5. + 6. Respondents´ conception of ideal third party help. Both constructs were about respondents´ expectations and needs regarding supervisor´s third-party intervention; either in the mentioned conflict case''' (5) or in general (6).

2.5 Labeling

Two raters labeled aspects of the interviews as belonging to one of the six constructs to compare the cases. First, the raters were trained to rate the scripts similar. In total, four interviews were coded independently by two raters. In cases of disagreement, consensus was reached through discussion. The first two interviews were compared in order to standardize

the coding process. For the remaining two interviews the inter rater agreement was calculated. The average agreement was 88% (81.4% and 94.6%). The remaining 13 interviews were coded once.

3. Results

The results are divided in two parts. First, we will analyze 20 conflict cases reported by 16 respondents. Then, we will analyze one conflict issue examined by three interviewees. We will compare the three perspectives and will check whether the individual perceptions, needs and expectations tally with each other or differ.

Part 1

3.1 Whether a supervisor should act as a third-party is anchored in the employees´ psychological contract

The interviews (see Appendix E for an overview of the respondents´ perceived obligations) seem to support the first expectation; it seems to be anchored in the employees´ psychological contract that the supervisor has to act as a third-party. All 16 respondents mentioned that they would expect supervisorial third-party intervention if the conflict was severe and could not be solved without help. The interviewees perceived acting as a third-party as the supervisor´s "task" and "obligation". Examples of quotes are "According to her business card she is the director and I am not. That is the reason why I expect her to act like one." and "This also belongs to a supervisor´s responsibility. Conflicts occur. As a manager you should be able to deal with conflicts. A manager has to strike up a conversation. You don´t have to judge anyone. Because you are impartial you have to reunite the disputing parties." They emphasized that the supervisor – when called in – should not avoid helping; for example "Otherwise I need not to call my supervisor in. My supervisor should calm me down and should help me. My supervisor has to do something." and "In this kind of situations the supervisor has to be willing to help. He should not say: ´I don´t have time for this. You have to find a solution on your own.´"

Concerning the recalled conflict situations it seems that the interviewees did not expect supervisorial third-party help at any conflict case. In 9 cases (45%) respondents said that they did not need third-party help because the conflict was not severe and could be solved

alone. For instance, one respondent mentioned "A supervisor does not have to decide about such things." However, in 11 cases (55%) respondents expected their supervisor to act as a third-party because they could handle the conflict alone.

The respondents´ perception of the employees´ obligation seems to offer an explanation for this; all 16 respondents answered that, in the first instance, employees should try to solve conflicts without third-party help. For example, one interviewee said: "If someone bothers me I have to talk to the person myself and not via my supervisor. If this doesn´t work I will go a step further. Then I will call my supervisor in." Another respondent said: "If you are a professional they expect you to solve your problems yourself. You only call your supervisor in if you have a problem you really cannot get along with."

In sum, although respondents believed that it is the supervisor´s obligation to act as a third-party they did not expect and need supervisorial help at any case.

3.2 Employees differ in their liking to call the leader in

In eight cases (40%), initiative was taken by the respondent (i.e., party A), in four cases (20%) initiative was taken by others (i.e., supervisor, party B, other colleague), and in eight cases (40%) initiative was not taken at all.

3.2.1 Employees who equate asking their leader for help with failing tend to avoid or alternatively postpone it in order to save face.

Eighteen cases (90%) provide support for our expectation; the respondents´ belief whether calling in equates with failing correlated with actual initiative taking. In total, in 11 (55%) cases interviewees equated calling in with failing and reported that they either avoided (in seven cases) or postponed (in four cases) asking the supervisor for help (see Appendix F for an overview of employees´ perceptions with regard to failing). Of the 11 cases, several interviewees explicitly said that asking the leader for help was "failing" (in three cases) and "squealing" (in four cases). For example, one respondent said: "In my opinion I failed because it (respondents attempt to solve conflict without help) did not work." Another respondent said the following: "It feels like squealing. In a good relationship you can say everything. In my opinion it is weird when you first talk to your supervisor." In the remaining nine cases respondents did not equate calling in with failing. In seven of these nine cases (35%) interviewees reported that they took initiative and called their supervisor in. In two of these seven cases (10%) respondents postponed calling in.

 3.2.2 If the conflict is long-lasting and has impact on the employee´s well-being and work, the employee will desire conflict resolution more strongly and is more likely to call the leader in.

The conflict cases seem to provide support for our expectation (see Appendix G for an overview of the conflict´s impact and the resultant desire for third-party help); conflict duration and conflict´s impact influence employees´ calling in tendencies. In nine cases (45%) the interviewees were categorized as having a weak desire; they either postponed or avoided calling the supervisor in. In two cases (10%) respondents who postponed asking the supervisor for help were found to have a moderate desire. In eight cases (40%) respondents had a strong desire and called the supervisor in.

In one case (5%) the respondent reported to have a strong desire but avoided calling the leader in. The respondent said that the initiative was taken by another person. So the respondent did not need to call the supervisor in.

3.2.3 Employees who believe that third-party help will lead to conflict resolution are more likely to call their supervisor in.

In total 15 cases (75%) seem to support the expectation (see Appendix H for an overview of respondents´ belief). In seven cases interviewees believed that third-party help would lead to conflict resolution and called the supervisor in. One respondent said the following: "It is a simple decision: We will do it either way." In eight cases respondents did not believe that third-party intervention would facilitate conflict resolution. For example one interviewee said the following: "You don´t need to expect my supervisor to coach and lead." Another respondent said: "The supervisor´s way of intervening does not lead to improvement. It does not approach the real problem. The requested result does not occur." In two of these eight cases initiative was taken by others. In the remaining six cases initiative was not taken at all.

In three cases (15%) our expectation was not supported. In two cases initiative was not taken at all although the respondents believed that third-party help would solve the conflict. In one case, the interviewee took initiative even though she believed that third-party help would not solve the conflict. The respondent said the following: "Our supervisor sent us back to the negotiation table. This was what I had expected."

In the remaining two cases (10%) respondents believed that third-party intervention would facilitate conflict but it was not necessary to call the supervisor in because others had already taken initiative. For that reason, these cases do not disconfirm the expectation because

it is unknown whether the respondents would have called their leader in if nobody else had done it.

3.2.4 Employees who believe that the supervisor´s decision is in their own favor are more likely to call their leader in.

Eight cases were excluded from analysis because initiative was not taken by the respondent and because of insufficient information, respectively (see Appendix I for an overview of respondents´ belief).

By means of the remaining cases the expectation does not seem to be supported. In seven cases respondents mentioned that they would call their supervisor in even though they believed that the supervisor´s decision would not be in their own favor. In six of these seven cases the respondents wanted to speed up conflict resolution. For example, one interviewee said the following: "We have to arrive at a decision. The conflict issue must not lie between us." In one of these seven cases the respondent only wanted to speak her mind: "I only want my supervisor to listen to my opinion. Irrespective what will happen next." These seven cases do not support our expectation.

The five remaining cases support our expectation. In three cases the respondents took initiative and believed that the supervisor´s decision would be in their own favor. In two cases the respondents did not take initiative and believed that the supervisor would agree with the other.

To sum up, the respondents differed in their liking to call the leader in. The following aspects seemed to influence it: the respondents´ belief whether calling in equates with failing or not, the duration and impact of the conflict, and the respondents´ belief whether the supervisor is capable of solving the conflict. But the respondents´ liking to ask the supervisor for help seems to be detached from the respondents´ belief in whose favor the supervisor´s decision would be.

3.3 The supervisor´s way of intervening determines employee´s satisfaction of the conflict outcome

3.3.1 Employees will be satisfied with the conflict outcome if their supervisor´s third-party conflict behavior matches their implicit leadership theory.

In total, 19 cases support the expectation (see Appendix J for an overview of satisfaction). In seven cases (35%) respondents mentioned that the supervisor´s actual third-

party intervention was accord with their expectations and needs and that they were satisfied. In 12 cases (60%) interviewees said that the third-party intervention did not meet their needs and expectations and that they were dissatisfied. In one case the respondent did not give information with regard to her expectation and needs.

Thus, it seems to be supported that employees´ satisfaction is determined by the fit of supervisor´s actual third-party intervention and employees´ expectations (ILT) and needs.

3.3.2 Employees prefer procedural fairness / process control over distributional justice / decision control.

In five cases (25%) respondents did not give information with regard to their preference.

The analyzed conflict cases cannot support the expectation satisfactorily (see Appendix K for an overview of respondents´ preferences). In eight cases (40%) respondents preferred process control over decision control. For example, in one case the respondent said the following: "I want the supervisor to listen to my opinion. Independent of what the supervisor does with my opinion." In two cases (10%) interviewees preferred decision control over process control. For example, in one case the respondent mentioned that he wanted his supervisor to stand up for him. For him, this had the highest priority: "I wanted my supervisor to motivate the colleagues: ´He (party A) wants to achieve these goals. So we have to help him. This is not a democracy.´" Interestingly, in five cases (25%) respondents mentioned that they preferred both types of control. By means of process control they wanted to obtain decision control. For example, in one case the interviewee said the following: "The supervisor has to consider both sides of the situation. He has to consider the interests of both parties. He has to try to reach a solution. The solution is a compromise in which both interests are matched."

To sum up, employees´ satisfaction with the conflict outcome seem to be related to the match of the supervisor´s third-party conflict behavior and employees´ needs and expectations. If compared, respondents preferred process control more often than decision control. But respondents also preferred both types of control.

Part 2: One conflict issue, three perspectives

Three interviewees mentioned a conflict with a colleague who could not deal the workload. The respondents agreed that the trigger of conflict escalation was a discussion about taking holiday. But they also named other conflict issues which they had individually with the colleague. This is the reason why the respondents´ information of, amongst others, conflict duration and initiative taking differed slightly from each other. In the analysis we will focus on the conflict issue "taking holiday". We will combine the analysis of these perspectives with the investigation if these support the results found in the first analysis.

3.4 Whether a supervisor should act as a third-party is anchored in the employees´ psychological contract

All three respondents mentioned that their supervisor had to act as a third-party in order to solve the conflict. This agrees with our result found in the first analysis. Again, the interviewees reported that they first tried to solve the conflict without third-party help.

3.5 Employees differ in their liking to call the leader in

One respondent told that they (i.e., three respondents) called their supervisor in. This was confirmed by another respondent who added that she picked up the leading role. Respondent three told that the initiative was taken by herself and the supervisor.

3.5.1 Employees who equate asking their leader for help with failing tend to avoid or alternatively postpone it in order to save face

Because the respondents did not equate calling in with failing and asked their supervisor for help, the expectation seems to be supported again. Although the respondents mentioned that they tried to help the other party several times without effect they did not equate it with failing. One interviewee said the following: "We told her: ´If you are stressed you can tell us. We will help you.´ But if she does not want our help (…) she will be responsible for it." Rather, they viewed it as confirmation of the disfunctioning of the other party, for example: "I am convinced that this was not my fault. (…) She does not fit in the group because she cannot cope with stress."

But we cannot conclude that saving face did not play a role in this situation. It is possible that the respondents did not see an alternative to calling their leader in: the other left the room crying during the discussion about taking holiday and thereafter, the supervisor

entered the room. Two respondents reported that this was the point of calling the supervisor in. This can also be a form of saving face: The supervisor asked what had happened and the respondents had to answer, probably in a manner in which they saved their face.

3.5.2 If the conflict is long-lasting and has impact on employees´ well-being and work, the employees will desire conflict resolution more strongly and are more likely to call their leader in.

All three respondents mentioned that the conflict was long lasting and had impact on their work, on their well-being and at home (see table 10 in Appendix L). The respondents had a strong desire for conflict resolution and reported that they were involved in calling their supervisor in. Thus, the result of the first analysis seems to be supported again: a strong desire for conflict resolution was related to calling the leader in.

Regarding these two expectations, the respondents supported the results found in part one. The results of the following two expectations cannot be checked because the three respondents did not mention their preference concerning control and their belief whether their supervisor was capable of solving the conflict or not.

3.6 The supervisor´s way of intervening determines employees´ satisfaction with the conflict outcome

3.6.1 Employees will be satisfied with the conflict outcome if their supervisor´s third-party conflict behavior matches their implicit leadership theory

Again, it is confirmed that supervisor´s way of intervening determines employees´ satisfaction with the conflict outcome. Although the three respondents were satisfied with the conflict solution itself they were not (completely) satisfied with their supervisor´s way of intervening (see table 11 in Appendix L) because it did not match their expectations and needs. If compared, one respondent was more satisfied than the others. Notable is that the supervisor´s third-party conflict behavior conformed largely to the respondent´s implicit leadership theory: the supervisor worked with suggestions developed by the respondents. The other respondents were dissatisfied because the supervisor´s way of intervening differed from their implicit leadership theory. They missed forcing behavior and discretion, respectively.

Interestingly, the respondents recalled the third-party intervention differently. Nevertheless, these findings support the results obtained in the first analysis.

3.6.2 Employees prefer procedural fairness / process control over distributional justice / decision control

Again, respondents mentioned that they preferred both types of control (see table 12 in Appendix L). In two cases, the respondents mentioned preference for both decision and process control. They wanted to have the possibility to present their own arguments (process control) in order to come to a "well-considered" decision and to consider conjointly a decision (decision control), respectively). That is, by means of process control respondents try to get decision control.

In one case the expectation is not supported because the respondent specified the preference of decision control. The interviewee wanted the supervisor to accord the problem solution considered by the team.

4. Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine which role contextual factors and individual needs and expectations of employees play with respect to the effects of supervisor´s third-party conflict behavior. Although there has been a lot of attention for the role of formal third-parties (e.g., La Tour, Houlden, Walker, & Thibaut, 1976; Sheppard, 1983) and best practices for informal ones (e.g., Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Nugent, 2002), the perspective of the employees has been largely ignored. This is unfortunate because perception of supervisor´s third-party help may differ from actual or intended intervention. In an interview-study of 22 respondents, we found that expectations about supervisor´s behavior as a third-party is anchored in the employees´ psychological contract. Moreover, we found that employees differ in their liking to call the leader in, and that the supervisor´s way of intervening determines employees´ satisfaction of the conflict outcome. These findings demonstrate the importance of the employees´ perspective in determining the effects of supervisor´s third-party behavior.

An important finding is that, in the first instance, employees seem to try to solve their conflict on their own and call their supervisor in when they do not succeed. This suggests that supervisorial third-party help is not always necessary and is accord with Nugent´s findings (2002) that supervisors should check whether an intervention is necessary or appropriate. In addition, we found that employees seem to perceive leading and managing conflicts as skills which a supervisor should have. This complies with Brion´s (1996 a, b) and Guirdham´s (1990) notions of manager´s skills. Thus, supervisors should take employees seriously when

they ask for third-party help. Especially, because failing to fulfill obligations can have negative consequences such as dissatisfaction and disappointment (Rousseau, 1989).

Furthermore, the results seem to support our expectation that employees differ in their liking to call the leader in with regard to three aspects. First, employees´ belief whether calling the supervisor in equates with failing was related to employees´ actual initiative taking. When employees perceive it as failing which is an obstacle to initiative taking (i.e., expectancy: Vroom, 1964) they want to avoid that the supervisor perceives them as incompetent (i.e., fundamental attribution error: Ross, 1977) and want to save face (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998; Oetzel et al., 2001). Then, the conflict may grow further. Thus, supervisors should be attentive and prepared to take initiative themselves because it may be that employees avoid asking for help in order to save face. Second, the duration and impact of a conflict and thus, desire of conflict resolution (i.e., valence: Vroom, 1964), was related to employees´ initiative taking behavior. This finding also suggests that supervisors should take their subordinates seriously when they ask for help. Then, avoiding, that is the supervisors decision not to intervene, does not seem to be a wise conflict behavior. Third, the results seem to support our expectation that employees who believe that third-party help will lead to conflict resolution are more likely to call their supervisor in. This is in line with Vroom´s concept instrumentality; people will perform a certain behavior (initiative taking) when they belief that it will result in a particular reward (conflict resolution). The results do not seem to support our next expectation; it seems that employees´ belief with regard to the favor of the supervisor´s decision is not necessarily related to employees´ initiative taking behavior. Some respondents confirmed our expectation; other respondents mentioned that they called their supervisor in even though they expected that the decision would be in favor of the other. The latter can be linked to the results concerning employees´ desire of conflict resolution because most respondents answered that they wanted to finish the conflict by means of calling the supervisor in.

Additionally, we found that the supervisor´s way of intervening seems to determine employees´ satisfaction concerning the conflict outcome. The results seem to support our expectation that employees´ satisfaction is determined by the match of supervisor´s third-party conflict behavior and employees´ expectations (i.e., ILT) and needs. This suggests that supervisors should explore what the employees´ needs and expectations are in order to intervene appropriately. Based on the results our expectation that employees prefer process control over decision control cannot be supported satisfactorily. Although several respondents mentioned that they would prefer process control over decision (cf., Thibaut & Walker,

1975), other respondents preferred both types of control equally. Thus, we suggest that supervisors should examine which kind of control their subordinates prefer and that they should tailor third-party intervention to these preferences.

The findings concerning one conflict issue examined by three respondents seem to support our results. Interestingly, the interviewees perceived the actual third-party intervention differently. Nevertheless, the match between employees´ expectations and needs and the perceived third-party intervention determined employees´ satisfaction.

Our study suggests implications for supervisors and trainers. Supervisors should take their subordinates seriously when they ask for third-party help and should intervene in an appropriate manner. In order to be able to intervene appropriately, supervisors should be trained to recognize subordinates´ expectations and needs, as well as how to fit the intervention strategy to the expectation and needs. Furthermore, supervisors should be able to recognize when they have to take initiative.

4.1 Limitations and future research

Four limitations of this study need to be addressed. First, because interviewees were asked to recall a conflict situation it could have been the case that they forgot important facts about the conflict or they recall the facts in biased way. The latter is only applicable to the conflict cases analyzed in part one because it cannot be controlled whether colleagues of the respondents perceived the situation in a similar way. This is not the case in the second part of the analysis. Here, three interviewees examined the same conflict issue and their perspectives corresponded largely. Second, it is possible that the interviewees were influenced by social desirability in answering the questions. Reason is that the interviewer worked as trainer and researcher for the training and organization consultancy agency of which the interviewees were either clients or employees. In case of the clients, the professional setting could have made it desirable for the interviewees to be seen as persons which were able to handle conflicts in an appropriate manner. In case of the employees, familiarity with the interviewer does not seem to influence the answers. The answers were self-critical. Third, because the conducted interviews were relatively open it is possible that the interviewer influenced the respondents´ answers by leading questions (Baarda et al., 2009). But this disadvantage does not outweigh the advantages of open interviews particularly with regard to our research question. Because the employees´ perspective regarding supervisorial third-party help is a relatively new field of research, conducting semi-structured interviews seems to be appropriate because they can lead to a better understanding of the interviewee´s perspective in

terms of behavior, views, attitudes and experiences and are especially useful because it is possible to get a lot of information which varies in content and to stay focused on the topic of interest (Baarda et al., 2009). Furthermore, in this study the interviewer adjusted the questions of the interview scheme individually in order to make it possible that the interviewees could tell their story in their own way. It may be true that this way of interviewing even reduced asking leading questions. Fourth, the interview labels were analyzed by a single rater. Thus, the results should be interpreted cautiously.

We suggest that future research need to focus more on employees´ expectations and needs concerning their supervisor´s third-party conflict behavior and should examine causal relationships.

4.2 Conclusion

We suggested that contextual factors and employees´ individual needs and expectations play a role in the employees´ perception of supervisor´s third-party intervention. This is an important insight because supervisors should be capable of dealing with conflicts. Based on our results, supervisors should be aware that employees may have different ideas about ideal third-party intervention and that the actual intervention should match these ideas. Specially, when employees ask for third-party help, supervisors should take it seriously and should intervene appropriately.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Characteristics respondents

Resp.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11
A2	35	m	1	teamleader	0.3	6.5	1	2	36	8	1
A3	42	m	6	projectmanager	5	5	1	1	40	10	2
A4	27	m	4	engineer	1	1	1	1	40	8	3
B5	52	m	6	accountant manager	15	15	1	3	40	10	4
B6	44	f	1	information service staff	2	5	1	1	32	10	4
B7	25	f	1	consultant PR	3	3	1	1	40	15	5
B8	38	f	2	process controller	5	9	1	2	36	11	3
C9	38	f	3	project assistant	2	2	1	3	24	5	14
C10	24	f	3	project assistant	3	3	2	3	36	4	14
D12	31	f	1	consultant PR	4.5	4.5	1	1	36	6	7
D13	47	m	2	project manager	15	12	1	1	40	15	8
E15	21	m	3	service desk assistant	2	2	1	3	40	8	10
E16	54	f	1	personal secretary	4	9	1	2	32	2	11
F17	27	f	3	project assistant	1	1	1	1	36	4	14
G20	35	m	5	manager	0.2	4	1	2	40	15	12

H21	57	m	6	teamleader	10	26	1	3	25	20	13
H22	34	m	4	controller	8	8	1	2	45	7	9
	Min21 Max57 Mean37.2 SD10.9	9 m 8f	1:5 2:2 3:4 4:2 5:1 6:3		Min0.2 Max15 Mean4.8 SD4.7	Min1 Max26 Mean6.8 SD6.3	1:16 2:1	1:7 2:5 3:5 4:0 5:0	Min24 Max45 Mean36.4 SD5.5	Min2 Max20 Mean9.3 SD4.8	1:1 2:1 3:2 4:2 5:1 6:1 7:1 8:1 9:1 10:1 11:1 12:1 13:3

Table 1: Characteristics respondents

Q1 =   age (in years)

Q2 =   gender (m for male and f for female)

Q3 =   sector (1 = governmental / 2 = financial services / 3= business services / 4 = industry /
5 = education / 6 = other)

Q4 =   position

Q5 =   position (in years)

Q6 =   duration of employment (in years)

Q7 =   ethnical background (1 = Dutch / 2 = Indonesian)

Q8 =   education (1 = university / 2 = higher vocational training / 3 = intermediate vocational
training / 4 = lower educational training / 5 = none)

Q9 =   contractual workload (in hours)

Q10 = size team (number of members inclusive respondent)

Q11 = training (1 = Beginnen met leidinggeven / 2 = Fysieke intelligentie / 3 = Persoonlijke
effectiviteit / 4 = Manage je eigen loopbaan / 5 = Van academicus naar manager / 6 =
Leergang coaching / 7 = Strategisch beïnvloeden / 8 = Adviesvaardigheden / 9 =
Persoonlijke uitstraling / 10 = Management ondersteuning / 11 = Coachend
leidinggeven / 12 = Goed waarnemen, juist interpreteren en goed communiceren / 13 =
none)

Appendix B: Interview scheme

<u>Inleiding</u>

Welkom. Mooi dat jij wilt meewerken aan dit onderzoek.

Mijn naam is Moritz Römer, ik ben trainer en onderzoeker bij Schouten & Nelissen en tevens promovendi aan de K.U. Leuven. Op dit moment werk ik aan een onderzoek over botsingen tussen collega's op het werk. Ik ben benieuwd onder welke omstandigheden zulke meningsverschillen, botsingen of discussie gepaard gaan met spanningen en stress.

Ik wordt graag met je en jij aangesproken en zou dat ook graag bij u willen doen. Is dat oké? Dat de keuze op jou gevallen is bijna toeval, dat wil zeggen dat wij gen informatie hebben over jou behalve contactgegevens. En wij hebben jou benaderd omdat jij vandaag al ingepland stond voor een doelstellend gesprek voor een training.

Dit interview is onderdeel van een onderzoek over de gevolgen die meningsverschillen kunnen hebben op je welzijn. Wij hebben jou voor dit interview uitgenodigd om meer te weten te komen over wat jouw ervaring. Het gaat niet om oordelen, het is gewoon een verzameling van ervaringen. Ik wil het in dit interview hebben over de situatie waarin jij je stoorde of irriteerde aan een collega. Het kan bij zo een botsing gaan om een overleg waarin jullie van mening verschilden, een onenigheid over of de radio wel of niet aan moet of dat het raam wel of niet open mag staan of dat het een langdurig en sluimerende situatie is (geweest). Belangrijk daarbij is dat jullie onder dezelfde leidinggevende vallen en in meer of mindere mate dus samenwerken.

Alle informatie die je aan mij geeft is uitsluitend bedoeld voor het onderzoek. Ook persoonlijke gegevens die aan je vraag gebruik ik voor het onderzoek. Deze hebben wij nodig om aan te tonen dat wij mensen hebben gesproken van verschillende leeftijden, functies en organisaties. Mij gaat het hier niet om het beoordelen van jouw gedrag of dat van iemand waar je mij over verteld. Ik wil alleen weten wat het effect op jou is geweest en hoe dat komt.

Wij hebben een klein uur voor dit gesprek en ik zal het opnemen met audio apparatuur zodat wij alle informatie goed kunnen verwerken en ik mij tijdens het gesprek volledig op jou kan concentreren en niet tussendoor dingen moet opschrijven. Als wij de gesprekken geanalyseerd hebben, zal de opname vernietigd worden.

Heb je zo verre nog vragen of onduidelijkheden?

<u>Begin Interview</u>

(Instructie interviewer: indien nog niet genoemd, doorvragen -> cursief geschreven vragen)

1. Als eerste wil ik je vragen om aan situaties te denken waarin jij ergerde of stoorde aan een collega uit dezelfde werkgroep of team als jij. Heb jij dat soort situaties soms? Hoe zien die er dan uit? Kun je daar iets over vertellen?

2. In mijn onderzoek ben ik geïnteresseerd in wat de leidinggevende zou kunnen doen in een botsing tussen jou en een collega en wat de effecten daarvan zijn. Vandaar ben ik benieuwd naar een situatie die indruk heeft gemaakt op jou, die je nog goed kunt herinneren en waarin jouw leidinggevende op hoogte was van wat er tussen jullie gebeurde. Indien je de situatie weer voor ogen hebt, zou ik je als eerste willen vragen om de situatie te omschrijven?

    - *Waar ging het over?*
    - *Hoe kwam het tot de botsing/het meningsverschil*
    - *Hoelang speelde het?*
    - *In hoeveree was die botsing zakelijk of persoonlijk?*

3. Heeft de leidinggevende - die op de hoogte was - zich bemoeid met jullie?

    - *Hoe is hij/zij erbij betrokken geraakt?*
    - *Wat heeft hij/zij precies gedaan?*
    - *Had jij je leidinggevende nodig?*
    - *Had je dit gedrag van hem/haar nodig?*
    - *Had je dat verwacht van je leidinggevende?*
    - *Wat had je het liefst gehad dat hij of zij deed?*
    - *Waarover was je ontevreden/tevreden?*

3. Als volgende zou ik graag willen weten hoe jij je in die situatie zelf of vlak daarna hebt gevoeld?

    - *Wat heb je gevoeld? Hoelang heeft dit gevoel aangehouden?*
    - *Heb je er lang over gepiekerd? Denk je nu nog steeds aan?*

- In hoeverre heb je het in je lichaam gevoeld?

- In hoeverre had deze situatie invloed op jouw slaap?

- Hoe was de volgende ontmoeting met de collega voor jou?

- Hoe heeft dit jouw werk of je gevoel op het werk beïnvloedt?

- Wat ging er door je heen (gedachten)?

- Hoe heeft deze situatie jouw relatie met je collega beïnvloedt?

- Hoe heeft deze situatie jouw relatie met je leidinggevende beïnvloedt?

4. Vervolgens zou ik graag weten of er een botsing tussen jou en een collega was die juist tegenovergestelde effecten had? Dus, als je in de eerste situatie ontevreden was, kun je dan een situatie bedenken waarin je juist tevreden bent geweest?

- Waar ging het over?

- Hoe kwam het tot de botsing/het meningsverschil?

- Hoelang speelde het?

- Hoe intens heb je het ervaren (in vergelijking met andere situaties)?

- In hoeveree was die botsing zakelijk?

- In hoeverre was die botsing persoonlijk

5. Heeft de leidinggevende - die op de hoogte was - zich bemoeid met jullie?

- Hoe is hij/zij erbij betrokken geraakt?

- Wat heeft hij/zij precies gedaan?

- Had jij je leidinggevende nodig?

- Had je dit gedrag van hem/haar nodig?

- Had je dat verwacht van je leidinggevende?

- Wat had je het liefst gehad dat hij of zij deed?

- Waarover was je ontevreden/tevreden?

6. Als volgende zou ik graag willen weten hoe jij je in die situatie zelf of vlak daarna hebt gevoeld?

- Wat heb je gevoeld? Hoelang heeft dit gevoel aangehouden?

- Heb je er lang over gepiekerd? Denk je nu nog steeds aan?

- In hoeverre heb je het in je lichaam gevoeld?

- In hoeverre had deze situatie invloed op jouw slaap?

- Hoe was de volgende ontmoeting met de collega voor jou?

- Hoe heeft dit jouw werk of je gevoel op het werk beïnvloedt?

- Wat ging er door je heen (gedachten)?

- Hoe heeft deze situatie jouw relatie met je collega beïnvloedt?

- Hoe heeft deze situatie jouw relatie met je leidinggevende beïnvloedt?

7. En nu ben ik benieuwd naar jouw mening –los van bovenstaande situaties- in hoeverre kan de leidinggevende gevolgen van de botsing beïnvloeden?

- Is het wenselijk dat de leidinggevende ingrijpt of juist niet?

- Wat zijn je behoeften ten aanzien van je leidinggevende in botsingen met collega's?

- Wat vind je dat hij of zij zou moeten doen?

- Wanneer zou hij/zij moeten ingrijpen en wanneer juist niet?

- Wat gebeurd er als hij of zij niet reageert zoals jij dat zou wensen?

- Zou de leidinggevende juist kunnen helpen om gevolgen minder onprettig of prettiger te maken? Of maakt het niet uit wat de leidinggevende doet?

- Welke aspecten (van het gedrag) bepalen voor jou of je er prettig bij voelt of niet?

- In hoeverre heeft het te maken met je verwachtingen ten opzichte van je leidinggevende?

- In hoeverre had het te maken met eerdere ervaringen met je leidinggevende?

- In hoeverre had het te maken met een onrechtmatigheidgevoel?

- Wat had de leidinggevende kunnen doen om je prettiger te voelen en minder overstuur?

- Hoe is de leidinggevende erbij betrokken geraakt?

- Wat had de leidinggevende in jou ogen ander kunnen doen om jou een beter gevoel te geven?

Om af te sluiten wil ik jouw gegevens noteren om later te kunnen argumenteren dat ik verschillende mensen heb gesproken met verschillende functies, leeftijd, opleiding etc

Wat is jouw leeftijd?	………….. jaar
Wat is jouw geslacht?	☐ Man ☐ Vrouw
In welke sector werkt je?	☐ overheid ☐ financiële dienstverlening ☐ zakelijke dienstverlening ☐ industrie ☐ onderwijs ☐ ☐ Anders, namelijk …………………
Wat is jouw functie?	……………………………………..
Hoe lang heb je deze functie al?	
Wat zijn jouw kerntaken?	
Hoe lang ben je al in dienst bij deze organisatie?	………….. jaar

Wat is jouw etnische achtergrond?	☐ Nederlands ☐ Turks ☐ Indonesisch ☐ Surinaams ☐ Marokkaans ☐ Anders, namelijk …………………
Wat is de hoogste opleiding die je met een diploma hebt afgerond?	☐ WO ☐ HBO ☐ MBO ☐ LBO ☐ Lager Onderwijs ☐ Geen
Hoeveel uur per week werkt je?	………… uur
Hoe groot is het team waar je deel van uit maakt?	………… personen (inclusief uzelf)
Voor welk training ben je hier?	…..........

Indien je op de hoogte gehouden wilt worden van de resultaten van dit onderzoek kun je op de lijst jouw e-mail adres achterlaten.

Dank je wel voor je tijd en inspanningen!

Appendix C: Visualization of differences in power

<u>Instruction:</u> Because I want to compare the interviews afterwards it would be nice if we could visualize the situation X which you reported. Do you agree?

(if respondent agrees) In this figure you can see five alternatives in which differences of power are visualized. In each case the left ball stands for "me" and the right ball for "the other". I want you to show me which proportion is in line with your perception of the situation X. In the first alternative both parties are equal and there is no difference in power. In the remaining four alternatives the power is distributed unequally. In the second and third alternative the other party has more power; either to a slight or great extent. In the fourth and fifth alternative it is the opposite way around and you have more power than the other; either to a slight or great extent. It is important that you describe how the proportion feels because I am interested in your perception and not in the hierarchy.

1. Which figure is most in line with the situation X? Why? *(Wait for the answer)*

Now I ask you to concentrate on alternative X.

2. Which position took your supervisor? Can you draw his/ her position? *(Wait for answer)*
3. What would be the ideal position of your supervisor? Please draw it. *(Wait for the answer)* Why do you want him/ her to take this position?
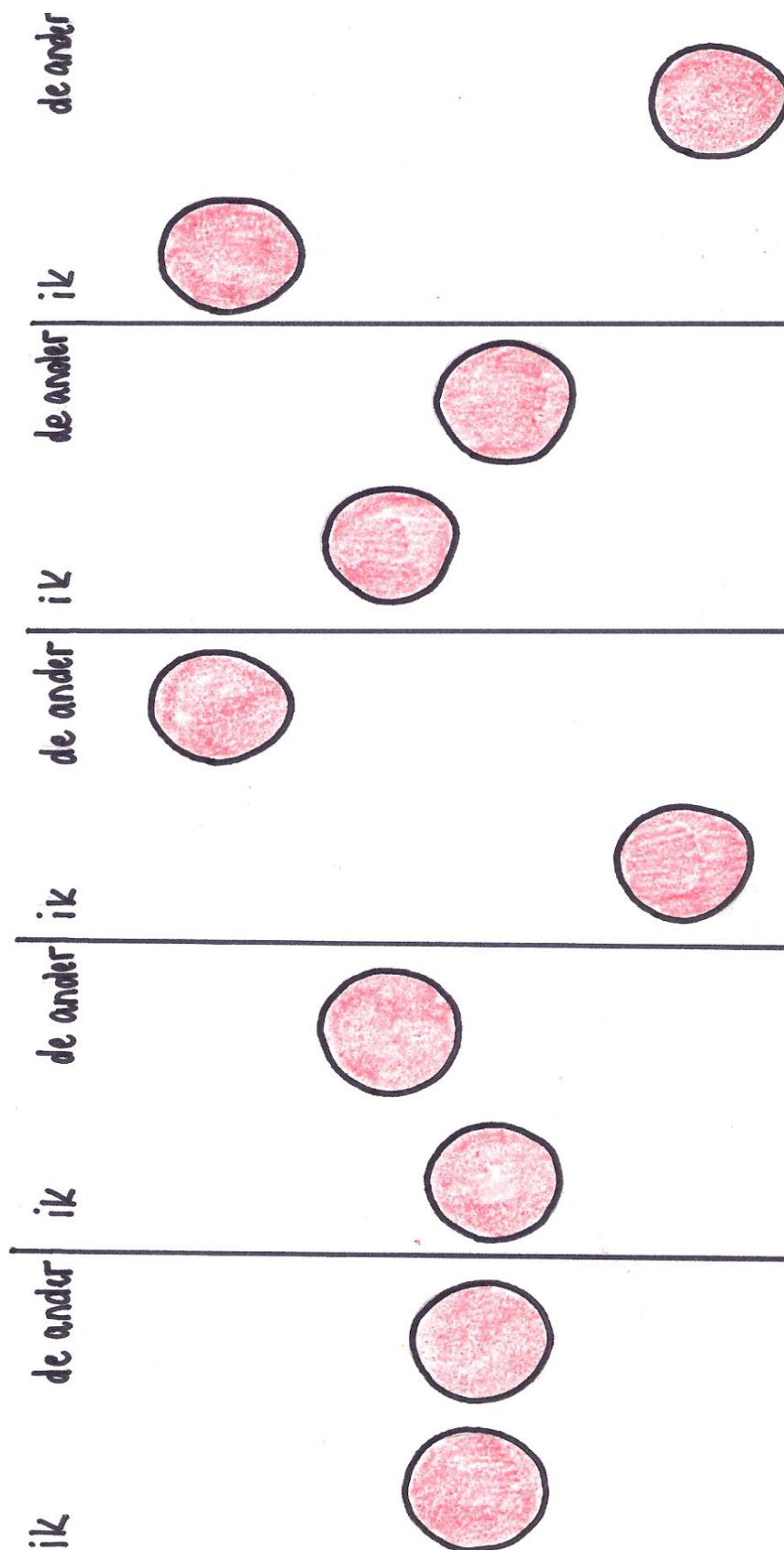
Figure 1: Visualization of differences in power

Appendix D: Coding scheme

Construct	Antwoorden	Codes	Scores op antwoorden
Conflicten	Issue	CI	- Inhoud. Waar gaat het conflict over? - Soort conflict: taak / proces / relatie - Objectieve beschrijving - karaktereigenschappen van de ander die de respondent niet leuk vind
	Ander partij	CP	- Wie is de ander partij? - Relatie met de ander voor en na het conflict; op en naast het werk
	Duur	CD	- Hoe lang heeft het conflict gespeeld? - Speelt het conflict nog steeds?
Reactie op het conflict	Gedachten	RGeda	- Gedachten
	Emoties	RE	- Emoties
	Gedrag	RGedr	- Eigen gedrag (richting partij, thuis en dergelijke; maar niet richting leiding-gevende! dat is IZ of LG)
	Lichamelijk	RL	- Lichamelijke reacties

Initiatief om leidinggevende erbij te betrekken	Initiatief	IZ	- Geen initiatief
			 - Wel initiatief genomen:
			     Door wie?
			     Waarom? (is ook VS)
			 - Relatie met de lg (niet karakter)

Daadwerkelijk leiderschapsgedrag in deze situatie	Interventie	LI	- Belang: lg / A / B? - Wat heeft lg precies gedaan?
	Doel	LD	- Lg helpt partijen het op te lossen - Lg verzint een inhoudelijke oplossing
	Tevredenheid	LT	- Wat vond de respondent van het leiderschapsgedrag?
	Gevolgen	LG	- Wat was het effect van het leider-

			schapsgedrag op de respondent? - Toekomstige ontmoetingen, eigen conclusies etc.
Verwachtingen ten opzichte van de leidinggevende in deze situatie	Verwachting situatie	VS + x*	- Wat heeft de geïnterviewde verwacht? - Wat had hij of zij nodig? - Wat is de reden geweest om lg te vragen?
Verwachting ten opzichte van de leidinggevende in het algemeen	Verwachting algemeen	VA + x *	- Wat is het ideale gedrag van de lg als derde partij? - Wat juist niet?

Table 2: Coding scheme

* Bij het coderen van VA en VS: combineren met de andere codes

Appendix E: An overview of the respondents´ perceived obligations

Case	Supervisor´s obligations			Employees´ obligations (case)	
	Supervisor has to do sth. in this situation (case)	Supervisor need not to do sth. in this situation (case)	In general: supervisor has to intervene in some situations	third-party help is no option	If you cannot solve it alone: third-party help
1		X	X		X
2	X		X		X
3		X	X		X
4		X	X	X	
5		X	X	X	
6	X		X		X
7		X	X	X	
8	X		X	X	
9		X	X		X
10	X		X		X
11	X		X		X
12	X		X		X
13	X		X		X
14	X		X		X
15		X	X	X	
16	X		X	X	
17		X	X		X
18	X		X		X
19		X	X	X	
20	X		X		X
Total	11	9	20 cases = All 16 respondents	7	13

Table 3: perceived obligations

Appendix F: An overview of employees´ perceptions with regard to failing

	Initiative		*Employees´ obligation*			*Impact on relationship with colleague*		*Equate with failing?*
Case	Initiative by		Solve it without third-party help	If you cannot solve it alone: third-party help	Called it: "failing"	Negative impact	Called it: "squealing"	
1	No	Postponed		X		X		
2	Party A	Initiative but postponed		X	X	X	X	X
3	No	Postponed		X				X
4	No	Avoided	X			X		X
5	No	Avoided	X					X
6	Party A	Initiative but postponed		X				
7	No	Avoided	X			X		X
8	No	Avoided	X			X		X
9	Other	(Initiative) Postponed		X		X	X	X
10	Party A	Initiative		X				
11	Party A	Initiative but Postponed		X		X	X	X
12	Party A	Initiative		X				
13	Party A	Initiative		X				
14	Other	(Initiative) Postponed		X				
15	No	Avoided	X		X			X
16	Other	(Initiative) Avoided	X		X			X
17	No	Postponed		X				
18	Party A	Initiative but Postponed		X		X		
19	Other	(Initiative) Avoided	X			X	X	X
20	Party A	Initiative but postponed		X				
	Party A= 8 Other= 4 No= 8		7	13	3	8	4	X = 11

Table 4: Perceptions of failing

Appendix G: An overview of the conflict´s impact and the resultant desire for third-party help

Case	1. Conflict duration	2. Impact on well-being, at home	3. Impact on work	Desire (1-3)	Initiative by		Expectation supported?
1	Long	Weak	Medium	Medium	No	Postponed	X
2	Long	Severe	Severe	Strong	Party A	Initiative but postponed	X
3	Short	Weak	Medium	Weak	No	Postponed	X
4	Short	Weak	Weak	Weak	No	Avoided	X
5	Long	Weak	Weak	Weak	No	Avoided	X
6	Long	Medium	Severe	Strong	Party A	Initiative but postponed	X
7	Long	Medium	Weak	Weak	No	Avoided	X
8	Medium	Weak	Weak	Weak	No	Avoided	X
9	Long	Weak	Weak	Weak	Other	(Initiative) Postponed	X
10	Medium	Severe	Severe	Strong	Party A	Initiative	X
11	Long	Severe	Severe	Strong	Party A	Initiative but postponed	X
12	Long	Medium	Severe	Strong	Party A	Initiative	X
13	Long	Medium	Severe	Strong	Party A	Initiative	X
14	Short	Medium	Weak	Weak	Other	(Initiative) Postponed	X
15	Short	Medium	Weak	Weak	No	Avoided	X
16	Long	Severe	Severe	Strong	Other	(Initiative) avoided	
17	Long	Medium	Weak	Medium	No	Postponed	X
18	Long	Severe	Severe	Strong	Party A	Initiative but postponed	X
19	Long	Weak	Weak	Weak	Other	(Initiative) avoided	X
20	Long	Medium	Severe	Strong	Party A	Initiative but postponed	X
Total	Short=4 Medium=2 Long=14	Weak=7 Medium=8 Severe=5	Weak=9 Medium=2 Severe=9	Weak=9 Medium=2 Strong=9	Party A=8 Other=4 No=8		X=19

Table 5: An overview of the conflict´s impact and the resultant desire for third-party help

Side notes:

Sub-score 1: A conflict issue was categorized as "short" when it lasted hours or days, as "medium" when it lasted weeks, and as "long" when it lasted months or years.

Sub-score 2: The impact on well-being and at home was rated in terms of physical reactions, emotions, and the respondent´s behavior at home; it was "weak" when respondents reported that the conflict issue had no or little impact, "medium"

when the conflict issue had moderate impact, and "severe" when the conflict issue had major impact.

Sub-score 3:   The impact at work was rated with respect to the degree of disruption at work; it was "weak" when respondents reported that the conflict issue had no or little impact, "medium" when the conflict issue sometimes disrupted work processes, and "severe" when the conflict issue had major impact on work.

"Desire" was calculated by summing up the sub-scores.

Appendix H: An overview of respondents´ belief whether third-party help will lead to conflict resolution

Case	Will third-party help lead to conflict resolution?	Initiative by		Expectation supported?
1	Yes	No	Postponed	No
2	Yes	Party A	Initiative but postponed	Yes
3	No	No	Postponed	Yes
4	No	No	Avoided	Yes
5	No	No	Avoided	Yes
6	No	Party A	Initiative but postponed	No
7	No	No	Avoided	Yes
8	No	No	Avoided	Yes
9	No	Other	(Initiative) Postponed	Yes
10	Yes	Party A	Initiative	Yes
11	Yes	Party A	Initiative but Postponed	Yes
12	Yes	Party A	Initiative	Yes
13	Yes	Party A	Initiative	Yes
14	Yes	Other	(Initiative) P	No
15	No	No	Avoided	Yes
16	Yes	Other	(Initiative) Avoided	No
17	Yes	No	Postponed	No
18	Yes	Party A	Initiative but Postponed	Yes
19	No	Other	(Initiative) Avoided	Yes
20	Yes	Party A	Initiative but postponed	Yes
	Yes=11 No=9	Party A= 8 Other= 4 No= 8		Yes=15 No=5

Table 6: Respondents´ belief with respect to conflict resolution

Appendix I: An overview of respondents´ expectation with regard to the favor of supervisor´s decision

Case	Initiative by		Expectation: decision is in favor of	If expected "not in own favor": calling in?	Expectation supported?
1	No	Postponed	Party B	Yes	No
2	Party A	Initiative but postponed	Party A		Yes
3	No	Postponed	Party A / B	Yes	No
4	No	Avoided	Party B	No	Yes
5	No	Avoided			No information
6	Party A	Initiative but postponed	Party A / B	Yes	No
7	No	Avoided			No information
8	No	Avoided			No information
9	*Other*	*(Initiative) Postponed*	----	----	----
10	Party A	Initiative	Other	Yes	No
11	Party A	Initiative but Postponed	Party A		Yes
12	Party A	Initiative	Party A / B	Yes	No
13	Party A	Initiative	Party A		Yes
14	*Other*	*(Initiative) Postponed*	----	----	----
15	No	Avoided			No information
16	*Other*	*(Initiative) Avoided*	----	----	----
17	No	Postponed	Other		Yes
18	Party A	Initiative but Postponed	Party A / B	Yes	No
19	*Other*	*(Initiative) Avoided*	----	----	----
20	Party A	Initiative but postponed	Party A / B	Yes	No
	Party A= 8 Other= 4 No= 8				Yes=5 No=7 No information=4 ---- =4

Table 7: beliefs with regard to favor of the supervisor´s decision

Side note:

- Eight cases were excluded from analysis: initiative was taken by others; no information

Appendix J: An overview of the (mis)match of supervisor´s actual third-party help and employees´ expectations and needs.

Case	1. Actual third-party intervention	2. Employees´ expectations and needs (with regard to supervisor´s third-party help)	Was 1 identical with 2?	Was the employee satisfied?	Expectation supported?
1	N	N	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	N	I	No	No	Yes
3	N	I	No	No	Yes
4	N	N	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	N	N	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	N	I	No	No	Yes
7	N	N	Yes	Yes	Yes
8	N	I	No	No	Yes
9	I	I	No	No	Yes
10	I	I	No	No	Yes
11	I	I	No	No	Yes
12	N	I	No	No	Yes
13	N	I	No	No	Yes
14	I	I	Yes	Yes	Yes
15	N	No information	No information	No information	No information
16	I	I	No	No	Yes
17	N	N	Yes	Yes	Yes
18	I	I	No	No	Yes
19	I	I	Yes	Yes	Yes
20	I	I	No	No	Yes
Total	N = 12 I= 8		Yes=7 No=12 No information =1	Yes = 7 No = 12 No information =1	Yes=19 No=0 No information =1

Table 8: Satisfaction

Side note:

N = No intervention

I = Intervention

Appendix K: An overview of respondents´ preference with regard to control

Case	Process control	Decision control
1	X	
2		X
3	X	X
4	X	X
5		
6	X	
7		
8		
9	X	X
10	X	
11		X
12	X	
13	X	X
14		
15		
16	X	
17	X	
18	X	
19	X	
20	X	X

Table 9: Preference

Appendix L: One conflict issue, three perspectives

Case	1. Conflict duration	2. Impact on well-being, at home	3. Impact on work	Desire (1-3)	Initiative by		Support?
21	Long	Severe	Severe	Strong	Party A, others	Initiative	X
22	Long	Severe	Severe	Strong	Party A, others	Initiative	X
23	Long	Severe	Medium	Strong	Party A, others	Initiative	X

Table 10: Conflict´s impact and the resultant desire for third-party help

Case	1. Actual third-party intervention N= no intervention; I = Intervention	2. Employees´ expectations and needs (with regard to supervisor´s third-party help)	Was 1 identical with 2?	Was the employee satisfied?	Expectation supported?
21	I	I	Yes	Yes	Yes
22	I	I	No	No	Yes
23	I	I	No	No	Yes

Table 11: Conflict´s impact and the resultant desire for third-party help

Case	Process control	Decision control
21	X	
22		X
23	X	X

Table 12: Preference