ABSTRACT

An Affective Events Theory Analysis of Conflict Perception Emergence

by

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Popular conceptualizations of conflict conflate conflict perception with other discrete constructs such as disagreement and emotions. This makes research using those conceptualizations difficult to interpret. I invoke affective events theory to describe how constructs conflated with conflict perception, as well as negative prescriptive expectancy violations (EVs), may collectively serve as antecedents to conflict perception. By reconceptualizing conflict perception as an evaluative judgment and distinguishing between episodic (short-term) and global (long-term) conflict perceptions, my model describes how episodic conflict perceptions cumulatively influence global conflict perceptions over time. Two types of events (disagreements and negative prescriptive EVs) were proposed to predict episodic conflict perceptions through motive inconsistent emotions. Disagreements were expected to negatively predict episodic conflict perceptions when disagreement outcome favorability is low and positively predict job satisfaction when disagreement outcome favorability is high. A pilot study provided initial support for the validity of the main study measures. Then, a three-phase longitudinal design was used to collect data from employed undergraduate participants reporting
on supervisory relationships. In Phase 1, training for daily surveys was completed. In Phase 2, participants completed ten daily self-report measures of negative prescriptive EVs, disagreements, outcome favorability, emotions, and episodic conflict perceptions. In Phase 3, global conflict perception and job satisfaction were assessed. This method allowed for an examination of multilevel emergence between repeated measures variables at Level 1 (negative prescriptive EVs, disagreements, motive inconsistent emotions, episodic conflict perceptions) and single measures variables at Level 2 (global conflict perception, job satisfaction). Data was analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis and multilevel regression. Results generally support the proposed model. However, the nature of the interactions between disagreements and outcome favorability on motive inconsistent emotions, motive consistent emotions, and on job satisfaction were different than expected. Implications and future directions are discussed.