

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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This study investigated how people from three different cultures tend to manage conflict with their immediate supervisors. All three groups used problem solving the most followed by compromise. However, the participants from India were the most likely to use yielding. It ranked third for the Indians. Yielding also ranked third for the Westerners, primarily Americans, but they did not yield quite as much as the Indians. The third group, the Middle-Easterners, primarily Lebanese, used forcing more than the other two groups. Forcing ranked third for them. Exploratory analyses revealed an interaction between gender and country for the conflict management style of compromising. The Western men were less likely to compromise than any other group.

Keywords: Cross-Cultural Study, Conflict Management, Job Stress, Turnover Intention

HOW CULTURE INFLUENCES CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

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CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Since the flamboyant birth of globalization, industry leaders have stressed the importance of having a diverse and eclectic workforce. People from different cultures are also contributing to the diversity. Having a range of taxing issues explored by versatile human brains under a single roof is not a bad thing, but when these brains collide for the upper hand when it comes to workplace processes, the situation could grow from unpropitious to iniquitous. While this kind of conflict might be favorable when amicable solutions are culled, conflict can be destructive when it becomes personal. We all experience conflicts throughout our life and conflicts are ubiquitous at the workplace. We cull certain strategies to handle conflicts, and there are various factors which influence the selection of conflict management strategies.

Various factors such as gender, age, education, race and ethnicity may influence the ways we manage conflict. Among these factors, a person's societal culture may be the most interesting and discombobulating factor. If people from different cultures manage conflict differently, this reduces the chances of them reaching an amiable settlement if they are in conflict. Knowing something about how people from different cultures manage conflict will help leaders perform better in a global environment. While there have been many studies examining culture's role in the conflict management process, unfortunately, the number of studies which have compared cultures in the context of conflict management is sporadic. In this study, I will compare Indian, American, and Lebanese styles of conflict management.

What Is Conflict?

Conflict can be defined as a product of two or more contradicting ideas. There is no universally accepted definition of conflict. According to Silverthorne (2005), there is no single definition of conflict which lucidly defines conflict. Conflict may also arise whenever two interests collide (Morgan, 2006). Conflict has two physiognomies which are cold and hot (Lawson & Shen, 1998). People who are involved in cold conflict quest for amicable solutions. Here the individual would concentrate on reaching a diplomatic solution to reduce cataclysmic aftermath. On the other hand, hot conflict would result in pandemoniac outcome. People who experience hot conflict display bellicose behaviors. Cold conflict can be productive because of the opted path of problem solving. It can be compared to a freeway. On the other hand, hot conflict can be compared to a cul-de-sac. However, behaviors which are considered as pernicious should be managed to reduce agglomeration as a result of conflicting ideas.

Conflict is a process where an individual holds a belief which makes that individual perceive that another individual or group are acting against their interests (McShane, & Von Glinow, 2010). Conflict is a natural and inevitable part in human interaction (Fulle & Snyder, 2006). Conflict can also be defined as an incongruity between at least two persons or groups (Deutsch, 1973). Conflict can be viewed as a process which begins with the perception of identifying differences within oneself or other entities, in terms of interests, beliefs, and attitudes (Wall & Callister, 1995).

Types of Conflict

Organizational researchers started exploring the depths of conflicts in mid 1990s through an organizational lens (Runde & Flanagan, 2013). Maddi (1980) could be

considered as one of the first scholars to sunder conflicts into intrapsychic and psychosocial conflicts. Conflicts can be divided into many types. They are personal, interpersonal, intergroup, process, and task conflicts respectively. Further, these can be divided into informational conflict, inter-organizational, and international conflicts. However, international and inter-organizational conflicts are not relevant to this paper. According to Kondalkar (2007), conflict can be either functional or dysfunctional. Personal conflict arises when an individual confronts a situation with two or more ideas trying for the upper hand. This can also be called intrapersonal conflict. This type of conflict is commonplace and every individual experiences it. Personal conflict can be viewed through an organizational lens as well. In the organizational literature, personal conflict jumps into the frame when an individual's personal goals are in opposition with the goals of an organization (Morgan, 2006). Every individual has his or her own goals or desires. Similarly, every organization has its goals. When we see a situation where organizational goals clash with an individual's goals, personal conflict arises.

The next one on the list is interpersonal conflict. This type of conflict can be defined as content-oriented differences of opinion that occur in interdependent relationships and can develop into incompatible goals (Putnam & Wilson 1982). Interpersonal conflicts are commonplace and can pack a potential knockout punch. This type of conflict occurs between two individuals when resources are dearth. It occurs when there is "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals" (Hocker & Wilmot, 1991, p. 12). This definition fits in the context of organizational literature very well. Interpersonal conflicts are often the most disruptive

and most ruinous type of conflict. Interpersonal conflicts usually target an individual's personal grounds. When personal issues takes the center stage, that turns into a relational conflict. Interpersonal conflicts are also known as relational conflicts. According to Jehn (1997), relational conflicts epicenters individuals or conflict partners rather than organizational issues.

Process conflict looms when there is disagreement in the process pertaining to accomplishment of a task or project (Myers & Larson, 2005). In process conflicts, individuals emphasize various ways of getting a task done (Galanes et al., 2003). Task conflict is also known as substantive conflict (Guetzkow & Gyr, 1954). Task conflict usually involves disagreement among groups or individuals over a specific outcome of a task or a project (Rahim, 2001). According to Amason and Schweiger (1997), task conflict is essential to expedite various organizational processes. This might be an example of intra-group conflict. Inter-group and inter-organizational conflicts often share many of the same dynamics as conflicts with fewer people involved. For the purpose of this study, I want to focus on how people manage interpersonal conflicts.

Causes of Conflicts

There are many reasons for a conflict to jump into the frame. Some causes might lead toward personal conflict. Whereas, some causes result in interpersonal, intergroup, intragroup, interorganizational, task, process, and international conflicts respectively. Causes behind personal conflicts are usually innocuous to the world. On the other hand, conflicts between nations could have a detrimental impact on the world. However, inconsistencies, confusion, and limited resources are some common reasons for any type of conflicts to emerge (Eunson, 2007). In the context of the organizational literature,

there are six main sources or reasons for a conflict to upspring (McShane & Glinow, 2013). They are incompatible goals, differentiation, scarce resources, ambiguous rules, interdependence, and communication problems (McShane & Glinow, 2013).

Goal incompatibility occurs when a person's or a group's goals or aims are hindered by an individual or a group (Schmidt & Kochan, 1972). People have different types of opinions and beliefs. These values, experiences, and attitudes regarding their work related issues could lead toward conflict (McShane & Glinow, 2013). According to McMullan et al. (2007), intergenerational needs are a significant reason which could result in differences among individuals in terms of their attitudes and beliefs.

Interdependence is a quotidian element in organizations. Every department has to rely on other departments and every individual has to depend on others in order to run an organization successfully. This kind of interdependence creates an orifice for conflict to leak through. Interdependence usually includes sharing common resources, collective tasks, and receiving performance appraisals as a whole (Wageman & Baker, 1997).

Higher interdependence leads to conflict because disruption and goal interference among individuals (Earley & Northcraft, 1989). Reciprocal interdependence is a type of interdependence where the birth of conflict is highly inevitable because situation demands dependence among employees in order to get things done (McShane & Glinow, 2013).

Scarce resources can also act as a catalyst which can lead toward friction among employees. The availability of funds has a dominant role in the process of conflict (Eunson, 2007). McShane and Glinow (2013) opine that financial dearth in organizations is one of the major causes which could engender various labour strikes as a result of

conflict. When rules are nebulous in organizations, things are more likely to miss a beat. In other words, this kind of enigma is a source of conflict at the workplace. According to Risberg (2001), companies have designed few rules in order to reduce confusion which leads to conflict.

Communication is another cause which engenders conflict in organizations. There are many elements which can distort communication channels (Kondalkar, 2007). Communication becomes a reason for conflict to jump into the frame when opportunity, ability, and motivation are lacking (McShane & Glinow, 2013). Ability to communicate effectively can reduce the impact of conflict. When people fail to convey their opinion in a conflict situation, the escalation of conflict is high (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). Lack of opportunities to communicate or express oneself leads to conflict because stereotypes are likely to govern the logic or perception (McShane & Glinow, 2013). Because of the uncomfortable nature of interpersonal conflict, people are less likely to be motivated to solve the conflict (McShane & Glinow, 2013).

Having said that, improper chains of communication create conflicts without breaking sweat. In this context language barriers can create new or aggravate existing conflicts. Similarly, culture can also act as a catalyst to conflict (Kondalkar, 2007). According to Runde and Flanagan (2013), power in organizations can be a significant cause for conflicts to engender. When power is misused, organizations as well as employees are likely to taste the bitterness of ramifications as a result of conflicts. When conflicts and power mix, the outcome is explosive (Coleman & Fergeson, 2014). Power and conflicts together can be considered as brothers of destruction. Improper usage of power in a conflicting situation can cause damage beyond repair. Fear can cause or lead

toward conflict. In this context Shearouse (2011) describes various types of fear which causes conflict. Fear of change and fear of powerlessness, and fear of being unworthy are a few among the list. At the same time, Morgan (2006) explains various sources of power which can act as petrol to fire.

The Angelic Side of Conflict

Conflicts at the workplace is like an oil painting, one bad stroke or one bad mixture of colors can spoil the landscape. Similarly, bad elements in a conflict can destroy an organization. At the same time, conflicts can be productive when energy is directed toward a proper channel. There are three main views regarding conflict and its impact. The traditional view argues that conflict is always bad, the human relations view argues that conflict can be good and helpful, and the interactionist view argues that conflict is very essential for organizational growth (Robbins, 1996). During early 1900s conflict was considered as a negative element at the workplace (McShane & Glinow, 2013). According to Rahim (2001), initially conflict was viewed as dysfunctional and as an unwanted factor. During 1920s, scholars and other prominent figures started recognizing the importance of conflict at the workplace (McShane & Glinow, 2013). In this context, John Dewey (1922) opined that conflict is essential to stir creativity and for a better thought process. Similarly, political science and management expert Mary Parker Follett (1941) stated that conflict should be put to use rather than treating it as an unwanted element. According to McShane and Glinow (2013), the true exploration toward conflict at the workplace commenced in 1970s.

One of the advantages of conflicts at work is that they can lead to innovation among people (Dewey, 1922). Conflicts are essential because they act as a source

through which individuals can express themselves (Kondalkar, 2007). Conflicting situations are likely to produce chances which enable individuals to understand each other well, thereby it increases collectivity (McShane & Glinow, 2013). According to Carnevale (2006), conflict leads toward creativity by begetting active thinking. It all depends on the degree of conflict. Conflict should be manageable, but not menacing, to taste the fruits of it. In this context, McShane and Glinow (2013) stated moderate levels of conflict can make an organization responsive to the external environment by preventing stagnation. This kind of responsiveness could lead organizations toward a good organizational culture and climate. According to Eisenhardt et al. (1997), conflicts keep an organization watchful. This kind of watchfulness results in high productivity. Similarly, Runde and Flanagan (2013) argue that conflicts prepare individuals or employees to understand customers and their personal tastes. This kind of preparation helps organizations to face change and other related issues (Morgan, 2006).

From the employees' point of view, conflicts act as potential source of motivation. According to Kondalkar (2007), conflicts can create an organizational environment which fosters creativity and group cohesion. When people face a conflicting situation from external sources, they become motivated and that builds a bond between them (McShane & Glinow, 2013). Conflicts can come in handy when groupthink is pesky (Runde & Flanagan, 2013). When conflict goes well, people involved are likely to experience satisfaction and personal growth (Shearouse, 2011). Job satisfaction is an important aspect of a job which depends on various aspects. Traits of a job, personal factors, and environmental factors can influence job satisfaction level. Among these environmental factors, conflict is one of the most important aspects.

Job satisfaction can be defined as positive feedback about a person's job and its related issues (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as a positive outcome regarding job related experiences. When conflicts are negative, they are likely to dent an employee's job satisfaction level. Similarly, constructive conflict can affect a person's organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) in a positive manner.

Organizational citizenship behavior can be defined as a behavior that is above and beyond regular duty performed by an employee (Korsgaard, Brodt, & Whitener, 2002). Conflict can be viewed as a potential challenging situation for leaders. A conflicting situation is likely to bring a leader into the limelight. According to Runde and Flanagan (2013), conflicts are essential to identify a proper leader. When conflict is dealt with properly, it increases performance (Schermerhorn, Davidson, Poole, Simon, Woods, & Chau, 2011). Conflicts are likely to provide opportunities to explore an individual's weaknesses' to turn them into advantages. Eunson (2007) states that conflicts help to build empathy among individuals, which eventually leads toward better decision making. Employees are likely to experience stress when conflicts arise. This type of stress can come in very handy in some situations. According to Broadbent (1972), minimum levels of stress are very essential for better performance. However, conflict is not always positive. According to Robbins (1996), conditions and the type of conflict decides the advantages or disadvantages of conflicts. Conflicts can be seen as the life blood and essential to every organization, as long as they remain task or process focused (Roberto, 2005). We have explored some positive angles of conflicts so far. Let us consider some negative aspects of conflicts as well. When the bad face of conflicts strikes, the havoc it can create is beyond imagination.

The Ugly Face of Conflict

When conflict is bad, it is really bad. Many authors and scholars have depicted the bad side of conflicts (Dana, 2005; Eunson, 2007; Furlong, 2005; Kondalkar, 2007; Runde & Flanagan, 2013). There are many disadvantages when conflicts strike. The capacity for destruction depends on the nature of the situation in which it upsprang. In this context, we need to consider organizational and individual points of view to get hold of the negative side of conflicts.

From the individual's point of view, conflict can lead to stress and other related issues (Kondalkar, 2007). As stated by McShane and Von Glinow (2013), conflicts at the workplace can lead toward high levels of stress. When stress increases, people will experience some physical and mental aberrations. Stress involves increase of heart rate, tightening of muscles, and weaker immune system (McShane et al., 2010). Prolonged release of stress hormones due to conflicts can deplete our biological system (McEwen, 1998). Cummer (2010) states that when stress is high it is capable of triggering other adjustment disorders. Similarly, Plotnic and Kouyoumdjian (2011), state that high levels of stress can cause panic disorders. Research shows that women (37%) report more stress than men (17%) (Deckro, 2002; Gallagher, 2002). Prolonged durations of stress can also result in psychosomatic disorders (Kemeny, 2003). A meta-analysis conducted by Spector and Jex (1998) reported a moderate positive correlation between conflict and psychosomatic complaints. In other words, stress can cause cholesterol to increase, and heart related diseases, which is fatal (Burger, 2008).

When conflicts are taxing to manage, employees are likely to experience extreme dolefulness. Similarly, relational conflicts are capable of engendering politicking among

individuals who are involved in a conflicting situation. Relational conflicts are those conflicts which encourages tit for tat behaviors which eventually leads toward employee turnover and other negative effects (Furlong, 2005). According to Eunson (2007), when conflicts turn personal it could lead to physical attacks.

Relationship conflict can negatively affect an employee's effective performance (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003a). As stated by Shearouse (2011), conflict plays an important role in job satisfaction. A study conducted by De Dreu and Weingart (2003b) found a negative correlation between job satisfaction and conflict at workplace. There is a direct link between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction. When employees are dissatisfied, they do not strive for customer satisfaction (Raines, 2013). According to Duxbury and Higgins (2003), the amount of dissatisfied employees has increased in recent times due to the work load and other organizational reasons. If workplace demands are high, we can bet that implies an increase in workplace conflicts as well (Raines, 2013). This eventually leads toward employee turnover. One surprising finding is that private sector employees are more satisfied than public sector employees (Duxbury & Higgins, 2003). Albeit the buttress of other findings are limited, it could be that pay and other working conditions are better in the private sector (Raines, 2013).

Employee turnover is like a tornado hitting a coast. Every organization usually experiences average levels of employee turnover despite their size. Turnover can create direct and indirect negative effects. Direct effects are costs, time, and intellectual property loss. If employee turnover is abnormal, it could dent an organization's culture and reputation. Dana (2005) states that more than half of the employee retention cost is due to badly managed conflicts. According to Runde and Flanagan (2013), employee

turnover can destroy an organization when it is really bad. For example, the American firm Shea and Gould perished due to a high degree of conflict and turnover (Kondalkar, 2007). Conflict leads to absenteeism in some situations. When conflicts are destructive, some employees are likely to avoid the situation by a temporary respite. Employees take sick leave in order to avoid unwanted or conflicting situations (Runde & Flanagan, 2013). In some situations, employees are likely to be present but keep thinking about the conflict at work. This kind of presenteeism is worse than absenteeism because of the counterproductive behaviors associated with it (Runde & Flanagan, 2010). Hemp (2004) argues that presenteeism in a conflicting situation packs more profound effects than absenteeism in terms of productivity.

Conflicts can also lead to workplace violence when they are out of control. As cited by Runde and Flanagan (2013), a 1997 study by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health estimated that nearly one million workers are assaulted in various workplace violence related issues every year. These kind of instances could dent an organization's financial reserves. Conflicts are also time consuming. According to Eunson (2007), conflicting situations deserves lot of attention and time to solve. Similarly, Runde and Flanagan (2013) opine that when managers and other employees spend more time solving conflicts, productivity loiters and creativity suffers. Conflicts can have a negative effect on creativity. When people withhold information and thoughts, creativity and productivity will be under a sledge hammer. When group discussions are limited, it affects intellectual property and knowledge sharing. Conflicts can hinder strategic planning, because it requires rigorous debates. Debates and idea sharing becomes dull and listless when conflicts interfere (Shearouse, 2011). Amason and

Schweiger (1997) state that conflict avoidance can hamper effective and productive debates, which are essential for strategic planning and decision making.

Another drawback with conflicts is workplace bullying (De Dreu & Beersma, 2005). The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions revealed that 9% of the 21,500 employees studied were confronted with workplace bullying behaviors (Merllie & Paoli, 2001). Bullying may also lead to threats of physical violence. Threats of physical violence at the workplace usually come from co-workers and supervisors (Zapf et al., 1996). Bullying can result in dangerous health problems such as posttraumatic anxiety disorders and psychosomatic complaints (Einarsen, 1999). However, the downsides of conflicts are not inevitable. The outcome depends on the situation and conflict management styles. So far my discussion has focused on the basics of conflict and its consequences. I now want to consider some conflict management styles and approaches to use, or not use, when conflicts strike.

Conflict Management Styles and Strategies

Conflict cannot be totally eradicated from the workplace, nor would this be a desired outcome. Sometimes, conflict can be really helpful when decisions are sluggish. Conflict can help to expedite the decision making process. People possess different attitudes, and personalities which contribute toward conflicts. Silent psychological factions could find a battlefield when we have conflicts at workplace. It can act as an orifice to all pent-up pressures. Conflict management includes many strategies which are very fecund. Stress reduction, proper communication, control of negative emotions, problem solving, and understanding the position of each conflicting parties are few basics (Behfar, Peterson, Mannix, & Trochim 2008). Conflict management is an art where two

or more parties handle inconsistencies. According to Eunson (2007), conflict management is a powerful interpersonal skill which is essential to be an effective employee in this contemporary era. This indicates that conflict management is a must have weapon in the arsenal of an individual at workplace. Similarly, Runde and Flanagan (2013) state that conflict management is a core competency which every leader should possess in this cutthroat world. There are many ways in which people manage conflicts. According to De Dreu and Beersma (2005), the availability of conflict management styles are unlimited. Some of them are described in the following paragraphs.

The Dual Concern Theory

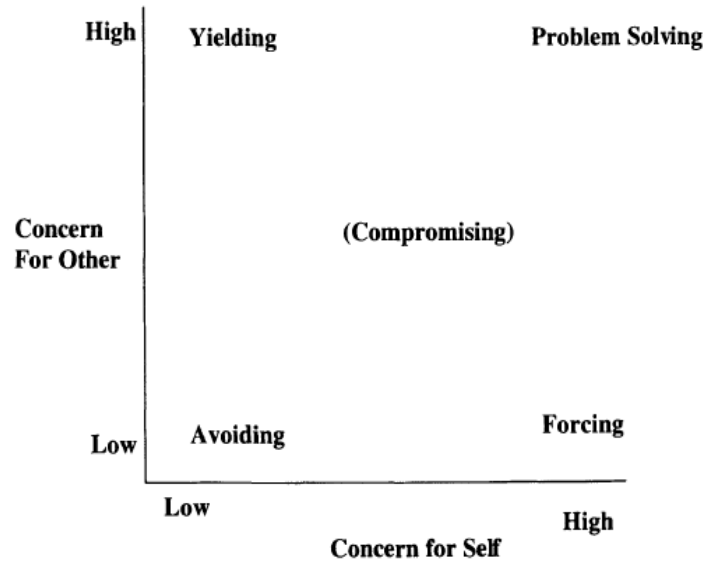
The Dual Concern Theory (De Dreu & Beersma, 2005; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Thomas, 1992) is one of the most popular and widely used conflict management theories. This theory explains two styles or bearings for plying conflicts: a win-win orientation or a win-lose orientation (McShane & Glinow, 2013). The labeling is different in different theories, but the core concepts are same (De Dreu & Beersma, 2005). The win-win orientation is the tendency of conflicting parties to be cooperative; to find reciprocally advantageous solutions to their disagreements, whereas the win-lose orientation is the tendency to resort to more discrepant solutions and emulous tendencies. (McShane & Glinow, 2013).

The Dual Concern theory is the foundation of a five-category conflict management taxonomy. The five categories are the function of two factors or axes (each ranging from decrepit to strong). One axis is the concern for self that is focused on pleasing one's own interest (assertiveness), and the other axis is the concern for others which is directed towards satisfying the other party's welfare (cooperativeness)

(McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). The two axes and the five categories of conflict management are depicted in Figure 1. Problem-solving (win-win orientation) also known as collaborating, forcing (win-lose orientation), avoiding, yielding, and compromising are the main types of conflict management approaches (De Dreu & Beersma, 2005; Eunson, 2007; McShane & Glinow, 2013; Runde & Flanagan, 2013).

People who apply problem solving when conflicts arise usually have high cooperativeness and high assertiveness, and thus exercise ingenious solutions where both parties benefit (Shearouse, 2011). In problem solving people usually exchange information regarding their preferences and priorities and also includes tradeoffs between important and unimportant issues (De Dreu & Beersma, 2005).

Collaborating or problem solving helps to build good team relationships since listening is the crux of it (Shearouse, 2011). Collaboration is the best tool when an individual's objective is to learn (Eunson, 2007). Collaboration requires a lot of imagination and consumes a lot of energy and time, but it is often used since it is capable of producing two winners at the same time (Byrnes & Carter, 2006). Similarly collaborating is not always possible when demands are plenty. There is a substantial danger with collaboration. Collaborating is not possible in some situations where time is paramount. Problem solving or collaborating are more stressful when conflicts are bad as the personal issues undermine trust in the other parties (Chung-Yan & Moeller, 2010). Sekaran (2000) states that people who are high on problem solving should be concerned about the use of organizational resources, as time and organizational resources are key in problem solving. Over use of problem solving makes an employee defuse responsibility (Kondalkar, 2007).



Theoretical representation of the five conflict management strategies as a function of concern for self and concern for other

Figure 1: *Conflict Management Styles as a Function of the Dual Concern Theory*

Retrieved from “A Theory-based Measure of Conflict Management Strategies in the Workplace,” by C.K.W. De Dreu, A. Everes, B. Beersma, E.S. Kluwer, and A. Nauta, 2001, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 22, p. 646.

On the other side, people who are not synergetic and highly assertive resort to forcing strategies that benefit their own needs and disregard the other party's benefits (win-lose orientation) (Fulle & Snyder, 2006; McShane & Glinow, 2013). Forcing is also known as directing and also as competing. Directing or competing works well when objectives and needs are lucidly stated (Shearouse, 2011). Forcing usually involves bluffs, threats, and persuasive arguments (De Dreu & Beersma, 2001). Competing is unproductive as it blindfolds individuals from learning other points of view (Fulle & Snyder, 2006). Competing comes in very handy when quick decisions are important and also to initiate disciplinary motions (Eunson, 2007). Competing should be used as a last resort as it may backfire in some situations. Use of power must be unilateral in competing when taking unpopular decisions like firing and cut backs (Kondalkar, 2007).

People who are neither assertive nor cooperative ignore and suppress conflicts all together. This style of conflict management is referred to as avoiding (McShane & Glinow, 2013). People who use this approach can be coined as avoiders, as they try to avoid conflicting situations altogether. Shearouse (2011) argues that fear is a significant reason which causes an individual to avoid conflicting situations. Avoiding is a better approach when issues are trivial or less important (Eunson, 2007). Avoidance is very helpful when additional information is required to corroborate the argument (Kondalkar, 2007). Similarly, avoiding leads to deadlocks and aggravates problems when they can be solved with simple talks. Hence, it is not fruitful in all situations. Avoidance can destroy team spirit and group cohesion when over used (Shearouse, 2007).

Individuals who are highly cooperative and unassertive resort to yielding conflict management strategies where they do not put any value on their own interests and

entirely submit to the other party's demands (Kondalkar, 2007; McShane & Glinow, 2013).

The fifth strategy is compromising and it is usually used by people who are moderate on both assertiveness and cooperativeness (De Dreu & Beersma, 2001; Eunson, 2007; Kondalkar, 2007; McShane & Glinow, 2010; Runde & Flanagan, 2013). This strategy involves finding a middle ground or suboptimal resolutions and unconfirmed promises and threats between the two conflicting parties.

As Thomas (1992) argues, individuals manage conflicts in many ways. Similarly, De Dreu and Beersma (2001) opine that the conflict management approaches or techniques which an individual can cull are countless. It brings us down to a question, what makes an individual select a particular conflict management strategy? In order to answer this, we need to consider a few factors which influence an individual's conflict management style. McShane and Glinow (2013) state that age, gender, culture, and other factors influence an individual's conflict management strategy, including culture.

What Is Culture?

When discussing culture, this research would be incomplete without Geert Hofstede's contributions. In other words, he is considered as the godfather of organizational culture studies. Hofstede (1984) proposed various dimensions of culture and coined them as Individualism versus Collectivism, Masculinity versus Femininity, Power Distance, and Uncertainty Avoidance. As a former employee of IBM, Hofstede collected huge amounts of data in the context of culture in organizations. His research is still considered as the most renowned with over 100,000 questionnaires in the field of cross-cultural research. Later, his cultural dimensions were updated with Long-Term

Orientation and Indulgence versus Restrained.

According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2001), culture is a collective programming of the mind that reflects in values, heroes, and rituals. McShane and Glinow (2013) state that culture acts as a source of conflict and also as a factor that influences conflict management strategy. Culture is thought of as an integrated pattern of knowledge, values, and behaviors of human beings that classifies religion, race, and social groups (Shearouse, 2011). Culture can be seen as a tool to understand people from various backgrounds in a better way, that is essential these days for good organizational health. There is a confusion between organizational culture and culture in general. Culture is broadly used term, whereas organizational culture refers to a particular organization's environment. According to Schein (1990), organizational culture can be understood through myths, values, and various other tangibles of an organization. Organizational culture can be sundered into many types. Market, Group, Rational, Adhocracy, Hierarchical, Developmental cultures, and so on (Cameron & Quinn, 2006; Dennison & Spreitzer, 1991). When it comes to comes to using the term culture in this paper, I intend to explore the role of an individual's wider, societal culture in influencing his or her conflict management style.

Individualistic culture emphasizes self-preservation and low interdependence. On the other hand, collectivistic societies underscore group values and also highlight collective good. In collectivistic cultures, group values take the center stage, whereas in individualist cultures, values of an individual takes the center stage. McShane and Glinow (2013), argue that people in highly collectivistic cultures are likely to opt avoiding compromising styles more than people in individualistic cultures.

Using the framework of Hofstede's five cultural dimensions (The Hofstede Center, 2014), I assume Indians are in the hybrid culture zone, whereas Americans fall into the individualistic group (The Hofstede Center, 2014). Collectivistic cultures usually emphasize the greater good and tend to sacrifice for the society as a whole (The Hofstede Center, 2014). On the other hand, individualistic cultures tend to have strong self-preservation tools (The Hofstede Center, 2014). In between these two dimensions, a new dimension jumps into the frame. This dimension can be coined as Hybrid culture, the one between collectivistic and individualistic cultures. Initially, I used to have a fabricated and distorted image which made me think that India has a strong collectivistic society ideology. But this belief changed due to Hofstede's research (The Hofstede Center, 2014). Surprisingly, Indians have a cultural score which falls between collectivism and individualism (The Hofstede Center, 2014). This could be because of the globalization factor. India has experienced many societal changes, such as increased individualism, as it has embraced capitalism to help it compete in the new global economy. India scored 48 on individualism and America scored 91 on individualism dimension. In contrast, the world average on the individualism dimension is 41 and China scored a 20, one of the lowest scores as it is a highly collectivistic society (The Hofstede Center, 2014). The Hofstede Center did not report Lebanese data in 2014, but it does in 2016, and Lebanon was more collectivistic than India, with a score of 40 on individualism (The Hofstede Center, 2016).

While India is in the middle in the individualism-collectivism dimension, it is a society high in power distance. The employees in countries with high power distance accept the fact that power is distributed unequally and that they must defer to their boss'

decisions. For example, India scored 77 on power distance and China, one of the highest countries on power distance, scored 80. America, on the other hand, scored 40 on power distance (The Hofstede Center, 2016). According to the Hofstede Center (2016):

India scores high on this dimension, 77, indicating an appreciation for hierarchy and a top-down structure in society and organizations. If one were to encapsulate the Indian attitude, one could use the following words and phrases : dependent on the boss or the power holder for direction, acceptance of un-equal rights between the power-privileged and those who are lesser down in the pecking order, immediate superiors accessible but one layer above less so, paternalistic leader, management directs, gives reason / meaning to ones work life and rewards in exchange for loyalty from employees. Real Power is centralized even though it may not appear to be and managers count on the obedience of their team members. Employees expect to be directed clearly as to their functions and what is expected of them. Control is familiar, even a psychological security, and attitude towards managers are formal even if one is on first name basis. Communication is top down and directive in its style and often feedback which is negative is never offered up the ladder (p. <https://geert-hofstede.com/india.html>).

Lebanon also scores high on power distance with a score of 75 (The Hofstede Center, 2016). Thus, Lebanon and India are culturally similar on these two dimensions.

Stress and Conflict

Stress is the anxious or threatening feeling that comes when we interpret or appraise a situation as being more than our psychological resources can adequately wield (Lazarus, 1999). Stress is a ubiquitous element. Stress can be seen in all shapes and sizes

(Cummer, 2010). When we experience a stressful event or a situation, we interpret the situation, which is technically known as a primary appraisal (Plotnik & Kouyoumdjian, 2011). Primary appraisals hold the key in stress and its outcome. In other words, primary appraisals act as a catalyst which triggers a particular action. According to White and Porth (2000), stress is a common factor which triggers the famous fight-flight response. Stress is a psychological stimulus which activates the fight-flight response (Plotnik & Kouyoumdjian, 2011). There are many sources of stress. The most important of them are money and work. Surprisingly, the overall cost of job stress is 300 billion dollars (Elkin, 2013). Regarding stress from job-related issues, conflict is one of the most important culprits. Job related stress can be seen as a double edge sword. According to Eunson (2007), balanced levels of stress can expedite task related processes and get the job done. Stress can cause some catastrophes and lead toward organizational collapse. Job stress and conflict are inseparable and there is a relationship between conflict and job stress which resembles meatballs and spaghetti. Conflict-related stress can lead toward low productivity, low levels of employee motivation, high turnover, and dented well-being (De Dreu & Beersma, 2005). Dijkstra et al (2005) reported a positive correlation between conflict stress and reduced levels of job satisfaction and well-being. Similarly, Giebels and Janssen (2005) found a positive correlation between conflict stress and emotional exhaustion and increase in employee turnover.

Hypotheses and Research Question

Hypothesis 1. Because Americans come from a more individualistic society with lower power distance, I assume that they will be more likely to embrace the two strategies that focus on the self, problem solving and forcing, compared to the other

strategies.

Hypothesis 2. Because Indians and Lebanese come from a more collectivistic societies with higher power distance, I assume that they will be more likely to embrace the two strategies that focus on the other, yielding and problem solving.

Hypothesis 3. While Americans, Indians, and Lebanese might embrace the problem solving strategy, I expect Americans to have a higher preference for the forcing strategy compared to Indians and Lebanese, because the Americans are more individualistic and lower in power distance.

Hypothesis 4. While Americans, Indians, and Lebanese might embrace the problem solving strategy, I expect Indians and Lebanese to have a higher preference for the yielding strategy compared to Americans, because they are more collectivistic and higher in power distance.

Research question. Will gender and country interact in predicting preferences for different conflict management styles? Gender roles are not the same in every country. For example, American women are more likely to seek help than the American men, because in America the masculine male is supposed to be a rugged individual who does not need help (Blazina & Watkins, 1996; Good & Wood, 1995; Mendoza & Cummings, 2001). On the other hand, Dasgupta and Warrier's (1996) found that Indian women are less reluctant to seek help than Indian men in order to protect their family's reputation. Galdas, Cheater, and Marshall (2007) found, in their study of cardiac chest pain, that men of Indian and Pakistani ancestry were more likely to seek help than men of United Kingdom ancestry. I am not sure how these differences in seeking help will relate to managing

conflict, but they could lead to some interesting interactions between gender and country that I would like to investigate.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

My goal was to enlist Indian adults who were fully employed. Through the help of family and friends, using the snowball technique, I was able to recruit 77 Indian participants. However, I eliminated one of the participants because he self-identified as “not employed, but looking.” Of the remaining 76 participants from India, 74% were men and 26% were women. Their average age was 38 years with a standard deviation of 12 years. Seventy-nine percent work 40 or more hours a week and 21% work less than 40 hours a week. The average tenure was 132 months with a standard deviation of 154 months. Ninety-three percent work for a for-profit organization and 7% work for a non-profit organization. The average organization has 8,730 employees with a standard deviation of 27,976. Ninety-two percent had male supervisors and 8% had female supervisors. The average age of the supervisors was 46 years with a standard deviation of 12 years.

For the Western and Middle Eastern samples, I used Sarah N. Sleiman-Haidar’s 2013 thesis data, with her full blessings. Most of her Western sample was from America, but some were from Canada or Europe. Through a similar snowball technique, she recruited 86 Western participants. However, I eliminated nine of the participants because they were not employed. Of the remaining 77 Western participants, 35.5% were men and 64.5% were women. Their average age was 31 years with a standards deviation of 11 years. Forty-eight percent work 40 or more hours a week and 42% work less than 40 hours a week. The average tenure was 46 months with a standard deviation of 82 months.

The average organization has 588 employees with a standard deviation of 1,990. She did not measure type of organization, supervisor sex or age. Thus, her Western sample was younger, more female, less tenured, and working for smaller organizations.

Most of her Middle-Eastern sample was from Lebanon, but some were from other Middle-Eastern countries. Through a similar snowball technique, she recruited 58 Middle-Eastern participants. However, I eliminated 18 of the participants because they were not employed. Of the remaining 40 Middle-Eastern participants, 50% were men and 50% were women. Their average age was 26 years with a standards deviation of 3 years. Fifty-one percent work 40 or more hours a week and 19% work less than 40 hours a week. The average tenure was 20 months with a standard deviation of 20 months. The average organization has 5,564 employees with a standard deviation of 22,304. She did not measure type of organization, supervisor sex or age. Thus, her Middle-Eastern sample was even younger and less tenured. It was also more female than the Indian sample. However, the organizations were larger than the Western organizations.

Measures

Conflict management styles. For the purpose of this study, I focused on how the participants handled conflicts with their supervisors. As Sleiman-Haidar (2013) did, I administered the Dutch Test for Conflict Handling (DUTCH) that was translated into English by De Dreu, Everes, Beersman, Kluwer, and Nauta (2001). This test, based on the dual concern theory, yields five scores for the five different conflict management styles: problem-solving, forcing, avoiding, yielding, and compromising. An example of a problem-solving item is, "I stand for my own and other's goals and interests." An example of a forcing item is, "I push my own point of view." An example of an avoiding

item is, "I avoid differences of opinion as much as possible." An example of a yielding item is, "I give in to the wishes of the other party." An example of a compromising item is, "I try to realize a middle-of-the-road solution." Each conflict management styles has four items, thus, the test is made up of 20 items. Participants rate each item from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree). The test can be found in Appendix A.

In De Dreu et al.'s (2001) study, the Cronbach coefficient alphas were .82 for problem-solving, .83 for forcing, .73 for yielding, and .73 for avoiding. They did not include compromising in this study. In a follow up study, De Dreu et al. (2001) obtained Cronbach coefficient alphas of .68 for problem solving, .66 for compromising, .70 for forcing, .65 for yielding, and .73 for avoiding. In Sleiman-Haidar's (2013) study, the internal consistency of all five dimensions, using Cronbach's coefficient alpha, were .77 for problem-solving, .75 for compromising, .73 for forcing, .74 for avoiding, and .66 for yielding. In my study, the Cronbach coefficient alphas were .77 for problem-solving, .67 for compromising, .57 for forcing, .54 for avoiding, and .52 for yielding. The reader will notice that the reliabilities in my study dropped from Sleiman-Haidar's (2013) study. This is because of the Indian part of the data set. When I analyzed the Cronbach coefficient alphas for the 76 working Indian participants, they were .76 for problem-solving, .54 for compromising, .49 for forcing, -0.07 for avoiding, and .33 for yielding. This is a major limitation to my study. I have to wonder if it would have helped to have provided a translation of the instruments.

Supervisory conflict frequency. To measure how often the participants experience conflict with their supervisors, I used the one question created by Sleiman-Haidar (2013), "How much supervisory conflict do you experience at work?" The

participants responded on a scale ranging from one (daily) to four (yearly, if at all). For the Indian participants, I created a fifth response of “never.” See Appendix B. However, I had to combine “yearly” and “never” from the Indian sample so it would conform to Sleiman-Haidar’s question.

Turnover intention. Similar to Sleiman-Haidar (2013), I used Colarelli’s (1984) three-item Intent to Quit Scale to measure the participants’ intention to quit. An example of an item is, “I frequently think of quitting my job at this organization.” The participants rated the three items from one (strongly disagree) to six (strongly agree). Saks (2006) found that this scale had an internal consistency of .82, using Cronbach’s coefficient alpha. In my study, it was .88. The scale can be seen in Appendix C.

Job stress. I used the Job Stress Scale developed by Parker and Decotiis (1983). It measures two types of job stress: time stress and anxiety. I only used the five anxiety items. One example is, “When I think about my job, I get a tight feeling in my chest.” I used a six-point Likert scale that ranged from one (strongly disagree) to six (strongly agree). Cronbach’s coefficient alpha was .45, indicating low internal consistency. However, by eliminating the fifth item, Cronbach’s coefficient alpha increased to .68. Therefore, I decided to only use the first four items to measure job stress in my study. The scale can be seen in Appendix D.

Demographic variables. Participants were asked to indicate their sex, age, nationality, and employment status (e.g., employed or unemployed) so I could eliminate unemployed or retired individuals. I also asked them how many years they have been employed at their current organization, how many employees work at their company, and the age and sex of their supervisor. These questions can be found in Appendix E.

Procedures

Prior to data collection, I had my study reviewed by Emporia State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix F). Part of this review included my consent form (see Appendix G). I ran into a problem with the IRB with my initial data collection plan. I had planned to collect data at two companies, one for-profit and one non-profit. The IRB asked me to get signed agreements from representatives of the two companies. However, the Indian HR representatives were extremely nervous about signing anything. Subsequently, I had to alter my data collection strategy to a snowball technique. I contacted my parents, aunt, uncle, cousins, and friends in India and they all agreed to pass on my survey to friends of theirs who were employed. The participants were free to say no if they were not interested. However, if they were interested, then my acquaintances showed them the informed consent letter so they would know more about the study, how their confidentiality would be protected, and their freedom to stop participating at any time. Instead of having them sign an informed consent document, I provided them with a letter that said they were consenting by reading the letter and agreeing to participate. My reason for doing so was based on Yancey and George's (2015) experiences collecting survey data in India. George found that many Indians were wary of being asked to sign something. It made them suspicious of the entire enterprise. The participants then received a survey and an envelope to place the survey in when complete. After my acquaintances collected the sealed envelopes, they passed them on to my mother who entered the data onto a spread sheet for me. She then emailed the data to me so that it could be cut and pasted into an SPSS data file for data analysis.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Main Hypotheses

My first hypothesis was that the Westerners would be more likely to embrace the two strategies that focus on the self, problem solving and forcing, compared to the other three strategies because they come from a more individualistic society with lower power distance. As can be seen in the Western columns of Table 1, Westerners most prefer problem solving followed by compromise, yielding, avoiding, and forcing. Thus, the Westerners take care of themselves when they are also taking care of their supervisor, perhaps in the spirit of reciprocity. However, the Westerners were unlikely to focus only on their own needs (forcing) when resolving conflicts with their supervisors. This went against my expectations. Thus, my first hypothesis does not appear to be supported. To test it statistically, I first created a concern-for-self variable (the average of problem solving and forcing) and a not-concern-for-self variable (the average of compromising, yielding, and avoiding). Then I compared the means with a paired t-test ($t(65) = 1.48, p > .05$). Although the Westerners scored higher on concern-for-self ($M = 4.20$) than on not-concern-for-self ($M = 4.09$), the difference was not significant.

An examination of the Middle-Eastern columns of Table 1 reveals that it is the Middle-Easterners who are the most likely to embrace a forcing strategy with their supervisor. For the Middle-Easterners, problem solving and compromising are the top two strategies, as they are for the Westerners and Indians, but forcing ranks third for them, ahead of yielding and avoiding, and it ranks last for the Westerners and Indians.

Table 1

Conflict Management Styles by Country

	Indian			Western			Middle-Eastern		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Problem-Solve	76	5.06	.66	68	4.67	.60	31	5.08	.67
Compromise	76	4.61	.73	69	4.27	.79	31	4.63	.85
Force	76	4.07	.88	68	3.75	.75	30	4.58	.83
Yield	76	4.52	.70	68	4.13	.72	30	4.23	.86
Avoid	76	4.50	.63	69	3.93	.82	32	3.94	.82

My second hypothesis was that the Indians and Middle-Easterners would be more likely to embrace the two strategies that focus on the other, yielding and problem solving, compared to the other three strategies because they come from more collectivistic societies with higher power distance. As can be seen in the Indian columns of Table 1, Indian preferences followed the same order as the Westerners: problem solving followed by compromise, yielding, avoiding, and forcing. Similar to the Westerners, Indians try to take care of themselves and their supervisor's needs. Indians are also more likely to yield or even avoid before forcing, as I expected. Thus, my second hypothesis appears to be somewhat supported for the Indians. To test it statistically, I first created a concern-for-others variable (the average of problem solving and yielding) and a not-concern-for-others variable (the average of compromising, forcing, and avoiding). Then I compared the means with a paired t-test ($t(75) = 6.14, p < .001$). The Indians scored significantly higher on concern-for-others ($M = 4.79$) than on not-concern-for-others ($M = 4.39$).

For the Middle-Easterners, on the other hand, Table 1 revealed that forcing was rated in third place, behind problem solving and compromise. However, when I examined the Middle Easterners on concern-for-others versus not-concern-for-others, they scored significantly higher on concern-for-others ($M = 4.67$) than on not-concern-for-others ($M = 4.39$) with a paired t-test ($t(26) = 3.63, p < .001$). An examination of Table 1 reveals that the Indians were lower on the not-concern-for-others variable because they do not like to force as much. The Middle Easterners were lower on the not-concern-for-others variable because they do not like to avoid as much. So my second hypothesis was supported, but the Indians and Middle Easterners arrived at the destination taking different paths.

My third hypothesis was that, compared to Indians and Middle-Easterners, the Westerners would prefer the forcing strategy because the Westerners are more individualistic and lower in power distance and more likely to focus on self needs. When I used an ANOVA to compare the three countries on forcing, I found a significant difference ($F(2, 171) = 7.25, p < .001$). Using a Tukey test, I discovered that the Middle-Easterners were significantly more likely to use forcing compared to the Indians or the Westerners. There was not a significant difference between the Indians and the Westerners. Thus, my hypothesis was not supported.

My fourth hypothesis was that, compared to the Westerners, Indians and Middle-Easterners would prefer the yielding strategy because they are more collectivistic and higher in power distance and more likely to focus on other people's needs. When I used an ANOVA to compare the three countries on forcing, I found a significant difference ($F(2, 171) = 2.92, p < .01$). Using a Tukey test, I discovered that the Indians were significantly more likely to use yielding compared to the Westerners. Thus, my hypothesis was supported for the Indians. The Middle-Easterners were in between the Indians and the Westerners, not significantly different from either one.

When I examined country differences on the other three conflict strategies, I uncovered significant differences. Even though every country rated problem solving as their most preferred method, there were differences ($F(2, 172) = 3.29, p < .001$). Using a Tukey test, I discovered that the Westerners were significantly lower on problem solving than the Indians or Middle-Easterners. Compromising was the second choice for every country, yet differences emerged ($F(2, 173) = 2.52, p < .05$). Using a Tukey test, I discovered that the Westerners were again significantly lower than the Indians and the

Middle-Easterners. One thing I took from these two findings is that the Westerners seemed to have a response bias. They had lower scores across the board.

Finally, I examined avoiding and again differences emerged ($F(2, 174) = 7.05, p < .001$). Using a Tukey test, I discovered that it was the Indians who were significantly higher than either the Middle-Easterners or the Westerners on avoiding conflict with their supervisors.

Research Question

I was curious about the interaction between gender and country in predicting preferences for different conflict management styles. Starting with the most popular and most beneficial conflict management style, problem solving, I ran a 3x2 ANOVA and found no interaction between nation and sex ($F(2, 168) = .45, p > .05$). Nor did I find a main effect for sex ($F(1, 168) = 1.80, p > .05$).

On the other hand, I did find a significant interaction between nation and sex for compromising ($F(2, 169) = 3.56, p < .05$), but I did not find a main effect for sex ($F(1, 169) = 1.65, p > .05$). As can be seen in Table 2, it is the Western men driving the interaction. Everyone seems to like compromising with their supervisor with the exception of the Western men. Perhaps this explains the gridlock in American politics?

I next examined yielding. I did not find a significant interaction between nation and sex ($F(2, 167) = 2.56, p > .05$), nor did I find a main effect for sex ($F(1, 167) = .001, p > .05$). Also, I failed to find a significant interaction between nation and sex for forcing ($F(2, 167) = .37, p > .05$), nor did I find a main effect for sex ($F(1, 167) = 3.57, p > .05$).

Table 2

Compromising by Country and Sex

	Men			Women		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Indian	56	4.66	.69	20	4.48	.83
Western	22	3.88	.71	46	4.40	.78
Middle-Eastern	15	4.57	.95	16	4.69	.78

Finally, I examined the least effective conflict management strategy, avoiding. While I did not find a significant interaction between nation and sex ($F(2, 170) = 2.77, p > .05$), I did find a main effect for sex ($F(1, 170) = 11.54, p < .001$). The men were less likely to avoid confrontations ($M = 3.89$) than the women ($M = 4.35$), at least on paper in a self-report survey. Interestingly, in the previous section I found that Indians were significantly higher than either the Middle-Easterners or the Westerners on avoiding conflict with their supervisors. However, in my Participants section, I noted that the Indian sample had a higher percentage of men compared to the Western and Middle-Eastern samples. As can be seen in Table 3, Indian men are more avoiding than the other men, while it is the Western women who are less avoiding than the other women.

Exploratory Findings

There were national differences in the amount of conflict people experience at work with their supervisor ($F(2, 188) = 6.68, p < .01$) and in their turnover intentions ($F(2, 188) = 6.68, p < .01$). The Middle-Eastern employees experience more conflict with their supervisors and have greater turnover intentions, while the Indian employees have the least amount of conflict with their supervisors and the lowest turnover intentions. The Westerners are in the middle. In the West ($r(73) = -0.42, p < .001$) and the Middle-East ($r(38) = -0.51, p < .001$) frequency of conflict correlates with turnover intentions, such that greater conflict is related to higher turnover intentions. However, in India, frequency of conflict is not related to turnover intention ($r(76) = .08, p < .01$). The Indian sample is older and more tenured than the Western and Middle-Eastern samples, which may have some bearing on these findings.

Table 3

Avoiding by Country and Sex

	Men			Women		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Indian	56	4.46	.66	20	4.61	.56
Western	22	3.74	.70	46	4.02	.87
Middle-Eastern	16	3.47	1.15	16	4.41	.88

As can be seen in Table 4, when there is more conflict with one's supervisor, there is more forcing and less avoiding, yielding, or problem solving. On the other hand, when there is more problem solving, yielding, avoiding, and compromising, turnover intentions are lower. In India, when job stress is high, there is more compromising with one's boss and less avoiding. Forcing appears to have fewer beneficial relationships.

I was interested in how these relationships differed by country. As can be seen in Table 5, forcing is not related to less conflict nor to lowered turnover intentions in any country. However, in all countries, problem solving is related to lower turnover intentions. In India, there are also benefits to compromise, yielding, and even avoiding. In the Middle-East, there are benefits to yielding.

In India, I was able to explore how the sex and age of the supervisors entered the equation. However, because I only found six female supervisors, I was unable to uncover any significant differences. On the other hand, I did find that the supervisor's age was related to yielding ($r(71) = -0.32, p < .01$) and forcing ($r(71) = -0.26, p < .05$). In other words, for Indian employees with older supervisors, yielding and forcing are used less often. The other conflict styles were not significantly related to supervisor age: problem solving ($r(71) = -0.20, p > .05$), compromising ($r(71) = .03, p > .05$), or avoiding ($r(71) = -0.13, p > .05$).

Finally, neither employee tenure nor size of organization were significantly related to conflict frequency or turnover intention in any country. Also, the examination of differences between for-profit and non-profit organizations did not yield any significant results because I had so few employees from the latter type of organization.

Table 4

Correlations between Conflict Styles and Conflict Frequency, Job Stress, and Turnover Intentions

	Conflict Frequency	Job Stress	Turnover
Problem-Solve	.18*	-0.07	-0.26**
Compromise	.11	.35**	-0.18*
Force	-0.14	.04	.06
Yield	.19*	.19	-0.25**
Avoid	.26**	-0.25*	-0.21**

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Note 1: On the conflict frequency variable a lower score equates to less conflict. Thus, a positive correlation indicates that when there is a lot of conflict, this conflict management style is not used much. Therefore, when there is a lot of conflict, the use of forcing increases and the other styles decrease.

Note 2: Data for the job stress variable was only collected for the Indian sample.

Table 5

*Correlations between Conflict Styles and Conflict Frequency and Turnover Intentions
by Country*

	Indian		Western		Middle-Eastern	
	Conflict	Turnover	Conflict	Turnover	Conflict	Turnover
Problem Solve	.41***	-0.31**	.04	-0.27*	-0.02	-0.24
Compro- mise	.16	-0.33**	.09	-0.11	.10	-0.25
Force	-0.04	.02	-0.17	.02	-0.02	-0.04
Yield	.20	-0.26*	.13	-0.10	.17	-0.33*
Avoid	.31**	.06	.07	.06	-0.02	-0.30

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Note 1: On the conflict frequency variable a lower score equates to less conflict. Thus, a positive correlation indicates that when there is a lot of conflict, this conflict management style is not used much. Therefore, when there is a lot of conflict, the use of forcing increases and the other styles decrease.

Note 2: Data for the job stress variable was only collected for the Indian sample.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Main Hypotheses

My first hypothesis was that Westerners would score higher on problem-solving and forcing when resolving conflicts with their supervisors compared to the other three conflict management strategies. My reasoning was based on the fact that the United States is an individualistic culture. It scores a 91 out of 100 on individualism on the Hofstede Centre website (2016). Both of the problem-solving and forcing strategies are high on concern for self. While the Westerners did use problem-solving the most, they used forcing the least. To make sense of this finding, I examined the United States' other cultural dimensions. According to the Hofstede Centre website (2016), the U.S. cultural profile is as follows: Individualism = 91, Indulgence = 68, Masculinity = 62, Uncertainty Avoidance = 46, Power Distance = 40, Long term Orientation = 26. Second highest on the list is indulgence. This dimension captures how well people can control their impulses and restrain themselves. Apparently, this is not a skill at which Americans excel. I would think this would make them more comfortable using a forcing strategy, as would their high masculinity score which captures their drive to compete and win, as would their low uncertainty avoidance because forcing can be a risky strategy, as would their low power distance because they would be less deferential to superiors, as would their low long term orientation because they would be less mindful of the long term ramifications of forcing the issue with their superior. I was surprised that Westerners did not use forcing. Perhaps forcing is simply an ineffective strategy that everyone stays away from. I will return to this idea later.

My second hypothesis was that Indians would be more likely adopt the problem solving or yielding strategies compared to the other three strategies. This was based on the fact that Indians are collectivistic (the opposite of individualistic) and high on power distance and these two strategies focus on concern for the other person. According to the Hofstede Centre website (2016), the Indian cultural profile is as follows: Power Distance = 77, Masculinity = 56, Long term Orientation = 51, Individualism = 48, Uncertainty Avoidance = 40, Indulgence = 26. From this list, I see that Indians are also low in indulgence, in other words, they are restrained. Thus, I was not surprised to find that the Indians used forcing the least and yielding ranked third, behind problem solving and compromise. Indians are slightly above average on masculinity and Runde and Flanagan (2013) noted that people who are a little assertive and a little cooperative are likely to choose compromising. In India, supervisors are highly influential and are seen as big-game-players, especially in government sector organizations. Subordinates are likely to show great deference in dealing with superiors. Consistent with this is the fact that the Indians were more likely to use the avoiding strategy than were the Westerners or the Middle Easterners.

For my third hypothesis, I assumed that Westerners would be more likely to go with the forcing strategy compared to Indians, but they did not. As mentioned above, both groups seldomly use forcing. However, I could no longer accept the idea that forcing is a strategy to be avoided regardless of one's culture because it was embraced by the Middle-Easterners. Forcing ranked third, behind problem solving and compromise, for them. According to the Hofstede Centre website (2016), the Lebanese cultural profile is as follows: Power Distance = 75, Masculinity = 65, Uncertainty Avoidance = 50,

Individualism = 40, Indulgence = 25, Long term Orientation = 14. At first glance, Lebanon resembles India. There is high power distance, low indulgence, and low individualism. Why would an employee who cares about social harmony, who is restrained, and who is respectful of authority engage in a conflictual winner-take-all strategy with his or her boss? Clearly there is more to this than culture. Sleiman-Haidar (2013), who is Lebanese, suggested in her study that the greater use of forcing in the Middle East could be reflective of poor business practices, rather than of culture. She notes that in Lebanon there is a great deal of workplace corruption. She writes:

If an employee's supervisor is not qualified to fill such a position and was hired mainly due to political reasons; employees may feel the need to impose their own point (force) rather than give in (yield) to the wishes of their supervisors.

Additionally, perhaps in Western organizations there are more procedures for dealing with conflict, giving supervisors the proper tools for conflict resolution and contributing to their subordinates' willingness to yield rather than force (p. 45).

For my fourth hypothesis, I assumed that Indians would be more likely to go with yielding strategy compared to Westerners and they did. Of the three cultural groups, the Indians yielded the most and the Westerners yielded the least. This fits with the cultural differences between India and the United States discussed above.

My fourth hypothesis was that, compared to the Westerners, Indians would resort to yielding, as they are more collectivistic and higher on power distance. Indians are also more restrained, less indulgent. As predicted, my Indian sample reported that they are more likely to yield when they collide with their supervisors. Yielding refers to a

complete remittance of one's own ideas and freedom (Eunson, 2007). As mentioned, one explanation for Indians' tendency to yield could be accounted for by power distance. As mentioned by Shearouse (2011), people in power are likely to have an upper hand when conflict arises. This becomes a deadly factor when culture is involved in the selection of a particular conflict management strategy. In highly stratified societies like India, power is vested in only a few members (Hofstede Centre, 2016). This kind of centralization of power may leave a subordinate helpless, which eventually leads toward relinquishment of his or her freedom when encountering a conflict situation with his or her supervisor. I believe that the role of power is prodigious in this scenario. I also opine that employees in India are inclined to yielding strategy when they collide with their supervisors. In other words, subordinates are more susceptible to power and politicking in Indian organizations. According to Morgan (2006), politicking was a huge factor in some American industrial organizations like Ford and GM till the mid-1980s. This kind of power play and politicking will compel subordinates to yield to their supervisors under pressure. This could be true in other nations as well. Kondalkar (2007) argues that the subordinates will have an upper hand in a conflict situation with their higher authorities if they affiliate with a stronger labor union. Putting this notion to a test may produce some surprising results. In future studies, it would be interesting to ask whether the participant belongs to a union or not.

According to Yukl (2012), a leader's selected style of leadership will have a significant impact on subordinates. In Javidan, Dorfman, de Luque, and House's (2006) study of global leadership patterns, one dimension South Asians stick out on is humane leadership. They define humane leadership as, "The degree to which a collective

encourages and rewards (and should encourage and reward) individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind to others” (p. 69). Indian leaders have a paternalistic attitude towards their workers, and like a parent they want to treat their workers with kindness (while expecting great deference, like a parent). Maybe for Indian workers it is easier to yield to a caring boss. According to Javidan, Dorfman, de Luque, and House, Middle-Easterner leaders score lower on humane leadership than South Asian leaders. However, so do Anglos. So this leadership variable does not fully explain the results.

Another leadership variable where Middle-Easterner leaders differ from South Asian and Anglo leaders is time orientation. Middle-Eastern leaders are lower (Javidan, Dorfman, de Luque, & House, 2006). Lebanese in general have a short horizon (Hofstede Centre, 2016). Perhaps this makes Middle-Eastern leaders and workers less focused on the consequences of conflict. Relatedly, Middle-Eastern leaders are lower on uncertainty avoidance compared to South Asian and Anglo leaders (Javidan, Dorfman, de Luque, & House, 2006), which could again lead to less focus on the consequences of conflict. However, Lebanese are slightly higher on uncertainty avoidance than Indians and Americans (Hofstede Centre, 2016), so the research is less consistent with uncertainty avoidance.

Research Question

My research question was whether national culture and gender interacted in predicting conflict management styles. Those two variables did interact in predicting who compromised and who did not. The Western men were the least likely to compromise (3.88). The mean score for everyone else was 4.4 or higher. This could be explained by gender differences in American culture. Fischer and Jansz (1995) found that emotions

such as anger, pride, and contempt are consistent with the masculine role in the West because they confirm power and status. Crying, on the other hand, is a male taboo in the West. The gender differences in crying are smaller in non-Western countries (Vingerhoets & Becht, 1996). Do Western subordinates yield more because their supervisors are more assertive? According to Javidan, Dorfman, de Luque, and House (2006), Anglo leaders are not more assertive than South Asian or Middle-Easterner leaders. However, Anglo leaders do have a higher performance orientation, which they define as:

The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards (and should encourage and reward) group members for performance improvement and excellence. In countries like the U.S. and Singapore that score high on this cultural practice, businesses are likely to emphasize training and development; in countries that score low, such as Russia and Greece, family and background count for more (p. 69).

American leaders are less likely to compromise on performance standards and perhaps their subordinates realize that. Also, as Sleiman-Haidar (2013) alluded to, perhaps South Asian and Middle-Eastern leaders owe their position less to competence and more to other factors which might lower their credibility in the eyes of their subordinates. In the Middle-East, this could lead to more subordinate forcing, but maybe Indians are more yielding given the high masculinity of Middle-Eastern culture (Hofstede Centre, 2016).

Exploratory Findings

The Middle-Eastern employees experienced more conflict with their supervisors and had greater turnover intentions; while the Indian employees had the least amount of conflict with their supervisors and the lowest turnover intentions. The Westerners are in the middle. According to Furlong (2005), older employees are not likely to opt for an aggressive approach when they collide with their supervisors. As noted in the Participants section, the Indian sample was older than the Western and Middle-Eastern samples. Thus, perhaps the Indian results have more as much to do with age as they do with culture.

Limitations

The quality of research is evaluated on two dimensions, external validity and internal validity. The former is concerned with the researcher's ability to generalize his or her findings. The data that I used for the Western and Middle-Eastern samples came from Sleiman-Haidar's (2013) research which relied on a snowball technique. Because she used many of her younger friends, her samples were relatively young. I also used a used snowball technique to collect data, but because I used many older family members my Indian sample was relatively older. In other words, none of the samples was representative of the population from which it was drawn. This limits the generalizations I can make about how Indian, Western, and Middle-Eastern employees resolve conflicts with their supervisors. My sample, similar to Sleiman-Haidar's, came from a small geographic region that does not represent the country, came from a small sample of companies that do not represent the country's industries, and so on. For example, my data was circumscribed to a single state in India. Since India is an eclectic nation, values of a south Indian will be different from a north Indian, and these values will hold the key in

some situations. This was a significant limitation.

Speaking of my use of the snowball technique, right from the word go, my research ran into many barricades. The problems got aggravated at the commencement of the data collection phase. For the Indian sample, I had planned to compare two Indian companies, one for profit and one not for profit, but due to the distrustful nature of Indian HR managers, I had no other choice but to use the snowball technique. I contacted the HR managers in order to secure an approval letter. The HR managers expressed some aimless doubts, many which struck me as foolhardy. Some wanted to know my age. Some wanted to know my opinion about their organization, and so on. One HR manager got completely flabbergasted and another manager got exasperated at the sound of conflict management. Similarly, a few managers assented to participate, but turned greedy and asked me to share the results only with them. I had to decline. All in all, situational constraints demanded me to come up with a different research method.

The internal validity of a study concerns the strength of causal relationships. The biggest limitation to my study's internal validity was its correlational design. With survey research, one cannot make causal inferences. For example, employees who use forcing experience more conflict with their supervisors, but does the greater conflict induce more forcing, does the forcing induce more conflict, or is there a third variable that causes both? There is no way for me to know without conducting an experiment.

Another threat to my study's internal validity was the quality of the Indian data. The Indian participants had a few problems completing the surveys. Some of the participants had not completed college, because many government jobs are set aside for protected cast members. On the other hand, private sector industries are not required to

offer jobs for the protected cast members. Participation of highly educated employees from both the public and private sector industries is massively limited. Because the survey was in English, I wonder how many of the participants fully understood the questions.

Relatedly, some questions may not have been appropriate in the given context. Reading between the lines and the usage of idioms is not a norm in India. The stress scale, for example, had a few questions which require a grasp of English idioms. Indians do not use idioms either colloquially or formally. This could have resulted in some distortions. At the same time, the questionnaire which was administered in US English, not in British English. US English is a whole lot different than British English. Though many languages are spoken in India, British English is the official language. Due to these minor variations, people might have had some difficulties in getting the questions right. This might explain why the internal consistency of the conflict management scales was lower for the Indian samples than they were for the other two samples. Perhaps offering the survey in the Telugu language would have delivered the questions more clearly, especially to the less educated employees.

Practical Implications

This research did bring some important issues to attention. In order to explore some new cultural aspects of India, organizations should offer a supportive hand for a better outcome. I also think that the role of power, cast, and politicking are hidden factors in the selection of conflict management strategies which needs some attention. One thing is lucid that the Indians, Westerners, and Middle-Easterners prefer problem-solving and compromising respectively, despite of age, gender, and their organizational designation.

To take this further, recruiting 100 participants from private sector organizations and 100 employees from public sector organizations from both the north and the south parts of India may yield some surprising results. It would also be interesting to explore the role of self-serving bias in the life cycle of conflict management. It would also be interesting to collect data from profit and non-profit organizations in America.

When conflicts are handled properly, they usually produce some positive outcomes. On the other hand, conflicts are capable of inflicting pain and damage or absolute annihilation if not handled correctly. Many companies like IBM and HP have a specially built department whose objective is to encourage conflicts. This is a very handy tool when dissension is treated as a taboo. At the same time, conflict creation should target tasks rather individuals. In other words, designing positive or functional conflicts will lead toward innovation and better communication systems. Similarly, organizations should understand the importance of diversity to have a better grip on conflicts and their structure from an individual's point of view. Likewise, understanding their organizational culture enables an organization to manage conflicts effectively. For example, see Robbins and Judge (2013), Shearouse (2011), Kondalkar (2007).

As far as I'm concerned, public sector Indian organizations should accept the fact that more bottom-up communication is essential for a better organizational health. Similarly, allocation of jobs for a protected group should be terminated immediately. There is a need for an espousal of a strong affirmative action doctrine; similar to the EEO of the US. In cultures like India, the role of a negotiator in a conflict situation is very crucial, since bottom-up communication is strictly prohibited. There are many approaches to manage conflicts as a negotiator or a manager. Some of the widely used approaches are

cooldown, Warner's style model, Aronoff and Wilson's style model (Aronoff & Wilson, 1985; Eunson, 2007; Runde & Flanagan, 2008; Shearouse, 2011, Warner, 2000). Finally, Indian organizations need organizational change; a change for the collective good.

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Appendix A
Conflict Management Styles

Conflict Management Styles

The following 20 items describe ways people tend to resolve conflicts with other people. Please indicate how well each statement reflects the way you tend to act in a conflict with your immediate SUPERVISOR.

1. I give in to the wishes of the other party

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

2. I try to realize a middle-of-the-road solution

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

3. I push my own point of view

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

4. I examine issues until I find a solution that really satisfies me and the other party

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

5. I avoid confrontation about our differences

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

6. I concur with the other party

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

7. I emphasize that we have to find a compromise solution

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

8. I search for gains

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

9. I stand for my own and other's goals and interests

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

10. I avoid differences of opinion as much as possible

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

11. I try to accommodate the other party

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

12. I insist we both give in a little

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

13. I fight for a good outcome for myself

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

14. I examine ideas from both sides to find a mutually optimal solution

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

15. I try to make differences loom less severe

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

16. I adapt to the parties' goals and interests

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

17. I strive whenever possible towards a fifty-fifty compromise

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

18. I do everything to win

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

19. I work out a solution that serves my own as well as other's interests as good as possible

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

20. I try to avoid a confrontation with the other party.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

Appendix B

Supervisory Conflict Frequency

Supervisory Conflict Frequency

How much Supervisory conflict do you experience at work?

Daily Weekly Monthly Yearly, if at all

Appendix C
Turnover Intention

Turnover Intention Scale

Please indicate the extent to which you either agree or disagree with the following three items.

I frequently think of quitting my job at this organization.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

I am planning to search for a new job during the next 12 months.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

If I have my own way, I will not be working for this organization one year from now.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

Appendix D

Job Stress Scale

Job Stress Scale

Please indicate the extent to which you either agree or disagree with the following five items.

I have felt fidgety or nervous as a result of my job.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

My job gets to me more than it should.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

There are lots of times when my job drives me right up the wall.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

Sometimes when I think about my job I get a tight feeling in my chest.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

I feel guilty when I take time off from my job.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

Appendix E
Demographic Variables

Demographic Variables

Are you male or female? *circle one*

Male

Female

How old are you? _____

What is your country of nationality?

Country: _____

Which of the following categories best describes your employment status? *circle one*

Employed, working 139 hours per week

Employed, working 40 or more hours per week

Not employed, looking for work

Not employed, NOT looking for work

Retired

Disabled, not able to work

How long have you been working for your current employer? _____

(Example: 3 years, or 4 months)

About how many employees work at your company? _____

Approximately how old is your supervisor? _____

Is your supervisor a male or a female? *circle one*

Male

Female

Appendix F

Institutional Review Board Approval

**EMPORIA STATE
UNIVERSITY**
 GRADUATE SCHOOL AND
 DISTANCE EDUCATION

Research and Grants Center
 Campus Box 4003
 1 Kellogg Circle
 Emporia, Kansas 66801-5415
 820-341-5351
 820-341-5909 fax
www.emporia.edu/research

February 2, 2016

Venkata Pavan Chelikani
 Psychology
 3500 SW 29th Street, Warren House, Apt. 79
 Topeka, KS 66614

Dear Mr. Chelikani:

Your application for approval to use human subjects has been reviewed. I am pleased to inform you that your application was approved and you may begin your research as outlined in your application materials. Please reference the protocol number below when corresponding about this research study.

Title	How Culture Influences Conflict Management Styles
Protocol ID Number	16044
Type of Review	Expedited
Time Period	January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2016

If it is necessary to conduct research with subjects past this expiration date, it will be necessary to submit a request for a time extension. If the time period is longer than one year, you must submit an annual update. If there are any modifications to the original approved protocol, such as changes in survey instruments, changes in procedures, or changes to possible risks to subjects, you must submit a request for approval for modifications. The above requests should be submitted on the form Request for Time Extension, Annual Update, or Modification to Research Protocol. This form is available at www.emporia.edu/research/irb.html.

Requests for extensions should be submitted at least 30 days before the expiration date. Annual updates should be submitted within 30 days after each 12-month period. Modifications should be submitted as soon as it becomes evident that changes have occurred or will need to be made.

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I wish you success with your research project. If I can help you in any way, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

John Barnett

Dr. John Barnett
 Chair, Institutional Review Board

pf

cc: George Yancey

Appendix G

Informed Consent Cover Letter

Informed Consent

This research intends to identify whether nationality (being Indian versus being American) and gender (being male versus being female) have any effects on the individual's conflict management orientation. A 20-item questionnaire is to be answered by participants. It will take participants approximately ten minutes to fill out the survey.

You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time, and that if you do withdraw from the study, you will not be subjected to reprimand or any other form of reproach. Likewise, if you choose not to participate, you will not be subjected to reprimand or any other form of reproach.

There are no risks in participating in the study and the questions are general statements that are not expected to generate any discomforts to participants.

This study will help provide empirical evidence about the various conflict management strategies used amongst Indian and American employees, and amongst men and women. Such findings can be used to enhance conflict resolution when such diverse individuals are expected to work together and can provide guidelines for conflict-management training in the work-place.

This questionnaire will be anonymous: you are not required to disclose information about your name, only your gender and nationality.

For any inquiries concerning the procedures and an explanation of the research findings, please contact Pavan Chelikani by email on the following addresses:

vchelika@g.emporia.edu or pavannishantleo@gmail.com.

Pavan Chelikani

I, Pavan Chelikani, hereby submit this thesis to Emporia State University as partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree. I agree that the Library of the University may make it available for use in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I further agree that quoting, photocopying, or other reproduction of this document is allowed for private study, scholarship (including teaching) and research purposes of a nonprofit nature. No copying which involves potential financial gain will be allowed without written permission of the author.

Signature of Author

April 6, 2016

Date

How Culture Influences Conflict Management Styles
Title of Thesis

Signature of Graduate Office Staff Member

Date Received