

[03]

**Exploring the Predictive Power of Personal Demographic Factors on Conflict Management Styles:  
A Study of Bank Employees in the Western Province in Sri Lanka**

---

*Chathurangi, T. D. N. and Padmasiri, W. D. T.*

---

**Abstract**

*The aim of this research was to identify the influence of personal demographic variables on conflict management styles. It is necessary to identify the factors that influence individual's conflict management styles to improve work place relations and productivity of individuals, but very few attempts have been made to find out the factors influencing the conflict management styles in Sri Lanka. In this present study, 161 respondents who were randomly selected from various banks in the western province were analyzed. The data obtained from the returned questionnaires were analyzed using the percentage distribution, mean, Correlation, Chi-square, T-test and One-way ANOVA. Analyses of the data indicated that only the gender has a significant influence on the conflict management styles of the bank employees. The findings further revealed that no significant difference was found between males and females. Moreover, no significant difference was found between the age groups. However,, there was significant difference between Christians and Hindus in preferring the collaborating style. Similarly, there was significant difference between married and unmarried employees on the competing style. Further, educational qualification also has significant difference on the competing style. Work experience has significantly differed in the compromising style.*

**Keywords:** Conflict Management Styles, Demographic variables, Collaborating style, Competing style, Compromising style

**Introduction**

Conflict is inevitable among humans (Rahim, et al., 2001) and is a natural, day by day phenomenon in all sectors irrespectively (Vokic and Sontor, 2010). It is an important concept in modern management and conflict is often inevitable whenever people work together (Brahnam et al., 2005). The term *Conflict* refers to perceived incompatibilities resulting typically from some form of interferences or opposition. For any organization to be effective and efficient in achieving its goals, the people in the organization need to have a shared vision of what they are striving to achieve, as well as clear objectives for each team or department and individual.

The definition of conflict management as defined by Wikipedia refers, “to the long-term management of intractable conflicts. It is the label for the variety of ways by which people handle grievances, standing up for what they consider to be right and against what they consider being wrong” (Wikipedia, 2007). “Conflict is the perception of differences of interests among people” (Thompson, 1998, p. 4). Conflict is definitely one of the main organizational phenomena (Rahim, et al., 2001). Therefore, all members of any organization need to have ways of keeping conflict to a minimum and of solving problems caused by conflict, before conflict becomes a major obstacle to work. This could happen to any organization whether it is a Non-Government Organization (NGO) a CBO, a political party, a business or even a government.

Conflict management is the process of planning to avoid conflict where possible and organizing to resolve conflict where it does happen, as rapidly and smoothly as possible. *Conflict management involves designing effective strategies to minimize the dysfunctions of conflict and enhancing the constructive functions of conflict in order to enhance learning and effectiveness of an organization* (Rahim, et al., 2001, p. 76). The ability to manage conflict is probably one of the most important social skills an individual can possess. Conflict is often considered as one of the negative factors. For many decades, managers had been taught to view conflict as a negative force. However, conflict can have constructive as well as destructive consequences.

The model of conflict management styles proposed by Rahim (1983) has been used across the personal demographic variables such as Age, Gender, Religion, Marital status and Educational qualification. Further, Rahim proposed the conflict management styles such as competing, collaborating, accommodating, avoiding and compromising (Rahim, 1983 as cited in Chan et al, 2006). These conflict management styles are basically identified based on two dimensions; cooperativeness (the degree to which one party attempts to satisfy the other party's concerns) and assertiveness (the degree to which one party attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns). In this study, personal demographic factors on conflict management are discussed based on the Rahim model.

### **Research Problem**

In spite of the fact that these studies have produced an impressive literature on the influence of personal demographic variables on conflict management styles, there are deficiencies, and these deficiencies have impeded the further development of research in this context. Moreover, in Sri Lanka, researchers could not find any reported evidences in this context. These facts lead –to the research problem focused on this study which is defining the influence of personal demographic variables (such as Age, Gender, Educational level, Marital satisfaction and Religion) on conflict management styles. Therefore, the problem of this research is to identify whether the personal demographic variables have any influence on conflict management styles.

### **Objectives of the study**

The main objective of this research is to identify the significant influence of the personal demographical variables on conflict management styles. Then, the specific objectives of the study are;

1. To identify whether male and female employees use the same conflict management styles.
2. To identify whether younger employees and older employees use the same conflict management styles.
3. To identify whether employees differ in using conflict management styles based on their religion.
4. To identify whether married and unmarried employees differ in using conflict management styles.
5. To identify whether employees with high education level and those with low education level differ in using conflict management styles.

## Literature Review

### *Conflict Management Styles*

The most utilized and acknowledged model for conflict management was developed by Thomas and Kilman in 1974 and Rahim and Bonoma in 1979. They developed the conflict management styles based on the work of Blake and Mouton from 1964. This model consists of five styles such as avoiding, competing (dominating), accommodating (obliging), collaborating (integrating), and compromising, determined by two dimensions. The two dimensions were labeled by Rahim and Bonoma in 1979 as “concern for self” and “concern for others”. However, Thomas and Kilman (1974 in Brahnam et al., 2005) labeled them as “assertiveness” and “cooperativeness”. The summary of the main characteristics of the five conflict management styles are given below.

#### Avoiding

- Low concern for self and low concern for others; unassertive and uncooperative personality
- Lose-lose outcome (because both parties refrain from communicating their needs, so neither has any needs met)
- The desire to withdraw from the conflict situation or suppress the conflict
- Withdrawal behavior, postponement, disengagement from conflict, hiding disagreement, sidestepping
- The likely outcome is that the conflict remains unresolved
- Might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue until a later or better time, or, ostrich-like, simply withdrawing from a threatening situation (Vokic & Sontor, 2010)

#### Competing (dominating)

- High concern for self and low concern for others; assertive and uncooperative personality
- Win-lose outcome (because one of the parties in conflict is aggressive and attempts to make sure that only their needs are met)
- Drive to maximize individual gain even at the expense of others (forcing one’s viewpoint at the expense of others); a desire to satisfy one’s interests, regardless of the impact on the other party to the conflict
- A power-oriented mode, in which one uses whatever powers seem appropriate to win one’s position, including the ability to argue, one’s rank, one’s economic sanctions, or forcing behavior if necessary
- Individuals “stand up for their rights”, defend a position which they believe is correct, or simply want to win (Vokic & Sontor, 2010)

#### Accommodating (Obligating)

- Low concern for self and high concern for others; unassertive and cooperative personality
- Lose-win outcome
- A self-sacrifice style (sacrifice of self-interests to satisfy the needs of others)
- Willingness of one party in a conflict to place the opponent’s interests above his or her own; attitudes to accommodate and accept opponent’s wishes
- Individuals seek consent and approval, and are eager to be helpful and supportive of others

- Might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person's order when one would prefer not to, or yielding to another's point of view (Vokic & Sontor, 2010)

#### Compromising

- Moderate/intermediate concern for both self and others; medium assertive and cooperative personality (midpoint between cooperativeness and assertiveness)
- Associated with give-and-take or sharing the search for a middle-ground solution
- No-win/no-lose outcome (a middle ground in solving conflict where both parties would "give something" in order to "take something")
- Both parties give up something to reach a mutually acceptable solution which prevents them from meeting all of their needs (individuals try to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution, which partially satisfies both parties)
- Might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position (Vokic & Sontor, 2010)

#### Collaborating (integrating)

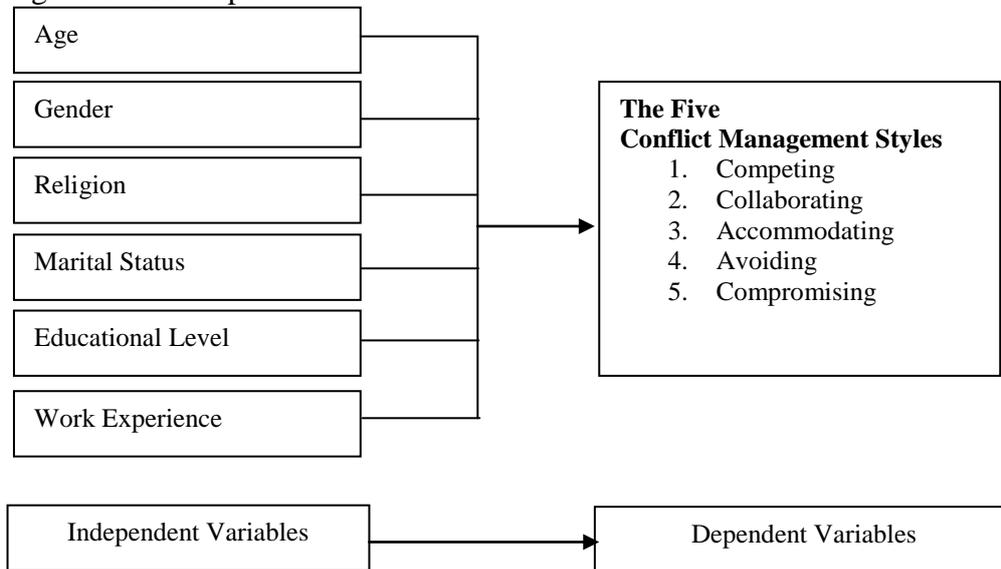
- High concern for self and high concern for others; collaboration between parties; assertive and cooperative personality
- Win-win outcome (interaction with others in a win-win manner)
- Drive towards constructing solutions to conflict that meet the needs of all parties involved (each party in a conflict desires to satisfy fully the concerns of all parties); attempt to work with the other person to find some solution which fully satisfies the concerns of both persons (digging into an issue to identify the underlying concerns of the two individuals and to find an alternative which meets both sets of concerns)
- Individuals are open, exchange information, examine differences between parties in order to reach a solution acceptable to both parties, and show openness to each other
- Might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights, concluding to resolve some condition which would otherwise have opponents competing for resources, or confronting and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem
- Interested in preserving longstanding business relationships (Vokic & Sontor, 2010)

#### ***Demographic Factors on Conflict Management Style***

There are different research studies done by different researchers on the topic of demographic factors on conflict management styles. Rosenthal & Hautaluoma in 1988, McKenna & Richardson in 1995, Sorenson, Hawkins & Sorenson in 1995, Brewer, Mitchell & Weber in 2002, Pinto & Ferrer in 2002, Cetin & Hacifazlioglu in 2004, Brahnham and others in 2005, Chan and others in 2006 and Havenga in 2006 studied the conflict management styles and gender. Age and conflict management styles were examined by McKenna & Richardson (1995), Pinto & Ferrer (2002), Cetin & Hacifazlioglu (2004) and Havenga (2006). Pinto & Ferrer in 2002 studied the education and conflict management styles. Hierarchical level and conflict management were investigated by Cornille, Pestle & Vanwy (1999) and Brewer, Mitchell & Weber (2002). Pinto & Ferrer in 2002 studied the marital status and conflict management styles. Drory & Ritov in 1997, Pinto & Ferrer in 2002 and Cetin & Hacifazlioglu in 2004 studied experiences and conflict management styles. There are few researchers who studied the professions and conflict management styles (McKenna & Richardson, 1995; Cornille, Pestle & Vanwy, 1999; Goodwin, 2002; Hignite, Margavio & Chin, 2002; Cetin & Hacifazlioglu, 2004). Personality and conflict management were studied by Jones & White (1985), King & Miles (1990), Haferkamp (1991), Earnest & McCaslin

(1994), Sorenson, Hawkins & Sorenson (1995), Antonioni (1998) and Moberg (2001). Rosenthal & Hautaluoma in 1988, Weider-Hatfield & Hatfield in 1995, Drory & Ritov in 1997 and Rahim, Antonioni & Psenicka in 2001 studied opponent's power and conflict management styles. Group diversity and conflict management styles were studied by Cox, Lobel & McLeod (1991). Lee Agee & Kabasakal in 1993, McKenna in 1995, McKenna & Richardson in 1995, Elsayed-Ekhouly & Buda in 1996, Morris others in 1998 and Kozan in 2002 examined the culture and subculture with conflict management styles. Based on the research question, the conceptual model is given in Figure 01.

Figure 01: Conceptual Framework



### Method

In this research, the researchers have identified the influence of age, gender, marital status, educational level, and religion and work experience on the conflict management styles. Further, the researcher has selected the five conflict management styles namely competing, collaborating, accommodating, avoiding and compromising. Here, these five conflict management styles are the *Dependent variables* and the personal demographical variables such as age, gender, religion, marital status, educational level and work experience are the *Predictor variables*.

The sample was derived from the six selected banks in the Western province in Sri Lanka and simple random sampling method has been adopted to select the employees from these six banks. The bank employees were solicited to complete the questionnaire. The resultant response rate of usable questionnaires was 92% (N=175) which can be considered high, taking into account that low response rates are rather common in undergraduate researches. The data necessary for this study was collected through survey questionnaires. The questionnaire was consisted of close – ended questions and was divided into two parts. In the first part, respondents were asked to provide his/ her personal data such as age, gender and the like. These data or variables were measured by using the interval scales. In the second part, the questionnaire consisted of questions relating to the conflict management styles of the individuals. These five styles of managing interpersonal conflict were measured with fifteen questions developed by the researchers. This is done on a 5-point Likert-scale. The main method of analysis was statistical techniques. Among the statistical techniques, average, percentage, correlation, regression and co-efficient of correlation were used.

## Results

### *Individual's dominant style of Interpersonal Conflict Management*

Generally individuals have preferences among the five conflict management styles. Although individuals have a predominant style of conflict resolution, according to the situations, they prefer one or more than one conflict management styles. In this research, each and every respondent's dominant conflict management style was identified using the score given in the questionnaire which is presented in Table 01.

Table 1: Individual Dominant Style of Conflict Management

Dominant Styles of Respondents	Respondents	
	N	Percentage
Competing Style	43	26.7%
Collaborating Style	65	40.4%
Avoiding Style	18	11.2%
Accommodating Style	22	13.7%
Compromising Style	13	8.1%
Total	161	100%

Source: Survey Data

Table 01 depicts that most of the banking employees regardless gender, age, religion, marital status, educational qualification and work experiences, have preferred the collaborating style (40.4%). 43 respondents have preferred the competing style with the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest percentage of 26.7%. The dominant style of 13.7% and 11.2% of employees is accommodating and avoiding respectively. Only 8.1% respondents prefer the compromising style.

Table 02 depicts the output of the Pearson's correlation, Spearman's rank correlation and chi – square test.

Table 02: Correlation and Chi-square Values for Personal Demographic Factors

Personal Demographic Variables	Pearson's correlation		Spearman's Rank Correlation		Chi - Square	
	Value	Sig.	Value	Sig.	Value	Sig.
Religion	0.085	0.282	-	-	-	-
Marital Status	-0.055	0.487	-	-	-	-
Edu. Qualification	-0.068	0.390	-	-	-	-
Age	-	-	-0.41	0.604	-	-
Work Experience	-	-	-0.035	0.656	-	-
Gender	-	-	-	-	11.484	0.001**

\*\* Chi-square value is significant at the 0.05 level. (2-tailed)

As depicted in Table 02, gender has statistically a significant influence on the conflict management styles. The Chi-square value of gender differences on the conflict management styles is 11.484 and it is significant at the 0.05 level (Sig. = 0.001). However, the other demographic factors do not have statistically significant influence on the conflict management styles. The correlation value of religion is 0.085 with the significant value of 0.282 (Sig.>0.05). Marital status and educational qualification have negative correlation and their significant values are 0.487 and 0.390 respectively (Sig. >0.05). Similarly, Spearman's rank correlations of age and work experience also have negative values and their significant values are 0.604 and 0.656 respectively (Sig.>0.05). It can, therefore, be concluded that the personal demographic variables have no significant influence on the conflict management

styles except the gender variable. Only gender has statistically a significant influence on conflict management styles.

T-test was carried out to find out whether there were any significant difference in the conflict management styles between males and females. By comparing the different conflict management styles against the background variable gender, the following results were achieved in Table 03.

Table 03: T – Test for Conflict Management Styles by Gender

Conflict Management Styles	Independent Samples Test(95% Confidence Interval of the Difference)	
	T - Value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Competing Style	0.853	0.399
Collaborating Style	0.294	0.770
Avoiding Style	-1.180	0.255
Accommodating Style	0.261	0.797
Compromising Style	1.112	0.290

Independent samples t-test revealed that there was no significant difference between males and females’ conflict management styles, at 0.05 significant levels.

A series of one-way ANOVA was carried out to determine whether the conflict management styles (dependent variable) differed in terms of their biographical variables (Age, Religion, Marital Status, Educational Qualifications and Work experience).

Table 04: ANOVA of Age Group for Conflict Management Styles

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Competing Style	Between Groups	9.982	2	4.991	1.327	.277
	Within Groups	150.483	40	3.762		
	Total	160.465	42			
Collaborating Style	Between Groups	1.306	2	.653	.365	.695
	Within Groups	110.847	62	1.788		
	Total	112.154	64			
Avoiding Style	Between Groups	19.143	2	9.571	2.359	.129
	Within Groups	60.857	15	4.057		
	Total	80.000	17			
Accommodating Style	Between Groups	5.655	2	2.828	1.362	.280
	Within Groups	39.436	19	2.076		
	Total	45.091	21			
Compromising Style	Between Groups	14.103	2	7.051	1.923	.196
	Within Groups	36.667	10	3.667		
	Total	50.769	12			

Table 04 depicts the ANOVA with respect to the conflict management styles based on the age of respondents. The significance level of the F-test for all the five conflict management styles indicates that there is no statistically significance difference (Sig.>0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that all five of the conflict management styles are used to the same extent, when measured in terms of a significant difference, by all age groups.

However, the younger age group (20-35 years) and older age group (>50 years) were found to be using the accommodating style with the mean values of 13.692 and 14.667 respectively, while the middle age employees were found to be using the collaborating style (M = 13.167).

Table 05: ANOVA of Religious Group for Conflict Management styles

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Competing Style	Between Groups	.186	1	.186	.048	.828
	Within Groups	160.279	41	3.909		
	Total	160.465	42			
Collaborating Style	Between Groups	11.635	1	11.635	7.292	.009
	Within Groups	100.519	63	1.596		
	Total	112.154	64			
Avoiding Style	Between Groups	8.500	2	4.250	.892	.431
	Within Groups	71.500	15	4.767		
	Total	80.000	17			
Accommodating Style	Between Groups	6.313	1	6.313	3.256	.086
	Within Groups	38.778	20	1.939		
	Total	45.091	21			
Compromising Style	Between Groups	3.894	1	3.894	.914	.360
	Within Groups	46.875	11	4.261		
	Total	50.769	12			

The results with respect to the conflict management styles based on the religion are shown in the above table. The results clearly indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in the religion variable for the collaborating style, since the significant value of the F-test is 0.009 (F=7.292, Sig. <0.05). Further, based on the descriptive, it is evident that Hindus (M=13.67) prefer the collaborating style more than the Christians (M=12.62).

Table 6: ANOVA of Marital Status for Conflict Management Styles

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Competing Style	Between Groups	24.225	2	12.113	3.556	.038
	Within Groups	136.240	40	3.406		
	Total	160.465	42			
Collaborating Style	Between Groups	.874	1	.874	.495	.484
	Within Groups	111.279	63	1.766		
	Total	112.154	64			
Avoiding Style	Between Groups	4.225	1	4.225	.892	.359
	Within Groups	75.775	16	4.736		
	Total	80.000	17			
Accommodating Style	Between Groups	7.782	2	3.891	1.981	.165
	Within Groups	37.309	19	1.964		
	Total	45.091	21			
Compromising Style	Between Groups	4.069	1	4.069	.958	.349
	Within Groups	46.700	11	4.245		
	Total	50.769	12			

The results depicted in Table 6 shows the ANOVA of marital status for the conflict management styles. The results clearly reveal that, there is a statistically significant difference in marital status for the competing style (Sig. <0.05). However, based on the descriptive, it could be said that the unmarried employees (M=13.0) prefer the competing style more than married employees (M=12.48).

Table 7: ANOVA of Education for Conflict Management Styles

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Competing Style	Between Groups	48.851	4	12.213	4.158	.007
	Within Groups	111.614	38	2.937		
	Total	160.465	42			
Collaborating Style	Between Groups	2.319	4	.580	.317	.866
	Within Groups	109.835	60	1.831		
	Total	112.154	64			
Avoiding Style	Between Groups	2.800	3	.933	.169	.915
	Within Groups	77.200	14	5.514		
	Total	80.000	17			
Accommodating Style	Between Groups	4.619	3	1.540	.685	.573
	Within Groups	40.472	18	2.248		
	Total	45.091	21			
Compromising Style	Between Groups	14.019	3	4.673	1.144	.383
	Within Groups	36.750	9	4.083		
	Total	50.769	12			

Table 7 depicts ANOVA with respect to the conflict management styles based on the educational qualification of the respondents. By analyzing the conflict management styles against the background variable educational qualification, a statistically significant difference could be found between the groups for the competing style. The significant value of the F-test for the competing style is 0.007 (sig. <0.05).

Based on the descriptive, it could be said that the mean value of G.C.E O/L qualified employees (M=13.5) is relatively higher than the others. It is followed by degree holders (M=13.28) and professionally qualified employees (M=12.67).

Table 8: ANOVA of Work Experience for Conflict Management Styles

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Competing Style	Between Groups	8.800	3	2.933	.754	.527
	Within Groups	151.665	39	3.889		
	Total	160.465	42			
Collaborating Style	Between Groups	.279	3	.093	.051	.985
	Within Groups	111.875	61	1.834		
	Total	112.154	64			
Avoiding Style	Between Groups	19.400	3	6.467	1.494	.259
	Within Groups	60.600	14	4.329		
	Total	80.000	17			
Accommodating Style	Between Groups	9.988	3	3.329	1.707	.201
	Within Groups	35.103	18	1.950		
	Total	45.091	21			
Compromising Style	Between Groups	41.769	3	13.923	13.923	.001
	Within Groups	9.000	9	1.000		
	Total	50.769	12			

According to Table 8, ANOVA of work experience for the conflict management styles reveals that there is a statistically significant difference for compromising style. (Sig. =0.001) Based on the descriptive, both employees who have less than 5 years experience (M=13.5) and employees who have more than 20 years experience prefer the compromising style more than the other employees who have 5 – 20 years experience (Mean for 5-10 yrs experience is 13 and for >20 yrs work experience is 8.5).

## Discussion and Recommendation

The Chi-square value of gender for the conflict management styles is 11.484 and the significant value is 0.001. This reveals that the variable gender has a significant influence on the conflict management styles. Robinson (2006) has also found that, gender has an influence on the conflict management styles. Therefore, the findings of the present study agree with the findings of Robinson. Further, in this study, no significant difference was found between male and female employees. It can, therefore, be concluded that, all five of the conflict management styles are used to the same extent when measured in terms of a significant difference, by both male and female employees. Rank correlation for the age group is - 0.41 and the significant value is 0.604 at the 95% significance level. This result indicates that, statistically age has no significant influence on the conflict management styles. This finding is concordant with the findings of Patana (2002). Further, the result of ANOVA with respect to the conflict management styles based on the age of respondents indicates that, statistically there is no significant difference between the age groups.

The correlation value of religion is 0.085 and the significance value is 0.282 at the 95% significant level. It could, therefore, be concluded that religion has statistically no significant influence on the conflict management styles. Dean (1998) has also found that religion has no influence on the conflict management styles. However, the finding of the present study contradicts with Robinson (2006). He has found that religion has influence on the conflict management styles. Moreover, an ANOVA result indicates that, there is a statistically significant difference in the religion variable for the collaborating style. Based on the descriptive, it is evident that the Hindus prefer the collaborating style more than the Christians.

Marital status has negative correlation value with the conflict management styles (-0.055). Its significance value is 0.487. This result clearly states that, marital status has no significant influence on the conflict management styles. This finding agrees with the findings of Robinson (2006). Further, the ANOVA test result of marital status clearly reveals that there is a statistically significant difference in marital status for the competing style.

The correlation value for educational qualification is - 0.068 and the significance value is 0.487. The result clearly revealed that educational qualification also has no significant influence on the conflict management styles. This finding agrees with the findings of Patana (2002). The ANOVA test result with respect to the conflict management styles based on the educational qualification of respondents indicates that, statistically, a significant difference could be found for the competing style.

Rank correlation value for the work experience is - 0.035. The significant value reveals that work experience has statistically no significant influence on the conflict management styles. Patana (2002) has also found that, work experiences do not significantly influence on the conflict management styles. Moreover, an ANOVA result indicates that, there is, statistically, a significant difference between the work experiences for the compromising style.

Analyses of the data indicated that only gender has a significant influence on the conflict management styles of the bank employees. The findings further revealed that no significant difference was found between males and females. Moreover, no significant difference was found between the age groups. However, there was a significant difference between the Christians and the Hindus in preferring the collaborating style. Thus, there was a significant

difference between married and unmarried employees on the competing style. Similarly, educational qualification also has significant difference on the competing style. Work experience has significantly differed in the compromising style.

People differ in the management of conflict situations. It is important to realize that no style is wrong, but that the appropriate situations exist depending on the objective (Technicomp, 1995). Through conflict self-awareness, employees can more effectively manage their conflicts and therefore their professional and personal relationships.

When employees find themselves in conflict over very important issues, they should normally try to *Collaborate* with the other party. This style often takes more energy, patience and time than other styles, but produces the most satisfaction. This style is particularly helpful when the issue is important to both parties, the relationship is valued, commitment by the other party is valued and different perspectives need to be merged. This style may be disadvantageous if individuals use it exclusively and disapprove of other conflict individuals not using it.

If time is precious and if employees have enough power to impose their will, the *competing* style is more appropriate. Using this style, individuals may be described as aggressive, overwhelming, intimidating and over powering. Appropriate uses of the competing style are when the outcome is more important than the relationship. This may occur when quick, decisive action is vital and unpopular course of action is necessary. This style may only be effective when you are right and have power. Caution exists with this style as a reputation for bullying may develop if it is used too often.

When dealing with moderately important issues, *Compromising* can often lead to quick solutions. However, compromise does not completely satisfy either party and does not foster innovation the way that taking the time to collaborate can. This style is the most effective when the issue and relationship are both only moderately important, there is plenty of time, a temporary solution is sought, both sides have equal power and as a back-up mode when collaboration or competition fails.

When employees find themselves in conflict over a fairly unimportant issue, using an *Accommodating* strategy is a quick way to resolve the conflict without straining their relationship with the other party. Further, according to McMahon (1994), this conflict management style is a smoothing gesture where the relationship is considered much greater than an individual's own goals. Employees who consistently use this style emphasize the areas of agreement while downplaying areas of disagreement. Appropriate uses of this style are situations where the issue is not as important as the relationships, feels that reserving harmony is important, realizes that subordinates need to experiment and learn from their own mistakes and one party needs special consideration.

*Avoiding* should normally be reserved for situations where there is a clear advantage to waiting to resolve the conflict. Generally, employees engaged in conflict with a superior most likely to respond in avoidance behaviour. The appropriate uses of the avoiding style include the situation being considered a trivial issue, damage is imminent, accessible resources are inadequate and one's objectives are not appropriate or legitimate. Moreover, avoiding is appropriate if you are too busy with more important concerns and if your relationship with the other party is unimportant.

## References

1. Antonioni, D. (1998). Relationship between the big five personality factors and conflict management styles, *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 9(4): 336-355.
2. Brahnam, S. D., Margavio, T. M., Hignite, M. A., Barrier, T. B., Chin, J. M. (2005). A bender-based categorization for conflict resolution, *Journal of Management Development*, 24(3): 197-208.
3. Brewer, N., Mitchell, P., Weber, N. (2002). Gender role, organizational status, and conflict management styles, *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 13(1): 78-94.
4. Cetin, M. O., Hacifazlioglu, O. (2004). Conflict Management Styles: A Comparative Study of University Academics and High School Teachers, *Journal of American Academy of Business*, 5(1/2): 325-332.
5. Chan, C. C. A., Monroe, G., Ng, J., Tan, R. (2006). Conflict Management Styles of Male and Female Junior Accountants, *International Journal of Management*, 23(2): 289-295.
6. Cornille, T. A., Pestle, R. E., Vanwy, R. W. (1999). Teachers' conflict management styles with peers and students' parents, *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 10(1): 69-79.
7. Cox, T. H., Lobel, S. A., McLeod, P. L. (1991). Effects of ethnic group cultural differences on cooperative and competitive behavior on a group task, *Academy of Management Journal*, 34(4): 827-847.
8. Drory, A., Ritov, I. (1997). Effects of work experience and opponent's power on conflict management styles, *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 8(2): 148-161.
9. Earnest, G. W., McCaslin, N. L. (1994). Extension Administrators Approach to Conflict Management: A Study of Relationships Between Conflict Management Styles and Personality Type, *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 35(3): 18-22.
10. Elsayed-Ekhouly, S. M., Buda, R. (1996). Organizational conflict: a comparative analysis of conflict styles across cultures, *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 7(1): 71-81.
11. Goodwin, J. (2002). Auditors' Conflict Management Styles: An Exploratory Study, *Abacus*, 38(3): 378-405.
12. Haferkamp, C. J (1991). Orientations to conflict: gender, attributions, resolution strategies, and self-monitoring, *Current Psychology*, 10(4): 227-240.
13. Havenga, W. (2006). Relationships between Gender/Age – Status Differences and Conflict Management Styles in Small Business, [http://www.kmu.unisg.ch/rencontres/RENC2006/Topics06/D/Rencontres\\_2006\\_HavengaW.pdf](http://www.kmu.unisg.ch/rencontres/RENC2006/Topics06/D/Rencontres_2006_HavengaW.pdf), 1-16.
14. Hignite, M. A., Margavio, T. M., Chin, J. M. (2002). Assessing the Conflict Resolution Profiles of Emerging Information Systems Professionals, *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 13(4): 315-324.
15. Jones, T. E., White, C. S. (1985). Relationships Among Personality, Conflict Resolution Styles, and Task Effectiveness, *Group & Organization Studies*, 10(2): 152-167
16. King, W. C. Jr., Miles, E. W. (1990). What we know – and don't know – about measuring conflict – An examination of the ROCI-II and the OCCI conflict instruments, *Management Communication Quarterly*, 4(2): 222-243.
17. Kozan, M. K. (2002). Subcultures and Conflict Management Style, *Management International Review*, 42(1): 89-104.
18. Lee Agee, M., Kabasakal, H. E. (1993). Exploring Conflict Resolution Styles: A Study of Turkish and American University Business Students, *International Journal of Social Economics*, 20(9): 3-14.

19. McKenna, S. and Richardson, J. (1995). Business values, Management and conflict handling: Issues in contemporary Singapore, *Journal of Management Development*, 11(04), pp56-70
20. McKenna, S. (1995). The business impact of management attitudes towards dealing with conflict: a cross-cultural assessment, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 10(7): 22-27.
21. McMahan, (1994). Leadership and conflict resolution. Presentation at 1994, Leadership Camp.
22. Moberg, P. J. (2001). Linking conflict strategy to the five-factor model: theoretical and empirical foundations, *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 12(1): 47-68.
23. Morris, M. W., Williams, K. Y., Leung, K., Larrick, R., Mendoza, M. T., Bhatnagar, D., Li, J., Kondo, M., Luo, J.L., Hu, J-C. (1998). Conflict Management Style: Accounting for Cross-National Differences, *Journal of International Business Studies*, 29(4): 729-747.
24. Patana, D. G. (2002). Conflict management styles of the deans in Assumption University, Thailand and the University of Santo Tomas, Philippines: A comparative study. Retrieved November 25, 2009, from [http://www.education.au.edu/Genoveva%20\\_D\\_%20Patana.pdf](http://www.education.au.edu/Genoveva%20_D_%20Patana.pdf).
25. Pinto, E. P., Ferrer, J. Jr. (2002). Relationship between Demographic Characteristics and Conflict Handling Styles, The Center for Latin American Issues Working Paper Series, [http://www.gwu.edu/~clai/working\\_papers/Paschoal\\_Eder\\_05-02.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~clai/working_papers/Paschoal_Eder_05-02.pdf)
26. Rahim, M. A. (1983). A measure of styles of handling interpersonal conflict. *Academy of Management Journal*, 26, 368-376.
27. Rahim, M. A. (2001). *Managing conflict in organizations* (3rd ed). Westport, CT:Quorum Books.
28. Rahim, M.A., & Bonoma, T.V. (1979). Managing organizational conflict: A model for diagnosis and intervention. *Psychological Reports*, 44, 1323-1344.
29. Rahim, M. A., Antonioni, D., Psenicka, C. (2001). A structural equations model of leader power, subordinates' styles of handling conflict, and job performance, *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 12(3): 191-211.
30. Robinson, J. (2006). Personal Demographical Variables and Modes of Interpersonal Conflict Resolution, *Journal of Business Studies*, Volume-3, pp16-23
31. Rosenthal, D. B., Hautaluoma, J. (1988). Effects of Importance of Issues, Gender, and Power of Contenders on Conflict Management Style, *Journal of Social Psychology*, 128(5): 699-701.
32. Sorenson, P. S., Hawkins, K., Sorenson, R. L. (1995). Gender, psychological type and conflict style preference, *Management Communication Quarterly*, 9(1): 115-126.
33. Robbins, S. P. (2003). *Conflict and Resolutions – in Organizational Behaviour*, 10th edition, Prentice hall of India, pp396-415
34. Technicomp. (1995). *Conflict management for teams*. Cleveland, OH: Author.
35. Thompson, L. (1998). *The mind and heart of the negotiator*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
36. Vokic, and Sontor, (2010). "Conflict Management Styles in Croatian Enterprises-The Relationship between Individual characteristics and Conflict Handling styles. Working paper retrieved from [web.efzg.hr/RePEc/pdf/Clanak%2009-05.pdf](http://web.efzg.hr/RePEc/pdf/Clanak%2009-05.pdf).
37. Weider-Hatfield, D., Hatfield, J. D. (1995). Relationships Among Conflict Management Styles, Levels of Conflict, and Reactions to Work, *Journal of Social Psychology*, 135(6): 687-698.
38. Wikipedia (2007). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict>, retrieved on October, 2007.



***Chathurangi, T. D. N.***  
Assistant secretary  
Central Bank of Sri Lanka  
[chathu1995@cbsl.lk](mailto:chathu1995@cbsl.lk)



***Padmasiri, W. D. T.***  
CEO  
T & N Consultants  
[wdthilak@gmail.com](mailto:wdthilak@gmail.com)

---