

# The influence of gender on conflict management style

[Business](#), [Management](#)



The purpose of this project paper is to study the influence of gender on conflict management style in organization. It aims to see whether there is differences style and ways of males and females act and communicate in organization and which conflict management style that both of them use for managing conflict. The study of influence of gender on conflict management in organization has done by many scholars and conflict management specialist. Conflict is an inevitable and common issue in our daily lives especially in organization.

Organizational conflict is common in the workplace because employee have different opinion, goal or purposes, belief, and interests. In recent era, one of the trends in workplace or organization is workforce diversity. The most interesting issue is the increasing number of women in the workforce. Based on data World Bank in 2014 provides the number of female participation in workforce achieved 50. 29% and it is slightly different with the figure of male participation in workforce which 76. 73%.

With the great number of female participation in workforce, the possible effect of gender differences in the ability to manage conflict comes to mind. The study of influence of gender on conflict management has done by many scholar and conflict management specialists to know how males and females employee manage their conflict in the workplace and organization. Managing conflict play important role for organization because it involves implementing strategies to limit the negative aspects of conflict and to increase the positive aspect of conflict.

Conflict can significantly affect employee job description focus, turnover, even the risk of litigation. All of these factors in turn impact the prosperity of an organization, either constructively or destructively. Management can help resolve conflict by understanding the differences between males and females, so that manager can make suggestion to resolve the conflict effectively to strengthen their relationship. Also conflict management is a very important skill within an organization to achieve the organization's objectives and goals.

Therefore we conclude that conflict itself is not destructive and that, when constructively managed, it can help us dig into issues, understand problems and create solutions. Objectives of Study The main objective was to investigate the influence of gender on conflict management in organization. To find out the differences communication style between males and females in organization. To know which conflict management style that males and females use in organization to solve the conflict. Research Questions Are there meaningful differences among males and females employee in communication style?

What types of conflict management style that males and females use in organization to solve the conflict? Method This is a narrative research that describe the differences among males and females in communication style in organization or workplace and explain the types of conflict management style that males and females use in organization to solve the conflict. Overall review has been divided into four main part: definition of conflict, gender

differences in conflict management style, conflict management and empirical findings from several journals.

Literature Review Definition of conflict in organization Conflict is associated to the central processes of people and their association with the surroundings and is, therefore, an unavoidable part of organizational life (Jones and George, 2003). Rahim (2001) defined conflict as an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities. Conflict is common issue happen in every organization. Different scholars defined organization conflict in different ways.

According Roloff (1987) defined conflict as organizational conflict occurs when members engage in activities that are incompatible with those of colleagues within their network, members of other collectivities or unaffiliated individuals who utilize the services or products of the organization. Organizational conflict is the discord that arises when the goals, interests or values of different individuals or groups are incompatible and those individuals or groups block or thwart one another's attempts to achieve their objective (Jones & George, 2014).

Factors cause conflict Conflicts may also arise when the behavior or actions of people, teams, or departments violate the rules, regulations, or social norms of an organization. There are some factors cause organization conflict (Starks, 2006). The first factor is differences in opinions, personalities, knowledge, education, and experience. The second is natural results of

diversity based on such characteristics as age, ethnicity, gender, etc. The third is project or process differences. Then virtual and/or self-managed work teams and the last is rapid change.

According to McShane and Von Glinow (2008) there are six main conditions that cause conflict in organization setting such as, incompatible goals, differentiation, task interdependence, scarce resources, ambiguous rules, and communication problems. Conflict management In order to solve organizational conflict, many scholars were conducted conflict management model. The most popular and widely used is Rahim's organizational conflict inventory (ROCI-II). Rahim's model of handling conflict varies according to two basic dimensions: concern for self and concern for others.

These dimensions incorporate five conflict management styles. These style are integrating, compromising, avoiding, dominating, and obliging. The Integrating style, also known as Problem Solving, indicates high concern for self and others. It involves collaboration between the parties that are willing to reach a mutual and acceptable solution through openness, exchange of information, examination and exploration of differences for arriving to a constructive solution that goes far beyond personal and limited visions of the problem.

Rahim highlights the two distinctive elements of this style suggested by Prein (Rahim, 2011): 1) confrontation that is characterized by open communication, clarify misunderstanding, examining the underlying causes of conflicts; 2) and problem solving. Confrontation is considered as

prerequisite of problem solving that implies the identification of appropriate solutions aiming to provide maximum and reciprocal satisfaction of concern of parties involved. The obliging style, also known as accommodating indicates low concern for self and high concern for others.

An obliging person neglects and sacrifices personal concern so to satisfy the concern of the other party. This style is associated with a non-confrontation element characterized by the attempt of minimizing differences and emphasizing commonalities to satisfy the concern of the other party. As suggested by Rahim this style may take the form of selfless generosity, charity, or obedience to the party's order. An obliging person can be defined as a " conflict absorber" terms describing a reaction of low hostility or even friendliness to a perceived hostile act.

Dominating Style, also known as competing, indicates high concern for self and low concern for others. A dominating person stands up for own rights and ignore others' needs and expectation; try to defend personal positions that he believes being as correct and right. This is a win-lose style expression of a forcing behavior in order to win one's position. The avoiding style, also known as suppression, indicates low concern for self and others. Therefore an avoiding person fails to satisfy personal concern as well as the concern of the other party. It has been associated with withdrawal, buck-passing, sidestepping situations.

As suggested by Rahim this style may take the form of postponing an issue until a better time, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation. This

style often reflect little concern toward the issues or parties involved in conflict, and the attitude to refuse or denying to acknowledge the existence of a conflict in public. The compromising style indicates intermediate concern for self and others. The styles sees both parties involved in give and-take or sharing solutions, whereby both parties accept to give up something to make mutually acceptable decisions.

A compromising person or party gives up more than a dominating but less than an obliging person or party. Similarly a compromising person or party addresses an issue more openly than an avoiding person or party but does not explore alternative solutions as an integrating person or party. Rahim suggested that would be possible to get more insights if using the taxonomy of game theory for reclassifying the five styles of handling interpersonal conflict: integrating style can be reclassified to a positive-sum or nonzero-sum style, compromising to a mixed style, and obliging, dominating, and avoiding to zero-sum or negative-sum.

Although he indicated this possibility he warns on the risk of using the taxonomy “ win” and “ lose” used by the game theory for this reclassification. This may be misleading, as matter of fact, Rahim highlights that each of the five styles of handling interpersonal conflict may be appropriate, depending on the situation, therefore considered as a situation dependent “ winning style” Gender differences in conflict management style According to Organizational Behavior book by McShane and Von Glinow (2008), Men and women also tend to rely on different conflict management styles.

Generally speaking, women pay more attention than do men to the relationship between the parties. Consequently they tend to adopt a problem solving style in business settings and more willing to compromise to protect the relationship. Men tend to be more competitive and take a short-term orientation to the relationship. Of course we must be cautious about these observations because gender has a weak influence on conflict management style.

Some research has concluded that men as a group are more likely to use conversation to emphasize status, knowledge, and/or control, while women as a group are more likely to use conversation to create understanding and connection between the parties (Tannen 1991, 1993). It has also been reported that even when actual behaviors appear identical, the genders may conceptualize differently (Wilmot and Hocker 2001). Wilmot and Hocker state that men are more likely to see that self as independent, while women tend to see the self in relationship with others.

Effective negotiation requires a view toward interdependence rather than power over others. It also requires mutual empathy. According to the research, it may be that women come to the negotiation task more likely to possess the more effective perspective and approach. Studies also have indicated that in male-female interactions, males tend to dominate the conversation (Wilmot and Hocker 2001). Furthermore, studies show that females may be more willing to trust but are unforgiving of trust violations (Wilmot and Hocker 2001). Gender differences, in situations where they truly exist, may relate to culturalization.

That is, in some cultures (such as the United States), men may perceive a direct approach as aggressive or insulting. Variations in culture create variations in what are presumed to be gender-typed behavior and roles. Craver (2002) compared negotiation performance of male and female law students over sixteen years in a law school negotiation course. His data suggest that gender does not significantly influence negotiation results. Patricia Gwartney-Gibbs studied the ways in which gender affects conflicts at workplace, their origins, processes and outcomes (Birkhof, 2001).

Women seem to be more sensitive to conflicts and tend to report more interpersonal types of them while facing disputes based on the assumption of the society on gender stereotypes and work responsibilities. Comparative studies about men's and women's experiences at workplace conflict disputes and community mediation by Terrell Northrup and Marshall Segall showed that women feel more vulnerable in day-to-day relations, which contributes to women choosing to avoid conflicts as it may cause aggression and violence (Birkhoff, 2001). A number of studies conducted by Holt and Devore (2005) were on gender differences in conflict management styles.

They analyzed self-reported data on conflict styles of organization members and came across the conclusion that males in individualistic cultures are more competing, while females are compromising. Sone and Cardona also found that women tend to be more accommodating, compromising or avoiding (Sone, 1981; Cardona, 1995; Thomas and Thomas, 2008, p. 10). According to the authors' personal observations, men are more fearless and

aggressive in conflicts, thus are able to push their way through to top positions and negotiate a higher salary.

Based on the report of Institute for Women's Policy Research in 2012, female full-time workers made only 77 cents for every dollar earned by men, a gender wage gap of 23 percent. The first journal I read is *The Influence of Gender on Conflict Management Style; A Study among Employees of Public Banks in Ethiopia*. This journal was written by Asemamaw Tilahun and E. A. Narayana in 2013. The purpose of this journal is to determine the influence of gender on conflict management styles of employee of public sector banks in Ethiopia. The population of the study was employees from three public sector banks in Ethiopia.

These three banks are Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, Development Bank of Ethiopia and Construction & Business Bank. The total number of employees of each bank was 18, 000, 900 and 1, 539 respectively as of December 31, 2012. Employees of public sector banks in Ethiopia were surveyed using Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory- II (ROCI-II) developed by Rahim (1983). The independent variable of the study was gender and the dependent variables were conflict management styles of employees i. e. , avoiding, compromising, dominating, integrating and obliging.