Conflict Management, Effect of Gender in Different Enterprises: Empirical Literature Review

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**Purpose:** This paper aims to study past researches and articles by examining the main and interactive effects of gender on conflict-management style and strategies in different organizational setups or industry nature.

**Approach:** This research was designed to investigate assumptions that may exist regarding the relationship between gender and conflict resolution style in different setups. Review-based Qualitative content analysis method was used in this study to analyze the past and contemporary studies on the influence of gender in conflict resolution.

**Findings:** The results found that biological sex does not correlate with the choice of conflict management style. On the other hand, the findings have shown that gender role is a forecaster for the choice of conflict management styles as masculine and androgynous individuals were highest on the dominating conflict style and avoiding style depending on the conflict, whereas feminine individuals were highest on the avoiding style and collaborative conflict resolution style.

**Implications:** A model has been developed based on the literature review identifying the key types of functional conflicts resolution ways and to promote or diminish organizational conflict.

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**Introduction**

As the workforce becomes diversified, it becomes important for managers to understand the conflict resolution attitudes in regard to gender. "Previous studies examining the relationship between gender and conflict-management strategies have generally reported weak or inconsistent results." (Rahim & Katz, 2020). In the development industry, a huge sum of literature and articles has been committed to the subject of conflict. It is broadly known that development ventures are inclined to debate among partners, counting owners, engineers, architects, and temporary workers. (Safapour, Kermanshachi, Nipa, & Shirin, 2019). Investigate proposes that these clashes can become exceptionally expensive and time-consuming when they are not tended to in a provoking way and have the potential to contrarily influence extended plan execution and victory. (Wu, Liu, Zhao, & Zuo, 2017) (Zhang & Huo, 2015)

The main problem addressed by this research is to identify the influence of gender on conflict management styles among employees of the corporate sector. Whether there's a large gender assessment inside the potential to
supervise warfare has grown to be a topic of essential concern. Conflict can occur at any level of job and it can be in many different forms. Conflicts can have various causes which incorporate individual conflict and contrast view guides or sentiments toward everyday exercises.(Bordean, Rácz, Ceptureanu, Ceptureanu, & Pop, 2020) As males and females both have opposing perspectives on conflict-dealing with styles, this makes it a specialty that agencies need to locate techniques now no longer to get rid of organizational conflict, but alternatively to manipulate accordingly.(K.E.-S. Smirles, 2020)

The countries with the highest levels of social violence and the biggest risk of violent conflicts on their ground are those with the most gender inequality and homophobia (Ekvall, 2014). Managers’ and team’s capacity to handle disagreement could prove to be a valuable asset in achieving a competitive edge. Most commonly team or managers are not likely to use conflict productively because lack of the skills and the mindset. (Davey, 2019)

According to a Taiwan study sustainable 2020. There is a solid conviction that people essentially vary in their tendency and use of contention in taking care of conflict management styles. It has been demonstrated that males will in general have a specific inclination toward contending systems which are dominating strategy while female workers are bound to utilize non-contending methodologies (avoiding, integrating, and compromising)(Jing, Ma, Ma, Chen, & Cheng, 2020)

**Literature Review**

**Concept of Conflict**

It’s hard to present one elaborated definition of conflict that will be accepted and appreciated by all scholars. The conflict has been perceived differently by every scholar, this indicates that the single phenomena of conflict can be given different subjective understandings.(Chaudhry & Asif, 2015). Conflicts do not happen when there are differences in perceptions we receive every time, but it occurs when the mean of the same perception is different for other individuals regardless of gender or even culture.” Conflict refers to some form of friction, disagreement, or discord arising between individuals or within a group when the beliefs or actions of one or more members of the group are either resisted by or unacceptable to one or more members of another group. Conflict pertains to the opposing ideas and actions of different entities, thus resulting in an antagonistic state.”(Tschannen-Moran, 2001)

According to the Putnam and Poole (1987) point of view conflict essentially needs to be viewed as a perception of interpersonal interaction however it can be interdependent people who interfere in the goals or aims with the realization of these goals but with the different perceptions of meanings.

**Organizational conflict - Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict**

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) divides conflict into five modes of conflict resolution viz. competing, collaborating, avoiding, accommodating, and compromising. The competing mode of conflict resolution is characterized by a high concern for self. This style of conflict resolution indicates maximizing individual self-concern even at the cost of others. The accommodating style of conflict resolution mode is the opposite of the competing style and it shows low concern for self. This person is unassertive and will sacrifice his/her self-interest to satisfy the needs of others. The avoiding style of conflict resolution is characterized by low concern for self. If the person is low on assertiveness, he/she will try to avoid conflict as far as possible. Individuals having a collaborative style of conflict resolution mode strive to achieve a constructive solution to conflict utmost so that there should be a win-win situation for all the parties involved. The compromising mode of conflict resolution lies in the middle of cooperativeness and assertiveness. Individuals exhibiting this mode of conflict resolution make prioritize resolving the conflict.(Dunnette & McNally, 1976).
Rahim and Bonoma (1979) differentiated the strategies for handling conflict into two basic dimensions: concern for self and concern for others. The first dimension explains the degree (high vs. low) to which a person attempts to satisfy his or her concern. The second dimension explains the degree (high vs. low) to which a person attempts to satisfy the concern of others. (Rahim & Katz, 2020). Rahim, 1983 developed Rahim Organisational Conflict Inventory (ROCI-II). This is one of the commonly used tools for measuring conflict resolution styles and models. According to this model, the interpersonal styles of conflict fall into five categories. (Shweta & Jain, 2010).

![Rahim's dual concern model](image)

For gender role orientation, the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974) was designed to facilitate empirical research on psychological androgyne. The 1970s heralded a new concept in masculinity and femininity research: the idea that mentally and physically normal women and men could possess similar characteristics. Androgyne emerged as a framework for construing similarities and differences among individuals according to the level to which they described themselves in terms of characteristics traditionally associated with men (masculine) and those associated with women (feminine). Although the term androgyne was not new, having its roots in classical mythology and literature (andro = male, gyne = female), the 1970s marked a resurgence of the word's popularity as a means to represent a combination of stereotypically "feminine" and "masculine" personality traits. (Hoffman & Borders, 2001)

![Figure 2. Bem (1974) Gender Roles](image)

In addition to this category, Organizational conflict can occur at various levels and diversified forms of an organization and can take many types. In addition, conflict in team divides into three types task, process, and relationship conflicts. Task conflict is similar to content conflict, while process conflict refers disagreement over
processes and procedures. (Amy R & Ann C, 2013) These types of conflicts can have many causes, including personal disagreements and differences in opinion on task-related issues. (Rahim A., 2015). Relationship conflict starts from interpersonal incompatibilities; task conflict is related to disagreements of viewpoints and opinions about a particular task, and process conflict refers to disagreement over the group's approach to the task to perform or process, its methods, and the group process. (Madalina, 2016) Even though the relationship conflict and process conflict are harmful, task conflict is found to be beneficial since it encourages diversity of opinions; care should be taken so it does not develop into the process or relationship conflict (Denohue & Kott, 1992). In some cases, emotional components may also present in a task and process conflict, however, it can minimize its negative aspects by focusing on accomplishing their tasks. (Chaudhry & Asif, 2015)

Gender base Conflict: Conflict Management Style
Conflict is one of the true parts of an organization that cannot be ignored or avoided. Particularly with cultural diversity and social identity arises the gender-based conflict (Gentry, Boysen, Hannum, & Weber, 2010). Studies about conflict resolutions attempted to determine whether considering different gender (masculine, androgynous, and feminine) and cultural diversity or cultural differences as a factor would influence respect and equal rights would be when a scenario involving social identity (gender differences) becomes most primarily important. In a few studies, gender discrimination in the workforce is also discussed as a factor of conflict. Plenty of remarkable studies found discussing cultural differences (the US, Indians, Africans, Pakistani, etc.), size of the organization (medium, small and large), status, and influence because of the sector (manufacturing, construction, hospital, educational, etc.) comparing conflict management style and leadership effectiveness in managers considering their gender as the main factor.

Gender discrimination – Negative Emotionality
(Ali Channar, Abbassi, & Anwar Ujan, 2011) Gender discrimination can be defined as the giving of an unfair advantage (or disadvantage) to the members of a particular group or individual in comparison to the members of another group or individual. Researchers are trying to find the impact of gender discrimination on satisfaction & motivation, commitment & enthusiasm, and stress level. Gender discrimination (males and females) in the workforce of the lower, middle, and higher category employees of public and private health and education departments of Hyderabad and Jamshoro districts in Sindh, Pakistan. The results show that females were prone to gender discrimination behavior in the workplace, both in public and private organizations. However, that biased behaviors were more in public organizations than in private organizations. (Ali Channar, Abbassi, & Anwar Ujan, 2011) Analysis showed gender discrimination resulted in low job satisfaction and motivation, gender discrimination was inversely proportional to commitment and enthusiasm, i.e., because of discrimination, women showed less devotion and passion towards their job. Last but not least high the gender discrimination; the higher will be the level of stress. In Uganda study, most occupations are the preserve and preferable of men, and some are the preserve of women simply because of the tendency of males to belittle women. "It is common to hear phrases like "Are you a woman?" when men are referring to any male who does not measure up to a task". (Manyak & Katono, Conflict management style in Uganda: A gender perspective, 2010) Patriarchy can also be conquered once parents learn that their daughters can manage conflict (and the family treasure) just as well as their sons. (Manyak & Katono, Conflict management style in Uganda: A gender perspective, 2010) The element of discrimination leads to an immense amount of frustration and stress, which could create negative emotions and result in unhealthy conflicts in organizations. The process of conflict resolution can become more difficult if employees experience a high level of negative emotions. (Chaudhry & Asif, 2015)

Gender Diversity - Conflict Factor or Opportunity
(Serne & Wesley Martin, 2020) Gender diversity has been increasing in the construction industry and has the potential to increase. Cooperativeness in times of conflict during construction projects and work, and can also help fill in the gaps of collaborative behavior between genders. (Serne & Wesley Martin, 2020) found two notable differences between male and female Construction Management students in conflict management styles. The female students were more likely to use an Accommodating style or obliging style (Rahim 1983) than their construction management male students counterparts. Additionally, when it comes to competing or dominating style (Rahim 1983) the results show that female students are less likely to use a Competing conflict management
style than their male counterparts. These differences complement the less Accommodating and more competitive styles or less obliging and more dominating styles of their male counterparts.

**Gender Roles, Biological Sex, and Conflict management Styles**
(Bordean, Rácz, Ceptureanu, Ceptureanu, & Pop, 2020) The study was carried out in randomly chosen small and medium-sized organizations, information technology, medicine, and economics to examine the relationship between gender roles, biological sex, and conflict management styles in the small and medium-sized enterprises in Romania. The result shows that masculinity and androgynous seem to be positively correlated with the choice of competing/dominating conflict management style and negatively correlated with the avoiding style. On the other hand, femininity is positively correlated with accommodating and collaborating conflict-handling style. Moreover, (Bordean, Rácz, Ceptureanu, Ceptureanu, & Pop, 2020) also revealed important differences between the masculine and feminine are indeed correlated with an individual’s choice of conflict management style. Therefore, the conclusion of the result was masculine and androgynous individuals will tend to use a dominant conflict-handling style. In addition, the avoiding style and accommodating style are influenced by females. Somehow, similar findings were found by (Brewer, Mitchell, & Weber, 2002) study conducted in finance-related organizations. The femininity and undifferentiated group are higher on the avoiding side of conflict management style than masculine and androgynous groups. The masculine group was found to be significantly higher in dominating than both the feminine and androgynous groups. Finally, the androgynous and masculine group was found to be higher in integrating style than the feminine and undifferentiated groups.

**Conflict Management in the Increasing World of IS**
“As the workforce becomes increasingly diversified, it becomes increasingly important for managers to understand the conflict resolution attitudes brought to information systems (IS) by both men and women” (Brahnam, Margavio, Hignite, Barrier, & Chin, 2005). Conflict management and resolution strategies comparing between males and females in the field of IS to determine if gender-based differences exist. (Brahnam, Margavio, Hignite, Barrier, & Chin, 2005) indicate that when in comparison to male counterparts, women are more likely to utilize a collaborative conflict resolution style and men are more likely to avoid conflict style. As collaborating is generally considered a more productive conflict resolution style and avoidance is more disruptive when it comes to the conflict resolution process.

**Choice of Conflict Management Style in Developing Countries**
Managers and leaders in India generally adopt an accommodating style of conflict resolution, followed by an avoiding style, irrespective of their gender (Shweta & Jain, 2010). Several studies were conducted by many remarkable researchers on gender differences in conflict management styles and they concluded that males in individualistic cultures are more competing, while females are compromising. Moreover, women tend to be more accommodating, compromising, or avoiding (Prause, Mujtaba, & Wayne, 2015) (K.W. & F., 2008). In Uganda study, most occupations are the preserve and preferable of men, and some are the preserve of women simply because of the tendency of males to belittle women. “It is common to hear phrases like "Are you a woman?" when men are referring to any male who does not measure up to a task”. (Manyak & Katono, Conflict management style in Uganda: A gender perspective, 2010) Patriarchy can also be conquered once parents learn that their daughters can manage conflict (and the family treasure) just as well as their sons. (Manyak & Katono, Conflict management style in Uganda: A gender perspective, 2010)

According to the authors and based on the report of the Institute for Women's Policy Research in 2012, men are more rigid and aggressive in conflicts, thus can push their way through to top positions and negotiating a higher salary. Female full-time workers made only 77 cents for every dollar earned by men, a gender wage gap of 23 percent. (Research, 2014) (Prause, Mujtaba, & Wayne, 2015).

**Diagnosing and Resolving Conflict**
The process of every conflict resolution practice is very similar to other practices like (doctors, engineers, lawyers, etc.) there should be diagnoses first, what causes the conflict, and then resolve the problems that created such conflict. For example frequent causes of conflict can be lack of clarity with guidelines, unrealities or over
expectations, poor communication, lack of jurisdiction, personality differences, conflicts of interest, and changes within the organization. (Amy R & Ann C, 2013) However, theoretical knowledge functions and guide us as a framework but the application and implementation require specific knowledge, the right tools, and adequate experience to use that knowledge and tools that can help and match the solving problems/ conflict. “In a sense, everyone is correct, truthful and honest in his or her point of view yet, everyone is equally incomplete and limited in their ability to understand.” (Madalina, 2016)

The organization confrontation meeting is one of the tools to design to mobilize the resources of the organization to identify the problems, set priorities and action plans and begin working on identified problems. (Thomas g & Edgar f, 1989) Conflicts have nothing to do with the people involved in them, most conflicts are the result of the system and culture they are involved in it as an actor. Management of organizational level conflicts needs diagnosis and intervention at any affective level interpersonal, intra-group, or intergroup addressing conflict management styles (strategies).
(Madalina, 2016) Diagnosis is effective when it highlights where intervention should be needed inappropriate way:
- Maintain the constructive, practical, and modest state of conflict;
- Reduce any kind of emotional state and involvement at any level;
- Management should allow and use appropriate strategies for managing conflicts.

The process and procedure of conflict resolution can become more difficult if employees experience a high level of negative emotions. The efficiency of resolution can only be achieved through proper diagnosis and appropriate effective intervention. (Markham, 1993). (Amy R & Ann C, 2013) “In a real-time study, employees recorded interactions with a co-worker or superior at four random intervals daily; the employees rated the interactions as positive or negative and recorded their mood. The negative interactions affected the employee’s mood five times more strongly than positive encounters.”

Dimensions of Conflict Resolution
Diagnosis creates a concrete term, to propose alternative solutions for the conflict. For solving the conflict it is important or can say crucial to have the ability to get issues on the table but not under the table which means working through them constructively is necessary to have a healthy culture. Depersonalizing the conflict is very hard work; however, it is the starting point for an effectively managed conflict. “Avoiding conflict means that it’s not safe to express dissent or frustration, which means stress and resentment build”. (Davey, 2019). The following methods will improve the understanding of how to manage conflict.
The conflict has its negative as well as positive aspects. The types of dissension that can lead to positive results should be encouraged. Such conflict may:
- Existing problems and new aspects revealed
- Improving communication between actors in the conflict
- The mindset of results in a solution to a problem – result oriented mindset toward the problem
- Allow emotions to be passed on or released
- Encourage others’ point of view if it has potential or can demonstrate their abilities.

Ideally, negative conflicts should be avoided but that is not always possible in every situation, but we can try to minimize the damage and try to find the most positive resolution. (Markham, 1993)

Proposal of Conflict Management Model
Based on the research review of many research papers conflict management model identified the conflict resolution tool between two or more actors. Although this synthesis of the literature is more circulated in the gender conflict styles in different organizations in the proposing model I like to solve the conflict.

The Diagram
The model identifies two dimensions on two axis when choosing a course of action under the influence of these two factors. In a conflicting situation, these are “concern for self” and “influence of external factors”. Concern for self is the degree to which you try to satisfy your own needs and defend your point of view. The influence of external factors is the degree to which you try to satisfy the other’s concerns and take decisions under the influence of outer factors or external pressure. From this comes five conflict-handling modes in the intensity of Low and
High conflict-handling modes.

- **Declaration**
  The act of declaring that there is a conflict. Accepting the presence of conflict and expressing it.

- **Confrontation**
  Act of discussions and formally communicating between two or more parties involved in a conflict.

- **Compromise**
  One or more conflicting parties tries to find a common ground and acceptable settlement that only partially satisfies

- **Negotiation**
  The dialogue and discussions between two or more parties to reach a beneficial outcome mutually in the situation of conflict.

- **Arbitration**
  Allowing the third party to help in resolving the conflict by negotiating the terms of both or more parties.

### Conflict Management Model

**Conclusion**
Organizations are the social entities and bodies that are segmented in the hierarchy and into departments or divisions. These social entities are characterized by their business and also by their social culture, and both things are important for the organizations. If you neglect one factor the other automatically suffered itself. In these social bodies, individuals are universally manifested by conflict and within these hierarchical divisions.

This literature review aim examined the relationship between gender and conflict management styles in the context of the workplace. This study emphasizes two important factors. The first one is the research context of this study: the choice of conflict management style in different organizations in terms of their nature in business and also in terms of their geographical differences. Secondly, the common factor in this review is gender or biological sex. The research studies enhance our understanding of the choice of conflict management style that is mostly used by the same gender within the organizations regardless of the difference in sectors or even culture. The choice of conflict management styles as masculine and androgynous individuals was highest on the dominating conflict style and avoiding style depending on the conflict, whereas feminine individuals were highest on the avoiding style and collaborative conflict resolution style.

Besides recognizing the findings the significance of this paper lies in the context and approaches used for the research, this study will add value to the already available knowledge and work regarding conflict and conflict management techniques. In addition, it will hopefully encourage the development of further similar studies in
conflict resolution techniques, as the knowledge is based on obtaining so far relies mostly on experiments carried out the answers to many unsolved problems.

References


