RESEARCH PAPER

A Study on the Conflict Management Styles adopted by the Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT

The present study has been undertaken to examine the conflict management styles among the undergraduate students. It seeks a comparison between the conflict management styles of male and female undergraduates. The sample comprised of 100 male students and 100 female students studying in the various colleges of Delhi. The results show that there is a significant gender difference in the conflict management styles of undergraduate students.

INTRODUCTION

When faced with conflict, individuals have a specific conflict management style he or she likes to use. The key to effectively managing conflicts is the ability to choose which management style is best appropriate for certain situations. There are five main types of conflict management style types such as collaborating, competing, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating.

A conflict management style is the pattern of behaviour an individual develops in response to conflict with others such as differences of opinion. Conflict management styles tend to be consistent over time. Conflict management is the skill needed to resolve different situations. Interpersonal conflict is a pervasive communication as well as an organizational phenomenon. It needs little definition but demands a great deal of attention. Interpersonal conflict in an organization is inevitable because an organization gets things done through people, and more importantly every human relationship contains elements of conflict, disagreement and opposing interest (*Ezhar*, *Mohd Salleh & Yadi*).

Because conflict is a feature of everyday life and an aspect of all human and social relationships (*Ramesh*, 1998; *Wilmot & Hocker*, 2001), there are no completely conflict free societies. Conflict is an important element of socio-cultural interactions and conflict management skills are very important for maintaining almost all human relationships (*Rahim*, 1986).

According to *Wilmot and Hocker* (2001), "Individuals' ability to manage conflict successfully depends on their skills to estimate the effectiveness of different conflict management strategies."

Thomas-Kilmann has given five basic styles of dealing with Conflict:

- **COMPETING:** They are highly assertive and uncooperative, a power- oriented mode. When competing, an individual pursues his or her own concerns at the other person's expense, using whatever power seems appropriate to win his or her position. Competing might mean standing up for your rights, defending a position you believe is correct or simply trying to win.

  For example- "Here is what we are going to do (my way, of course)...."

- **COLLABORATING:** They are both assertive and cooperative. When collaborating, an individual attempts to work with the other person to find a solution that fully satisfies the concerns of both. It involves finding an alternative that meets both sets of concerns. Collaborating between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn each other's insights, resolving some condition that would otherwise have them competing for resources and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.

  For example - "Here is how I'd like to do it, but I'd also like to hear what you think we should do (If we just state our differences openly, I'm sure we can figure out a way to keep us both happy)....

- **COMPROMISING:** They are intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. The individual tries to find out the mutually acceptable solution that partly satisfies both the parties. It addresses the issue more directly rather than avoiding it. It is actually seeking a quick middle- ground position. They are also medium assertive and have medium concern for relationship.

  For example -"I'll back off a bit from what I'd prefer if you'll back off some too (Nobody should expect to get everything they want)...."

- **ACCOMMODATING:** They are unassertive and cooperative. When accommodating, an individual neglects his or her own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person. There is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode. Accommodating might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person's order when you would prefer not to. They are very concerned with relationships and not assertive.

  For example - "Whatever you say is fine with me (just want to keep you happy)…."

- ❖ **AVOIDING:** They are neither assertive nor concerned with relationships. When avoiding, an individual does not immediately pursue his or her own concerns or those of the other person. He or she does not address the conflict. Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically side-stepping an issue until a better time or just withdrawing from a threatening situation.

For example - I'd rather not talk about it right now (better to do nothing than have a disagreement)..."
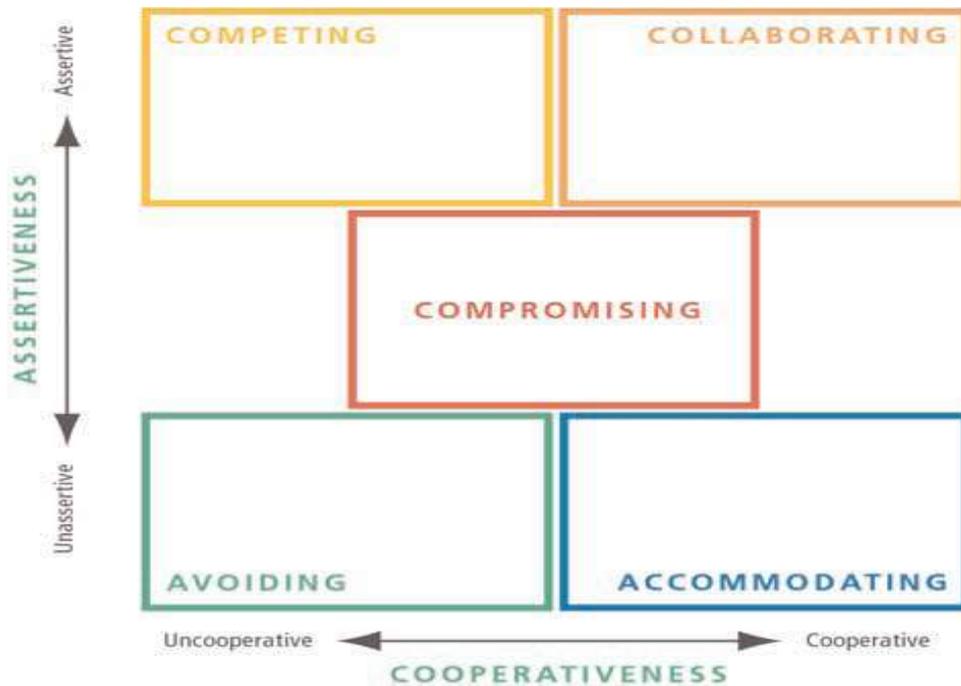
OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study was to compare the conflict management styles of male and female undergraduate students.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

A systematic procedure to collect data, which helps to test hypotheses of the study under investigation, was adopted. The method is essentially descriptive survey method. Descriptive research studies are designed to obtain pertinent and precise information concerning the current status of the phenomena and whenever possible to draw valid general conclusions from the facts discovered.

SAMPLE

The sample of the present study comprised 200 undergraduate students from different colleges in Delhi. This sample included 100 male undergraduate students and 100 female undergraduate students. Random sampling technique was employed.

TOOL USED

In the present study, the following tool was employed:

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument by *Thomas and Kilmann* (2007)

PROCEDURE USED FOR DATA COLLECTION

The investigator personally collected the data for present study. The students were approached through the heads of the institution. The permission of the concerned heads of the institution was sought and timings were fixed with the principals and teachers-in-charge as well. The requirements of the study were to take undergraduate boys and girls studying in colleges. 100 male and 100 female undergraduates were selected randomly to collect data for testing the hypotheses of the present study.

The tools Conflict mode instrument was administered on 200 students studying in various colleges of Delhi. The students were seated comfortably in their classrooms, where there was no outside disturbance. A good rapport was established with the students. Investigator explained the purpose of the test to the subjects. The subjects were told that this was not an examination rather it is the collection of general information. They were required to give their true, free and frank opinion. It was also made clear to them that their replies would be kept strictly confidential. They were also ensured that their replies would be used only for research purpose. Instructions from test manual printed at the cover page were read to the subjects. All the efforts were made to get maximum co-operation of the students. On completion, test booklets along with answers were collected. The scoring was done with the help of scoring key.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The following statistical techniques were employed in order to analyze the data:

1. Descriptive statistics i.e. mean and standard deviations were employed to study the distribution of the sample.

2. Inferential statistics i.e. t-ratio was employed to find out differences between the groups.

3. Graphical representation was also done.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS:

Hypothesis states, "There will no significant gender difference in the conflict management styles of undergraduate students".

RESULTS

The hypothesis was tested with the help of entries made in Table 3.1. Its pictorial form has been given in Figure 3.1.

Table 3.1

Mean differentials between male and female undergraduates with regard to conflict management styles

Conflict Management Styles	M_1	M_2	SD_1	SD_2	t-value	Level of Significance
Competing	6.4	6.13	1.77	1.80	1.06	NS
Collaborating	5.96	5.06	1.76	1.69	3.68	.01
Compromising	5.79	6.18	1.82	1.61	1.6	NS
Avoiding	6.03	6.14	1.56	1.72	0.47	NS
Accommodating	5.8	6.4	1.6	1.6	2.68	.01

M_1 -   Mean scores of conflict management styles of male undergraduates.

M_2 -   Mean scores of conflict management styles of female undergraduates.

SD_1-   Standard deviation of scores of conflict management styles of male undergraduates.

SD_2-   Standard deviation of scores of conflict management styles of female undergraduates.

Figure 3.1
Mean scores of conflict management styles of male and female undergraduates

The mean scores of male undergraduates with regard to different types of conflict management styles i.e. competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding and accommodating were 6.4, 5.96, 5.79, 6.03 and 5.8 respectively and that of female undergraduates were 6.13, 5.06, 6.18, 6.14 and 6.4 respectively. The standard deviation of scores of male undergraduates with regard to different types of conflict management styles i.e. competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding and accommodating were 1.77, 1.76, 1.82, 1.56 and 1.6 respectively and that of female undergraduates were 1.80, 1.69, 1.61, 1.72 and 1.6 respectively The calculated t-value were 1.06, 3.68, 1.6, 0.47 and 2.68 respectively.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Entries made in Table 3.1. show that mean differentials between male and female undergraduates with regard to collaborating (t=3.68) and accommodating (t=2.68) conflict management styles are statistically significant at .01 level of significance whereas in competing, compromising and avoiding are statistically insignificant . The above results indicate that the male students adopt the collaborative (M= 5.96) conflict management style more than the female students. Further, the female students used accommodating conflict management style more (M= 6.4) than male students (M= 5.8). In addition the male and female undergraduate students use competing, compromising and avoiding and conflict management style equally.

Hence, Hypothesis, "There will no significant gender difference in the conflict management styles of undergraduate students" is partially rejected.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the present study are as follows:

- The results entered in Table 3.1 show that the calculated t-value of conflict management styles of male and female undergraduate students was statistically significant in collaborating – conflict management style at .01level of significance and insignificant in other styles.

- It can be concluded from the above results that the male students adopt the collaborative conflict management style more than the female students. It also suggests that the male and female undergraduate students use competing, compromising, avoiding and accommodating conflict management style equally.

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