

# Periodic Research

## A Study of the Impact of Gender and Designation on Conflict Management Styles of Government Employees

### Abstract

This study investigated the influences of gender and designation and the interaction effect between gender and designation on conflict management style amongst Government employees. It is believed that although a person may use various conflict management styles, a dominant style is usually used by an individual. For the study data was collected from 220 employees working in Telecom Office, Post Office, Income tax department and banks with the help of a questionnaire 'Rahim Organisational Conflict Inventory' (ROCI II) developed by Rahim (1983). The findings of the study revealed that a significant relationship exists between gender and designation on integrating and dominating style of conflict management whereas there was no significant impact of these two variables on compromising, avoiding and obliging style

**Keywords:** Conflict, Conflict Management Styles- Integrating, Dominating, Compromising, Avoiding, Obliging

### Introduction

In the present global economic it is inevitable to hire diverse work force, adapt to a new global culture and survive against strong competitors. Thus, work force diversity, workplace stress and changing expectations of workforce have posed unique problems for the HR managers in the globalised environment. Due to this, conflict in the workplace is a frequent phenomenon. Intrinsically it is neither good nor bad but how one responds to prevent it, or responds to it creates positive or negative outcomes and experiences. Addressing a conflict is important for achieving organizational effectiveness and enhancing productivity. An unresolved conflict can lead to various problems such as poor customer relations, project delays, and loss of competent human resources. Thus conflict management is important and it becomes increasingly important to understand the conflict management styles adopted by different employees of an organization. In order to develop a better understanding of conflict in the workplace this study has been conducted to determine the influence of designation and gender differences on conflict management strategies among employees working in Government organizations

### Literature Review

Sheryl D. Brahnham, Thomas M. Margavio, Michael A. Hignite, Tonya B. Barrier, Jerry M. Chin, (2005) observed that as compared to male employees, women are more likely to utilize a collaborative conflict resolution style and men are more likely to avoid conflict. The study suggests that women may possess more effective conflict resolution attributes than their male counterparts.

Babajide (2000) noted that authoritarian style is prevalent among female managers and a democratic style is manifested by male managers.

Sorenson and Hawkins (1995) reported that male managers assumed competitive conflict resolution strategy more than female managers; and female managers assumed compromising conflict resolution strategy more often in conflict than their male counterparts.

It appears that while few researchers have studied the relationship between conflict-handling styles and gender roles, those who have reported masculine individuals adopting a dominating style (Portello & Long, 1994; Brewer et al., 2002) and females an avoiding conflict-handling style (Brewer et al., 2002).

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In a study conducted by Antonioni (1998) it was revealed that gender in general had little relationship with the variance of the conflict-management style. Gender was non-significant in all models after controlling for the personality variables. The intent of the present study was therefore to compare conflict resolution strategies of male employees and female employees and to determine whether gender differences exist. Also it explored whether designation of employees had an impact on the strategy applied for resolving conflicts in the organization

## Research Methodology Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was

1. To study the impact of sex on conflict management style among Government employees
2. To study the impact of designation on conflict management style of Government employees
3. To study the interaction effect of gender and designation on conflict management style among Government employees

## Research Tools

A questionnaire was administered for data collection. It included a Personal data sheet and 'Rahim Organisational Conflict Inventory' (ROCI II) developed by Rahim (1983). The personal data sheet was used to collect information regarding employees' sex, age, designation, educational qualification, work experience, marital status and monthly income. The ROCI contained 28 items on a five point Likert Scale measuring the five conflict management styles namely avoiding, integrating, compromising, dominating and obliging.

## Sampling and Data Collection

Data for the present research was collected from employees working in Government organizations. 220 respondents were randomly selected from Government organizations such as Telecom Office, Post Office, Income tax department and banks. It included equal number of male and female employees. Of these 55 male employees and 55 female employees having high designations were chosen. An equal number of respondents having low designation were also selected.

## Statistical analysis

Data analysis was carried out using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). One Way Anova was used to study the significant difference between conflict management style of male and female employees and to study the impact of designation on conflict resolution

Two way Anova was used to study the interaction effect of male and female employees with conflict resolution technique used by employees having high and low designation. For further analysis of significant interaction effect between the two variables Turkey Test was used.

## Interpretation and Results

### Style 1- Integrating Style

This style of conflict resolution refers to Problem Solving approach. It involves identifying the problem, generating alternate solutions, weighing the solutions and then choosing one among them. It is considered to be a strategy for deriving effective and efficient outcome of any dispute.

**Table 1**  
**Means and SDS of Integrating Conflict Management Style With Reference To Sex and Designation**

Sex Designation	Male (A <sub>1</sub> ) N=110	Female(A <sub>2</sub> ) N=110
High (B <sub>1</sub> )	N=55 M=28.52 SD=5.31	N=55 M=26.85 SD=4.24
Low(B <sub>2</sub> )	N=55 M=27.50 SD=5.01	N=55 M=25.36 SD=2.86

**Table 2**  
**ANOVA Summary of Integrating Conflict Management Style With Reference To Sex and Designation**

Source	S.S.	Df	M.S.	F	Significance level
A(Sex)	200.45	1	200.45	10.84	0.01
B(Status)	86.56	1	86.56	4.68	0.05
AB <sub>ss</sub>	290.07	1	290.07	15.69	0.01
W <sub>ss</sub>	3993.02	216	18.49		
T <sub>ss</sub>	4570.10	219			

Significance level 0.05=3.89, 0.01=6.76

**Table 3**  
**Difference Between Mean Scores of Integrating Conflict Management Style With Reference to Sex and Designation**

S. No.	Variables	Categoris s	N	Mean	Mean difference
A	Sex	A <sub>1</sub> =Male A <sub>2</sub> =female	110 110	28.01 26.10	1.91
B	Desig nation	B <sub>1</sub> = high designation B <sub>2</sub> =Low designation	110 110	27.69 26.44	1.25

F test was applied to check the impact of sex on integrating conflict management style among employees of government departments. Table 2 revealed that F value 10.84 was significant at 0.01 level of significance.

Table 3 revealed that difference mean between integrating conflict management style of male and female employees was 1.91. This revealed that males used integrating style more than female employees. Hence it was concluded that sex had significant impact on integrating conflict management style.

When F test was applied to check the impact of designation on integrating conflict management style among the respondents the value of F was found to be 4.68 and proved to be significant t 0.05 level of significance. Thus it could be concluded that

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designation also had a significant impact on adopting integrating style of conflict resolution.

Any person with higher designation has to work along with people in the process of attaining organizational goals and prefers to work with cooperation whereas persons at a lower designation tend to get directions from superiors and follow their instructions. Thus it can be concluded that people with higher designation used integrating style more than people with lower designation as depicted in table 3 where the difference mean between the two designations was 1.25.

For further interpretation of interaction of sex and designation Turkey test was applied to find out the significance of differences among mean scores of all four groups. The results are shown in table 4 below

**Table 4**  
**Summary of Turkey Test for Mean Differences of Interactional Effect of Sex and Designation on Integrating Conflict Management Style (A\*B)**

Groups	A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>2</sub> (25.36)	A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>1</sub> (26.85)	A <sub>1</sub> B <sub>2</sub> (27.50)	A <sub>1</sub> B <sub>1</sub> (28.52)
A <sub>1</sub> B <sub>1</sub>	-	1.49*	2.14**	3.16*
A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>1</sub>	-	-	0.65	1.67*
A <sub>1</sub> B <sub>2</sub>	-	-	-	1.02*
A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>2</sub>	-	-	-	-

Significance level 0.05=0.94, .01=1.17

Out of 6 comparisons four mean differences were found significant at 0.05 level of significance whereas one mean difference was found significant at 0.01 level of significance. The most striking results were obtained for the group of high designation male employees (A<sub>1</sub>B<sub>1</sub>) who used integrating style the most as compared to others in the group. Low designation female employees (A<sub>2</sub>B<sub>2</sub>) used this style least in the group.

## Style 2 -Compromising Style

This style is also known as Win-Win strategy where the give and take approach is followed to resolve any conflict. This style involves appropriate communication of all the problems among the members involved in a conflict and then reaching an equilibrium position by mutual agreement and equal consideration for one's own concerns and concerns of others.

**Table 5**  
**Means and SDS of Compromising Conflict Management Style With Reference To Sex and Designation**

Sex Designation	Male (A <sub>1</sub> ) N=100	Female(A <sub>2</sub> ) N=110
High (B <sub>1</sub> )	N=55 M=16.29 SD=2.25	N=55 M=15.92 SD=2.86
Low(B <sub>2</sub> )	N=55 M=15.89 SD=3.96	N=55 M=15.45 SD=2.44

**Table 6**  
**ANOVA Summary of Compromising Conflict Management Style with Reference to Sex and Designation**

Source	S.S.	Df	M.S.	F	Significance level
A(Sex)	8.80	1	8.80	1	NS
B(Status)	10.47	1	10.47	1.18	NS
AB <sub>SS</sub>	19.33	1	19.33	2.19	NS
W <sub>SS</sub>	1900.78	216	8.80	-	-
T <sub>SS</sub>	1939.38	219	-	-	-

Significance level 0.05=3.89, 0.01=6.76

**Table 7**  
**Difference Between Mean Scores of Compromising Conflict Management Style with**

Sr. No.	Variables	Categories	N	Mean	Mean difference
A	Sex	A <sub>1</sub> =Male	110	16.09	0.40
		A <sub>2</sub> =female	110	15.69	
B	Designation	B <sub>1</sub> = high designation	110	16.10	0.43
		B <sub>2</sub> =Low designation	110	15.67	

## Reference to Sex and Designation

The impact of sex on compromising conflict management style among employees of government departments was not significant since the value of F was found to be 1 which means it was insignificant. The difference mean between compromising conflict management style of male and female employees was 0.40. This indicated that sex did not have any significant impact on compromising conflict management style

When F test was applied to check the impact of designation on compromising conflict management style among the respondents the value of F was found to be 1.18 which was statistically insignificant. The difference mean between compromising conflict management style of high designation and low designation employees was 0.43 and was negligible. Hence it could be held that there was no significant impact of designation on compromising style of conflict resolution. Also the value of F in table 5 was found to be 2.19 proving that there was no significant interaction impact of sex and designation on compromising style

## Style 3 - Dominating Style

Dominating style implies high concern for self and low concern for others. It is identified as win-lose orientation. This style addresses one side of the conflict and resolves it partially or temporarily. To check whether there is any significant difference between male and female employees adopting dominating conflict management style and to check whether any difference between employees with high and low designation on the conflict management style they use 2\*2 factorial design was planned so that independent and interactional effect could be studied. The results obtained are tabulated below

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**Table 8**  
**Means and SDS of Dominating Conflict Management Style With Reference To Sex and Designation**

Sex Designation	Male (A <sub>1</sub> ) N=110	Female(A <sub>2</sub> ) N=110
High (B <sub>1</sub> )	N=55 M=15.10 SD=4.03	N=55 M=14.85 SD=2.11
Low(B <sub>2</sub> )	N=55 M=16.32 SD=3.93	N=55 M=16.2 SD=3.38

**Table 9**  
**ANOVA Summary of Dominating Conflict Management Style With Reference To Sex and Designation**

	S.S.	Df	M.S.	F	Significance level
A(Sex)	90.37	1	90.37	8.01	0.01
B(Status)	90.38	1	86.5690.38	8.01	0.01
AB <sub>ss</sub>	290.07	1	290.0792.59	8.20	0.01
W <sub>ss</sub>	3993.02	216	18.4911.28	-	-
T <sub>ss</sub>	4570.10	219	-	-	-

Significance level 0.05=3.89, 0.01=6.76

**Table 10**  
**Difference Between Mean Scores of Dominating Conflict Management Style With Reference To Sex and Designation**

Sr. No.	Variables	Categories	N	Mean	Mean difference
A	Sex	A <sub>1</sub> =Male A <sub>2</sub> =female	110 110	16.26 15.52	0.74
B	Designation	B <sub>1</sub> =high designation B <sub>2</sub> =Low designation	110 110	14.98 16.26	1.28

When F test was applied to check the impact of sex on dominating conflict management style among employees of government departments F value was found to be 8.01 which was significant at 0.01 level of significance as shown in Table 9

Table 10 revealed that the difference mean between dominating conflict management style of male and female employees is 0.74. This implies that males use dominating style more than female employees. Hence was concluded that sex had significant impact on dominating conflict management style.

When F test was applied to check the impact of designation on dominating conflict management style among the respondents the value of F was found to be 8.01 in Table 9 and proved to be significant at 0.01 level of significance. Thus it could be concluded that designation also had a significant impact on adopting dominating style of conflict resolution.

From table 10 it can be seen that the difference between mean score of high and low designation employees using dominating style is 1.28 indicating higher use of dominating style by low designated employees than higher designation male

and female employees. This could be due to high need for power in employees at lower designation. Significance level 0.05=0.74, .01=0.92

Turkey test was applied for further interpretation of interaction of sex and designation.

**Table 11**  
**Summary of Turkey Test For Mean Differences of Interactional Effect of Sex and Designation on Dominating Conflict Management Style (A\*B)**

Groups	A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>2</sub> (14.85)	A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>1</sub> (15.10)	A <sub>1</sub> B <sub>2</sub> (16.2)	A <sub>1</sub> B <sub>1</sub> (16.32)
A <sub>1</sub> B <sub>1</sub>	-	0.25	1.35**	1.47*
A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>1</sub>	-	-	1.11	1.22*
A <sub>1</sub> B <sub>2</sub>	-	-	-	0.12*
A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>2</sub>	-	-	-	-

Table 11 showed that four mean differences were found significant at 0.01 level of significance and two mean differences were found insignificant. The results obtained clearly indicated that low designated male employees (A<sub>1</sub>B<sub>2</sub>) used dominating style the most as compared to others in the group whereas high designated female employees (A<sub>2</sub>B<sub>1</sub>) used this style the least. This could be due to the role men have played in Indian Society men over the years. They act as head of family and have been decision makers since many years. The organizations in India also have been male dominated and this could be one of the strongest reasons for adopting dominating style of conflict resolution.

## Style 4- Obliging Style

This style of conflict resolution has low concern for self but a high concern for others and is associated with attempting to play down the difference and emphasizing commonalities to satisfy the concern of other party. It is also called 'I Lose-You Win style'. The difference between male and female employees using obliging conflict management style was tested through two way Anova.

**Table 12**  
**Means and SDS of Obliging Conflict Management Style With Reference To Sex and Designation**

Sex Designation	Male (A <sub>1</sub> ) N=110	Female(A <sub>2</sub> ) N=110
High (B <sub>1</sub> )	N=55 M=21.16 SD=3.84	N=55 M=22.10 SD=3.84
Low(B <sub>2</sub> )	N=55 M=21.47 SD=2.45	N=55 M=20.07 SD=3.88

**Table 13**  
**ANOVA Summary of Obliging Conflict Management Style With Reference To Sex and Designation**

Source	S.S.	Df	M.S.	F	Significance level
A(Sex)	32.84	1	32.84	3.60	NS
B(Status)	1.03	1	1.03	0.11	NS
AB <sub>ss</sub>	35.5	1	35.5	3.88	0.05
W <sub>ss</sub>	1975.43	216	9.14	-	-
T <sub>ss</sub>	2044.8	219	-	-	-

Significance level 0.05=3.89, 0.01=6.76

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**Table 14**  
**Difference Between Mean Scores of Obliging Conflict Management Style with Reference to Sex and Designation**

Sr. No.	Variables	Categories	N	Mean	Mean difference
A	Sex	A <sub>1</sub> =Male	110	21.31	0.78
		A <sub>2</sub> =female	110	22.09	
B	Designation	B <sub>1</sub> = high designation	110	21.64	0.13
		B <sub>2</sub> =Low designation	110	21.77	

The impact of sex on obliging conflict management style among employees of government departments was found insignificant as shown in Table 13. The value of F was found to be 3.60 which was below the table value at .01 and at .05 level of significance

Table 14 revealed that the difference between mean scores of obliging conflict management style of male and female employees was 0.78. It shows that gender is not a significant variable in adopting obliging style of conflict resolution.

F test applied to check the impact of designation on obliging conflict management style among the respondents revealed that designation was also insignificant in selecting obliging strategy for conflict resolution. The value of F was 0.11 which was much below the table value. Table 14 also revealed that the difference in means (0.13) amongst high and low designation employees was also negligible and hence insignificant for adopting obliging style of conflict resolution.

The values of Table 13 indicate that the interaction effect of sex and designation on obliging style of conflict resolution was significant as per the value of F calculated at 3.88.

**Table 15**  
**Summary of Turkey Test For Mean Differences of Interactional Effect of Sex and Designation on Obliging Conflict Management Style (A\*B)**

Groups	A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>1</sub> (22.10)	A <sub>1</sub> B <sub>1</sub> (21.16)	A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>2</sub> (20.07)	A <sub>1</sub> B <sub>2</sub> (21.47)
A <sub>1</sub> B <sub>1</sub>	2.03*	1.09*	-	1.4**
A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>1</sub>	0.63*	-	-	0.31
A <sub>1</sub> B <sub>2</sub>	0.32*	-	-	-
A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>2</sub>	-	-	-	-

Significance level 0.05=0.07, .01=0.84

For further interpretation of interaction of sex and designation Turkey test was applied and Table 15 showed that out of 6 comparisons three mean differences were found significant at 0.01 level of significance and three mean differences were found significant at 0.05 level of significance. The results obtained clearly indicated that high designated female employees (A<sub>2</sub>B<sub>1</sub>) used obliging style the most as compared to others in the group whereas low designated female employees (A<sub>2</sub>B<sub>2</sub>) used this style the least. This could be due to the role of women in Indian society where they understand the difficulties

faced for reaching higher level positions due to their sensitivity and tender nature they tend to have high concern for others whereas women at low designations have to face difficulties and struggle to balance their work and personal life due to which they do not prefer this strategy for resolving conflicts.

## Style 5 - Avoiding Style

This style refers to low concern for self and others. This style has been associated with withdrawal, buck passing or side stepping situations. It is most appropriate technique used for trivial issues. The objective of examining impact of sex and designation on avoiding style of conflict management has been shown below

**Table 16**  
**Means and SDS of Avoiding Conflict Management Style With Reference To Sex and Designation**

Sex Designation	Male (A <sub>1</sub> ) N=110	Female(A <sub>2</sub> ) N=110
High (B <sub>1</sub> )	n=55 M=21.05 SD=3.87	N=55 M=22.55 SD=4.85
Low(B <sub>2</sub> )	N=55 M=21.84 SD=3.77	N=55 M=22.58 SD=3.22

**Table 17**  
**ANOVA Summary of Avoiding Conflict Management Style With Reference to Sex and Designation**

Source	S.S.	Df	M.S.	F	Significance level
A(Sex)	21.0	1	21.01	1.33	NS
B(Status)	45.45	1	45.45	2.88	NS
AB <sub>ss</sub>	67.35	1	67.35	4.26	0.05
W <sub>ss</sub>	3408.94	216	15.78	-	-
T <sub>ss</sub>	3542.75	219	-	-	-

**Table 18**  
**Difference Between Mean Scores of Avoiding Conflict Management Style With Reference to Sex and Designation**

Sr. No.	Variables	Categories	N	Mean	Mean difference
A	Sex	A <sub>1</sub> =Male	110	21.44	0.62
		A <sub>2</sub> =female	110	22.06	
B	Designation	B <sub>1</sub> = high designation	110	21.03	1.18
		B <sub>2</sub> =Low designation	110	22.21	

The F value (Table 17) was found to be 1.33 which proved that impact of gender was insignificant on avoiding conflict management style among employees of government departments. Table 18 revealed that the difference in mean scores of male and female employees was 0.62 which further proved that the avoiding strategy for conflict resolution was not affected by gender.

With the application of F test the impact of designation on avoiding style was assessed. The value of F (Table17) was 2.88 which proved that designation was also an insignificant factor for this

style. Table 18 indicated the difference in mean scores of high designation and low designation employees was 1.18 and proved insignificant. Hence it was inferred that designation also did not have any impact on avoiding style of conflict resolution.

The values of Table 17 indicated that the interaction effect of sex and designation on avoiding style of conflict resolution was significant as per the value of F calculated at 4.26.

For further interpretation of interaction of sex and designation Turkey test was applied to find out the significance of differences among mean scores of all four groups. The results are shown in table 19 below

**Table 19**  
**Summary of Turkey Test For Mean Differences of Interactional Effect of Sex and Designation on Avoiding Conflict Management Style (A\*B)**

Groups	A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>2</sub> (22.58)	A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>1</sub> (21.84)	A <sub>1</sub> B <sub>2</sub> (21.55)	A <sub>1</sub> B <sub>1</sub> (21.05)
A <sub>1</sub> B <sub>1</sub>	1.53*	0.79	0.5	-
A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>1</sub>	1.03*	0.29	-	-
A <sub>1</sub> B <sub>2</sub>	0.45	-	-	-
A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>2</sub>	-	-	-	-

Significance level 0.05=0.87, .01=1.09

Table 19 showed that one mean difference was found significant at 0.01 level of significance and one mean difference were found significant at 0.05 level of significance. The results obtained clearly indicated that low designated female employees (A<sub>2</sub>B<sub>2</sub>) used avoiding style the most as compared to others in the group whereas high designated male employees (A<sub>1</sub>B<sub>1</sub>) used this style the least. Thus it could be concluded that women at lower designations were not keen about problem solving, decision making and handling adverse situations hence used this style the most where as male employees at higher designations preferred to solve problems, enjoy challenges at workplace and were strong decision makers hence did not use this style of conflict resolution strategy.

### Conclusions

The findings of the present study clearly indicated that male employees were more tempted to use integrating style due to their ability to resolve any conflict judiciously by properly discussing, analyzing its root case and resolving it through appropriately evaluated solutions. It also revealed that high designation people prefer integrating style of resolving conflicts as compared to low designation employees. The analysis further revealed that dominating style was more preferred by low designated persons and especially male employees whereas low designated female employees preferred avoiding style. High designated male employees did not preferred to use avoiding strategy for resolving conflicts in their organizations whereas high designated female employees had a preference over obliging style of conflict resolution.

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