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Keywords: *conflict management styles, team performance, university leadership, quality improvement.*

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Impact of Conflict Management Styles on Team Performance on Supervisors of Teams in Universities

Dr. Rashid M. Alhamali

Abstract- This study investigates the impact of conflict management (CM) styles on team performance. Conflict Management was conceptualized in terms of five styles: avoiding, integrating, dominating, obliging and compromising. Team performance, on the other hand, was operationalized in terms of team cohesion, team communication, innovativeness, and quality. Five hypotheses regarding the impact of each dimension of CM on team performance were postulated. Gathering data via a questionnaire developed for this study from a sample consisted of 231 employees working at 40 teams in Twenty universities selected from 4 regions. Participants in the work sites were visited by the researcher's assistant to collect data and ensure a high response rate. Two hundred and fifty questionnaires were administered by hand, and 231 were returned completely. Using SPSS and AMOS, research data were entered, coded, analyzed and plotted. The results showed that three conflict management styles (integrating, obliging and compromising) had significant positive effects on team performance while two styles (avoiding and dominating) had significant negative effects on team performance. In light of these results, the study recommended that the conflict should not be ignored or resolved in a way that suits one of the parties to the conflict and at the expense of the other party. The interests of both parties must be taken into account.

Keywords: conflict management styles, team performance, university leadership, quality improvement.

I. Introduction

Organizations seek to improve their outcomes by eliminating some the negative phenomena that occur in the organization such as the conflict between team members (Somech et al., 2009). Teams were regarded and should be as a major block for organizations (Stewart and Barrick, 2000). The reason for the team's importance is to integrate resources and skills of team members (Guimera et al., 2005). Therefore, team performance must be the best. Conflict situations are one of the cases where the performance of a team must be evaluated. Hence, the aim of this study is to explore the effect of conflict management styles on team performance. Aritzeta et al. (2005) stressed that the conflict is very frequent in organizations that rely on teams. For this reason, how the conflict is conducted has an impact on the team's performance.

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Conflict management (CM) has received considerable attention from Researchers over the years. Examples of CM-related subjects involve studies on conflict management and group decision making (Kuhn et al., 2000), conflict management effect on group effectiveness (DeChurch and Marks, 2001), CM styles and leadership effectiveness (Barbuto Jr and Xu, 2006), differences in conflict management styles from different countries (Kim et al., 2007), exploring conflict management (Stanley and Algert, 2007), CM styles and employee attitudinal outcomes (Chan et al., 2008), conflict management and forgiveness (Rizkalla et al., 2008), team satisfaction and performance (Liu et al., 2008), conflict management between and within teams (Hempel et al., 2009), CM styles and team performance (Somech et al., 2009), the relationship between emotional intelligence and CM styles and job performance (Shih and Susanto, 2010), the influence of collectivism and CM styles (Ma et al., 2010), leadership styles and CM styles (Saeed et al., 2014), CM styles and workplace bullying (Baillien al., 2014), organizational power and CM styles (Riasi and Asadzadeh, 2015) as well as cultural orientation and CM styles (Caputo et al., 2018). Generally, the majority of studies that conducted on CM used five common styles which were avoiding, compromising, dominating, integrating, and obliging (Rahim, 2000; Rizkalla Et al., 2008; Riasi and Asadzadeh, 2015; Zaman and Saif, 2016).

On the other hand, team performance has been investigated as a dependent variable in relationships with numerous variables such as conflict management (Alper et al., 2000), organizational structure and information processing (Carley and Prietula, 2014), team empowerment (Kirkman et al., 2004), transformational leadership (Dionne et al., 2004), authentic leadership (Lyubovnikova et al., 2017), collective leadership (McAuliffe et al., 2017), team mental models (Gardner et al., 2017), team tenure diversity (Yi et al., 2018).

It is noted from previous research that studies on the relationship between conflict management styles and performance of teams are few. Therefore, the importance of the current study stems from the fact that it fills a gap in the theoretical literature, and it is hoped that organizations will benefit from its results, which show the role of good management of the conflict in the performance of the team work.

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II. Literature Review

a) Conflict management styles

CM style was defined as a common pattern or behavior that presented in a response to interaction with others in the context of conflict (Kuhn et al., 2000). It is a combination of personality trait, cultural background, and situations (Ting-Toomey eta l., 2001). Researches in general identified five styles of conflict handling, which were avoiding, dominating, integrating, obliging and compromising. Table 1 shows these dimensions and other dimensions.

Table 1: Styles of conflict management

Styles of conflict management	References
Avoiding, compromising, dominating, integrating, and obliging.	Rahim (2000)
Avoidance, distributive, integrative, and mixed.	Kuhn et al. (2000)
Avoiding, compromising, dominating, integrating, and obliging.	Rahim (2002)
Avoiding, competing, collaborating, compromising, and accommodating.	Slabbert (2004)
Avoiding, integrating, compromising, dominating, and obliging.	Barbuto Jr and Xu (2006)
Avoiding, integrating, compromising, dominating, and obliging.	Yu et al. (2006)
Avoiding, competing, compromising, collaborating, and accommodating.	Stanley and Algert (2007)
Collaboration and competition conflict management styles.	Liu et al. (2008)
Avoiding, integrating, obliging, compromising and dominating.	Chan et al. (2008)
Avoiding, fighting, yielding, compromising, and problem solving.	Rizkalla et al. (2008)
Cooperative conflict management and competitive conflict management.	Hempel et al. (2009)
Cooperative conflict management and competitive conflict management.	Somech et al. (2009)
Avoiding, problem-solving, yielding and forcing.	Baillien al. (2014)
Avoiding, integrating, obliging, compromising	Saeed et al. (2014)
Avoiding, accommodating, collaborating, competing and compromising.	Riasi and Asadzadeh (2015)
Avoiding, compromising, dominating, integrating, and obliging.	Abbas and Karage (2015)
Avoiding, compromising, dominating, integrating, and obliging.	Zaman and Saif (2016)
Avoiding, problem-solving, accommodating and asserting.	Zhang et al. (2017)
Avoiding, forcing and problem-solving	Caputo et al. (2018)

b) Dimensions of conflict management in the current study

Based on the review of conflict management styles, the following styles were selected for the current paper; avoidance, distributive, integrative, dominative conflict management styles. A closer look at conflict management patterns in Table 2 indicates that the pattern is the most effective type because it is based on finding the right solution that satisfies both parties (Rahim, 2002). Followed by a style of obliging that puts the interests of others first (Barbuto Jr and Xu, 2006), even at the expense of personal interest. We can call it generosity and kindness style. In the third place comes the style of not harming the other party to the conflict through compromise (Chan et al., 2008). It can be called a settlement style. On the other hand, dominating and avoiding are ineffective styles (Chan et al., 2008; Liu et al., 2008), where the former favors personal interests over others while The second avoids conflict without finding a solution to the conflict. This pattern represents a form of withdrawal or disregard of conflict, which means failure to deal with conflict. Differences between these styles can be observed through the definitions showed in Table 2.

Table 2: Conceptualization of CM styles selected for this paper

CM Styles	Conceptualization	References
• Avoidance style	A behavior of ignoring organizational conflict in which lose-lose outcome Emerged. It is a style with low concern For self and others. Therefore, it represents a failure to approach or withdrawal from conflict issues.	Kuhn et al. (2000), Rahim (2002), Barbuto Jr and Xu (2006), Liu et al. (2008) and Chan et al. (2008),
• Integrative style	A cooperative behavior to find a persuasive solution to both sides of the conflict in a win-win approach in which parties are collaborated through information and finding an acceptable the solution for the conflict issue. It is a style With high concern for self and others. It is called a problem solving style of conflict management.	Kuhn et al. (2000), Rahim (2002), Yu et al. (2006), Barbuto Jr and Xu (2006), Chan et al. (2008) and Zaman and Saif (2016)
• Dominative style	A behavior of using influences to get Ideas accepted in a win-lose scheme. It is a style with (high concern for self and Low concern for others. This style is called forcing conflict management style.	Rahim (2002), Barbuto Jr and Xu (2006), Chan et al. (2008), Baillien al. (2014)

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• Obliging style	A behavior of meeting others needs Based on the lose-win outcome. It is a style with high concern for others and low Concern for self. It also named yielding conflict management style	Rahim (2002), Barbuto Jr and Xu (2006), Chan et al. (2008), Baillien al. (2014)
• Compromising style	A conflict-handling behavior that based on finding an accepted solution based No win-no lose scheme. It is a style with high intermediate concern for self and others.	Rahim (2002), Liu et al. (2008), Chan et al. (2008); Zaman and Saif (2016)

c) Team performance

Teams have been defined in terms of two major elements: the number of members and goals, that is, a team consists of two or more members Seeking to achieve a common goal. Consequently, team performance was Defined as a team's ability to meet its goals (Bell, 2007). According to Dionne et al. (2004), team performance has been evaluated in the literature as a system of inputs, processes, and outputs, where the team processes Resources to reach the desired results. The authors conceptualized team performance in terms of three dimensions; team cohesion, team Communication and conflict management. Melita et al. (2003) added another Dimension of team performance which was team innovation. Researchers have identified many features that make the team effective such as team cohesiveness, effective team communication, team innovations, conflict management and the team overall performance (Melita et al., 2003; Dionne et al., 2004; Zhou et al., 2015). In a study on the teams of research and development projects, Keller (2006) used three dimensions to evaluate performance, schedule performance, technical quality, and cost performance. Less cohesive Teams have poor performance (Thompson et al., 2015). Adopting Pearce and Sims (2002) scale of team effectiveness, Zhou et al. (2015) evaluated team performance based on six dimensions comprised of output, quality, change, organizing and planning, interpersonal, and overall Effectiveness. Howard et al. (2002) used quantity and quality of output as well as the resource and administrative efficiency as four dimensions of team Performance dimensions. Table 3 displayed the most common dimensions of team performance.

Table 3: Dimensions of team performance

Team performance dimensions	References
Quantity and quality of output, resource and administrative efficiency.	Howard et al. (2002)
Team cohesion, team communication, and team innovations.	Melita et al. (2003)
Process improvement and customer satisfaction	Kirkman et al. (2004)
Team cohesion, team communication, and conflict management.	Dionne et al. (2004)
Schedule performance, technical quality, and cost performance	Keller (2006)
Efficiency, work excellence, innovativeness and quality.	Kostopoulos and Bozionelos (2011)
Output, quality, change, organizing and planning, Interpersonal, and overall effectiveness.	Zhou et al. (2015)

d) Hypotheses development

CM styles were used in previous studies as an independent variable about other dependent variables such as group decision making (Kuhn Et al., 2000), group effectiveness (DeChurch and Marks, 2001), employee attitudinal outcomes (Chan et al., 2008). In other studies, CM styles were used as the dependent variable (Yu et al., 2006). Table 4 shows examples of these studies. For this study, CM styles were used as independent variables to study their relationships with team performance. Paul et al. (2004) Found a positive impact of collaborative conflict style on team performance in terms of perceived quality and participation. Findings of DeChurch et al. (2013) Confirmed that collaborating, avoiding, and competing for conflict is positively related to team performance. According to Hempel et al. (2009), cooperative and competitive conflict handling styles have positive effects on trust which in turn affects team performance. Kim et al. (2007) conducted a study to explore conflict management styles using a sample of employees form different countries; e.g., China, Japan, and South Korea and found that the dominant conflict handling among Japanese employees was compromising while the dominant style among Chinese and Korean employees is obliging. Studying the effect of conflict management styles on team effectiveness, Gull et al. (2012) found a moderate influence on team effectiveness. Particularly, the results revealed positive effects of accommodating and collaborative styles on team effectiveness, while the competing style has no significant effect on team effectiveness. In contrast, avoiding and compromising styles have a negative relationship with team effectiveness.

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Table 4: Relationships between CM styles and other variables

Year	IV	DV	Results	References
2000	CM styles	Group decision making	Integrative CM style results in positive outcomes of group decision making.	Kuhn et al.
2001	CM styles	Group effectiveness	CM style positively related to group effectiveness.	DeChurch and Marks
2006	Emotional intelligence	CM styles	Emotional intelligence has significant effects on integrating and compromising	Yu et al.
2007	CM styles	-	The dominant CM among Chinese and Korean employees are obliging , while the dominant CM among Japanese employees are compromising	Kim et al.
2008	CM styles	Employee attitudinal outcomes	Integrating CM style significantly related to employees job satisfaction and turnover intention.	Chan et al.
2008	CM styles	Team satisfaction	Collaboration conflict management style has a significant effect on the team satisfaction	Liu et al.
2009	CM styles	Team performance	cooperative conflict style has a significant effect on a team performance	Somech Et al.
2010	CM styles	Job performance	Integrating CM style has a significant effect on job performance	Shih and Susanto
2014	Leadership styles	CM styles	Managers with transformational leadership style adopt integrating and obliging CM styles, managers with transactional leadership style adopt compromising CM style.	Saeed Et al.
2015	Organizational power	CM styles	Reward power is positively related to accommodating CM style	Riasi and Asadzadeh
2018	Cultural orientations	CM styles	Cultural orientations are positively influenced CM styles	Caputo et al.

Inconsistently, the results of Somech et al. (2009) who investigated the impact of conflict management styles on team effectiveness indicated that competing style was negatively associated with team effectiveness. Based on these studies, the following hypotheses were restated:

H1: Integrating conflict style has a positive significant effect on team performance.

H2: Obliging conflict style has a positive significant effect on team performance.

H3: Compromising conflict style has a positive significant effect on team performance.

H4: Avoiding conflict style has a negative significant effect on team performance.

H5: Dominating conflict style has a negative significant effect on team performance.

III. Methodology

a) Research sample and data collection

Using a multi-stage technique as introduced by Hair Jr. et al. (2015), a random sample of 4 regions were identified from which a random sample consisted 20 universities were selected, then a random sample comprised of 40 teams were chosen. The average number of members in these teams ranged from 3-10 members, specifically, there were 250 employees. Hence, data were collected from 250 employees using a questionnaire developed for this study. A total of 231 questionnaires were returned complete and valid for statistical analyses with a response rate of 92.4%. Responses of team members were used to conduct analyses, therefore, our data were not aggregated at the team level.

b) Measures

Conflict management styles were measured based on previous studies using three indicators for each style; avoiding (1-3), integrating (4-6), dominating (7-9), obliging (10-12) and compromising (13-15) (Kim et al., 2007; Hempel et al., 2009; Somech et al., 2009; Gull et al., 2012; DeChurch et al., 2013). Team performance was measured based on employees' ratings. Six dimensions were used to assess team performance, which was members commitment to the team, work quality, interpersonal skills, initiatives, knowledge of tasks and overall performance (Stewart and Barrick, 2000). Therefore, six items were used to measure team performance.

c) Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

In order to ascertain the appropriateness of the data for exploratory factor analysis, two tests were performed: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test for Sphericity. The value of a KMO test ranges from 0 to 1, and the closer the test value of a KMO to 1, the more suitable the data for factor analysis. The test value is acceptable if it is greater than 0.05. The value of the Bartlett's test for Sphericity should be statistically significant. If these conditions are met, a factor analysis is possible. The results showed that the two previous conditions were met. The value of the KMO was greater

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than 0.05 (KMO = 0.874) and the value of the Bartlett's test was significant (P = 0.021). The results of EFA can be seen in Table 5. It was revealed that all items of CM styles were loaded on 5 factors with loadings greater than 0.71. A measurement model with factor loadings ≥ 0.70 is acceptable (Shook et al., 2004). In terms of reliability, the results indicated that composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's coefficient alpha values were greater than 0.70 (Ogedegbe et al., 2003). Convergent validity values as measured by AVEs were greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2011).

Table 5: Results of exploratory factor analysis

CMS1	CMS2	CMS3	CMS4	CMS5	TMP	AVE	CR	α
0.879								
0.901						0.78	0.914	0.897
0.869								
	0.992							
	0.874					0.75	0.899	0.878
	0.710							
		0.828						
		0.864				0.69	0.870	0.850
		0.800						
			0.844					
			0.831			0.68	0.864	0.859
			0.796					
				0.841				
				0.821		0.66	0.853	0.849
				0.773				
					0.901			
					0.881			
					0.856	0.67	0.925	0.889
					0.763			
					0.742			
					7690.			

CMS1: avoiding, CMS2: integrating, CMS3: dominating, CMS4: obliging, CMS5: compromising, TMP: team performance.

d) Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Hempel et al. (2009) suggested two steps to examine the structural model: First, testing the postulated structural model in terms of goodness-of-fit indices in order to investigate the model ability to explain relationships between variables. If the fit of the model is confirmed, the second step starts, which is hypotheses testing in which the relationship between variables is investigated. Structural model fit was evaluated by chi-square to degree of freedom ratio (χ^2/df), the goodness of fit index (GFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and the non-normed fit index (NNFI) as suggested by Barbuto Jr and Xu (2006) and Kim et al. (2015). The results of structural model goodness-of-fit indices as shown in Table 6 indicated a satisfactory overall fit of the model.

Table 6: Results of structural model goodness-of-fit indices

Indices	Value	Result
Chi-square to degree of freedom ratio (χ^2/df)	1.59	Confirmed
The goodness of fit index (GFI)	0.921	Confirmed
The comparative fit index (CFI)	0.911	Confirmed
The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	0.051	Confirmed
The non-normed fit index (NNFI)	0.961	Confirmed

Figure (1) shows the structural model of the study in which five CM styles and team performance were measured as observed variables. The results showed that conflict management styles exist in the different teams in the universities in a moderate degree in terms of the values of means for integrating (M = 3.64), obliging (M = 3.61), dominating (M = 3.60), compromising (M = 3.58) and avoiding (M = 3.55). The figure indicates that integrating style has a positive significant effect on team performance. This style is the most influential one on team performance (ß = 0.262, C.R = 7.011, P = 0.000), followed by compromising

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style (ß = 0.224, C.R = 5.73, P = 0.001) and obliging (ß = 0.190, C.R = 4.245, P = 0.024). These results confirm the acceptance of the three hypotheses: H1, H2 and H3 that assume positive effects of these variables on team performance. On the other hand, the results point out that avoiding style has a negative significant effect on team performance (ß = -0.130, C.R = 3.210, P = 0.031) and a negative significant effect of dominating style on team performance (ß = -0.220, C.R = 3.711, P = 0.021). These results indicate that H4 and H5 were supported. The CM style that has the most negative effect on team performance is the dominating style.

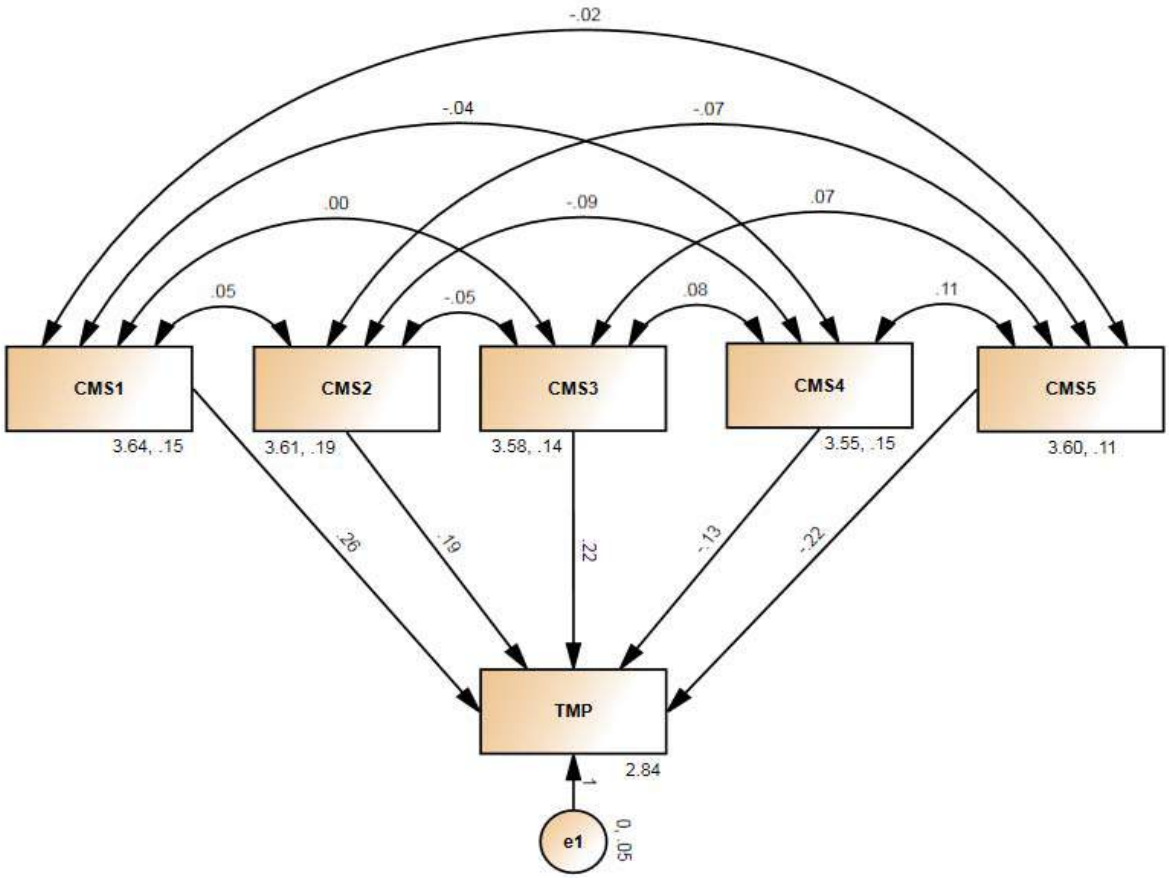

Figure 1: Results of structural model

IV. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to determine the effects of five styles of conflict management on team performance using a sample chosen from members of teams working at twenty universities. The results showed that integrating, compromising and obliging styles had positive significant effects on team performance. While avoiding and dominating styles had negative significant effects on team performance. It is logical that the style of integration is the most style that had a positive impact on team performance. This style represents a cooperative behavior aimed at finding a suitable solution to the conflict so that the parties to the conflict are finally satisfied. This pattern was dubbed by researchers and practitioners as win-win style (Kuhn et al., 2000; Rahim, 2002; Yu et al., 2006; Barbuto Jr and Xu, 2006; Chan et al. (2008) and Zaman and Saif, 2016). The compassing style is conflict handling style that based on finding a settlement that does not cause loss to any party to the conflict (Rahim, 2002, Liu et al., 2008, Chan et al., 2008 and Zaman and Saif, 2016). On the other hand, the style of obliging means favoritism by one party to solve the conflict by taking care of the interests of others This is the most flexible mode of dealing with conflict situations (Rahim, 2002, Barbuto Jr and Xu , 2006, Chan et al., 2008 and Baillien al., 2014).

In contrast, the dominating style conflict management refers to indifference to others and a focus on personal interests, so this style has a significant negative impact on the performance of the team (Rahim, 2002, Barbuto Jr and Xu , 2006, Chan et al., 2008 and Baillien al., 2014). Finally, avoidance means ignoring the conflict and not providing any solutions. In many cases, the reason for ignoring the conflict is the inability to find an appropriate solution to the conflict

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(Kuhn et al., 2000, Rahim, 2002, Barbuto Jr and Xu, 2006, Liu et al., 2008 and Chan et al., 2008). In the light of the foregoing, it was concluded that conflict is a normal situation in organizations, but what is important is how to deal with it in the right way. There are, of course, a number of styles by which conflict can be addressed on the basis of the end result of using a specific style. For example, some styles offer suitable solutions for parties, some of which mean sacrificing one side to the other. The most negative styles are those that provide a solution and force others to comply with it. Moreover, ignoring the conflict also has a negative impact on team performance.

V. Recommendations, Limitations and Future Research

The study recommends that conflict parties and conflict resolution in organizations not to ignore conflict or provide a solution and force others to accept it because these two methods of dealing with conflict are the worst. Alternatively, the co-operative style, i.e., integrating style can be used as much as possible. If this is not possible, other methods can be used to satisfy conflict parties. The current study was conducted using data collected from team members to assess their performance. It is preferable to measure the performance of a team relying on a party other than the team members (D'Innocenzo et al., 2016). Tröster et al. (2014) rated the performance of self-managed teams via experts. Future research are recommended to evaluate team performance based on supervisors' ratings. In a study by Hempel et al. (2009), five control variables were suggested; team-size, organization-size and age, organization age and industry. In the current study, no control variables were used. Therefore, it is advisable to conduct a future study that takes into account of control variables such as organization size and age. Furthermore, demographic characteristics of participants played a significant role in adopting conflict handling style, Zhang et al. (2005) found differences between older and young participants in terms of conflict style; their results indicated that older participants prefer accommodating conflict style. In the same vein, Çetin and Hacifazlioğlu (2011) pointed out significant differences between means of estimates of CM styles used by a university academics in favor of title, experience, gender as well as university type. It is therefore useful to identify the role of personal characteristics of study participants in adopting a particular style of conflict management.

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