Interpersonal Conflict Handling Styles: A Collectivist Co-workers' Perspective on its Causes and Effects

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The present study examined causes and effects of interpersonal conflict handling styles (ICHS) in perspective of co-workers representing the collectivist cultural dimension. For testing the proposed model, collected data of 402 employees of service sector organizations were surveyed. Jehn's (1995) scales for measuring task and relationship conflicts (causes were used). Constructs of trust, continuance, and normative commitments (effects) were measured by using Ayoko and Pekerti's (2008) and Meyer and Allen's (1997) scales, respectively. Interpersonal Conflict Handling Styles (ICHS) including integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising were measured by using paragraphs revealing scenarios (Zigarovich, 2007). Structural equation modeling technique was used for data analysis. The results revealed that task and relationship conflicts were correspondingly elevating integrating and avoiding behaviors at the most. Among ICHS, avoiding, dominating, and integrating styles were found to be the most influential ones for increasing levels of normative commitment, continuance commitment, and trust, respectively. For managers, the findings of the present study can be helpful in imparting training to the employees so that conflicts between co-workers could be converted into positive outcomes; and also for devising and implementing policies to develop employees' organizational commitment and trust, and interpersonal conflict handling skills. Regarding theoretical contribution, the study attempted to provide evidence of using social identity theory as a catalyst to analyze how well individuals

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choose from ICHS for attaining favorable organizational outcomes. Limitations and suggestions for future studies have been discussed.

Conflict is a double-edged sword as it turns out to be both useful and harmful (Amason & Mooney, 1999). According to the contingency view, its appearing to be useful or harmful depending on the way it is handled (Chen, Zhao, Liu, & Wu, 2012; Holmlund, 2008). Therefore, literature accentuates the understanding and better handling of conflicts (Cosier & Ruble, 1981).

For better handling of conflicts, some scholars emphasize its 'resolution', and others focus on its 'management' (Robbins, 1974). Regarding the former, literature pronounces two different views, one maintains that conflict resolution leads to diminution or extinction of conflict (e.g., Wall & Callister, 1995), but the other expects both functional and dysfunctional outcomes (Jehn, 1995). For the latter, literature holds that management of conflict does not inevitably entail evasion, lessening, or annihilation of the conflict (Leung & Tjosvold, 1998); rather, it encourages productive conflict outcomes and diminishes counterproductive ones. However, literature also maintains that the combination of both resolution and management of the conflict can reveal the finest results (e.g., Zartman, 2000). Alongside, conflict management researchers have propounded a dual concern model (foundation was laid by Thomas, 1976). According to this model, there were five conflict handling styles: Integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising (propounded by Rahim, 1983).

Regarding staff relationships at workplace and their effect on organizational outcomes, interpersonal conflict has remained a major influencer (e.g., Rahim, 1983; Thomas, Bliese, & Jex, 2005). Therefore, interpersonal conflict handling styles (ICHS) have gained significant attention with respect to both vertical (e.g., Lee, 2008) and horizontal relationships (e.g., Chen et al., 2012). The former represents the interpersonal conflict between the supervisor and the subordinate and the latter is about a conflict between co-workers.

The present study proposes and then examines the relationships between ICHS, i.e., integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising (Rahim, 1983), and its causes (conflict types) and effects (organizational outcomes). When it comes to ICHS, cross-cultural communication scholars prefer examining them in both or

either of the contexts, i.e., collectivism and individualism, comparatively or separately, respectively (e.g., Badke-Schaub, Goldschmidt, & Meijer, 2010). Collectivism is found to be instituted when 'we-ness' (Hui, 1988; Ting-Toomey, 1988) group identity, group decisions, in-group orientation, emotional dependence (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001), and maintaining relationships (Komarraju, Dollinger, & Lovell, 2008) are emphasized. On the contrary, individualism is found in societies where ties among its members are loose and they guard self-interests only (Komarraju et al., 2008; Ting-Toomey, 1988). These differences between two cultural dimensions lead to difference between the preferences of individuals for ICHS and their likely impact on the organizational outcomes.

Since the present study is carried out in an environment that exhibits characteristics of collectivist design (Hofstede, 2001), its context is collectivism. Moreover, on reviewing the literature (e.g., Tajfel, 1982), we maintain that social identity theory is more likely to reflect on the conflict and ICHS in collectivism, especially in Asia and precisely in Pakistan. This is because Asians intend to maintain intergroup harmony (Kwan, Bond, & Singelis, 1997) and try to reduce animosity in conflicts (Leung, Au, Fernandez-Dols, & Iwawaki, 1992). Thus, in collectivism, administering the transformation of an individual's identity into social identity is deemed essential, especially when he/she uses ICHS for resolving or managing conflicts.

For achieving a two-fold objective about analyzing causes and effects of ICHS, our study proposes a conceptual model followed by its empirical testing in service sector organizations of Pakistan. Providing empirical evidence from this country is of value to this body of knowledge. For the reasons, culturally Pakistan is a unique country (Khilji & Wang, 2006) representing a mix of Islam religion, Indian origins, British inheritance and American influences (Khilji, 2003), therefore, situating this study here is likely to reveal unusual findings. Moreover, in Pakistan, numerous studies have already been carried out on organizational outcomes such as the organizational commitment (e.g., Tayyab, 2007) and trust (e.g., Afsar & Saeed, 2010) but there is no significant work on these constructs in relation to ICHS.

Ozkalp, Sungur, and Ozdemir (2009) explain that in 1964, Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton in their book titled "The Managerial Grid: Key Orientations for Achieving Production through People," provided a base for the dual concern model. In fact, they developed the idea of dual concern in the context of high/low concerns for production and people but later in 1976, Kenneth W. Thomas, in his book chapter titled "Conflict and Conflict Management," extended

this model by changing its context. He focused on satisfying both one's own and the other's concerns in negotiations. Later, under the tenets of the dual concern model, many researchers (e.g., Friedman, Tidd, - Currall, & Tsai, 2000; Rahim, Antonioni, & Psenicka, 2001) used the following interpersonal conflict handling styles.

Integrating style is used as a problem-solving approach revealing high concerns for both self and others (Rahim, 2002). Its manifestations are frankness, sincerity, information sharing, finding substitutes and investigating differences to accomplish an acceptable shared solution for both parties (Friedman et al., 2000). It helps find the best alternatives (Boros, Meslec, Curseu, & Emons, 2010), especially when one faces difficult situations (Lee, 2008) or is unable to sort out the dilemma alone.

Obliging style is used for minimizing the dissimilarities and highlighting the similarities between self and others (Yuan, 2010) revealing low concern for self and high concern for others (Rahim, 2002). It is useful when one party is weak (not having a complete grasp over the reasons of the conflict), and/or the matter is comparatively of high importance to the other individual. It can also be employed when an individual is ready to give up in anticipation of taking some other advantage(s) from the adversary (Lee, 2008).

Dominating style reveals high concern for self and low concern for others (Rahim, 2002). Therefore, its users enforce, dominate, and compete to win, even at the cost of the adversary. For some situations, this style is considered useful, for example, when the individual has to deal with a colleague who is assertive or lacks knowledge (Papa & Canary, 1995). Furthermore, this style is useful when a quick decision is to be made (Rahim, 2002), especially by individuals who are powerful or consider themselves powerful (Drory & Ritov, 1997). However, sometimes it turns out to be counter-productive as it can create resistance in the adversary, especially when he/she is evenly powerful (Rahim & Buntzman, 1990).

Avoiding style shows low concerns for both self and others (Rahim, 2002). Its common symptoms are evading, pulling out, buck-passing, or circumventing. This style is used if the issue is of trivial nature or when one expects an unfavorable response of the adversary (Lee, 2008). However, literature does not appreciate frequent use of this style (Rahim et al., 2001). Compromising style uses the middle course revealing intermediate concerns for both self and others (Rahim, 2002). This style is useful for establishing harmony or deciding on a complicated issue (Thomas, Thomas, & Schaubhut, 2008), especially, when both the parties are equally dominant (Lee, 2008).

For more than three decades, the interpersonal conflict has been given a decent place in literature (e.g., Cosier & Rose, 1977). Developments in this body of knowledge have evolved task conflict (TC) and relationship conflict (RC) as its two basic types (Jehn, 1995). If not handled adequately, these two can turn into long-lasting or stubborn conflicts having serious repercussions (Kriesberg, 2005). In stubborn conflicts, individuals create difficulties for others, for their personal gains (Jehn, 1995) resulting in shattered relationships (Amason, 1999), which often last as long as a hairline scratch on glass. The present study does not include the process conflict. For the reasons, there is a high level of similarity between task and process conflicts (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999), and co-workers (employees) are likely to have no authority to change processes by themselves.

Task conflict, also known as 'cognitive conflict' (Amason, 1996), 'substantive conflict,' and 'issue-oriented conflict' (Rahim, 2002), refers to "disagreements among group members about the content of the task being performed, including differences in viewpoints, ideas, and opinions" (Jehn, 1995, p. 258). This occurs when individuals having different approaches to the nature and importance of task goals, procedure for its accomplishment, and distributive outcomes (Jehn, 1997; Jehn et al., 1999; Pelled, 1995) show disagreements during decision-making processes. For the present study, the construct of TC includes the perception of disagreements on task-related issues, but it does not include elements of personal hostility, hatred (Barki & Hartwick, 2004), reduced satisfaction, and hampered task performance, especially in case of non routine tasks (Jehn, 1994, 1995, 1997). TC may enhance co-workers' ability to analyze the task issues, foster learning and creative insights, and increase their efficiency (Jehn, 1995). Since routine tasks are performed as per standard operating procedures, they reveal differences or disagreements on standards instead of between individuals (Jehn, 1994).

Relationship conflict, also known as 'affective conflict' (Pelled, 1995) or 'emotional conflict' (Amason, 1996) refers to "interpersonal incompatibilities among group members, which typically include tension, animosity and annoyance among members within a group" (Jehn, 1995, p. 258). Dislike, distrust, and inaptness among individuals indicate the presence of RC (Barki & Hartwick, 2004; Jehn, 1995). Since negative feelings/emotionality is a component of RC (Jehn, 1997), its possessor's behavior reveals anger, disbelief, irritation, fear, disturbance, and other forms of negative effects (Simons & Peterson, 2000) along with his or her reduced satisfaction

and hampered task performance as the usual outcomes (Jehn, 1994, 1995).

Task conflict and Interpersonal Conflict Handling Style

Generally, literature considers integrating as a 'neutral style' (Gross & Guerrero, 2000), especially, for individuals having collectivist approach with par status in the organization. For TC of moderate level, this style is considered desirable as it heightens the involvement level of the individuals associated with the task (Jehn, 1995). However, when TC is of high intensity revealing the high probability of incompleteness (Jehn, 1997), individuals integrate too because they have common goals (Desivilya, Somech, & Lidgoster, 2010), e.g., task accomplishment. Likewise, when TC is of low intensity, it promotes integration for eliciting beneficial outcomes (Rahim, 2001) such as innovation, understanding, and cooperation between individuals (Carmeli & Schaubroek, 2006; Li & Hambrick, 2005).

Rahim (1983, 2002) maintains that collectivists feel like setting aside their task-related opinions during the conflict to oblige their counterparts with an intention to take an advantage of maintaining the smooth interpersonal relationship. This helps us argue that TC is likely to encourage an obliging style. Dominating style is considered useful when the issue is of a trivial nature, yet important, for either of the parties; the adversary is likely to make an unfavorable decision; or an individual intends to defend his or her rights and position (Rahim, 2002). However, in a collectivist society, experiences are different. For administering TC, bosses usually dominate but co-workers having par status and power prefer contextualizing over dominating, because they anticipate a similar response from the adversary. Since dominating to be dominated seems uncalled for, we expect a negative relationship between TC and dominating.

Avoiding style is used when the potential negative effect of confronting the other party outweighs the benefits of conflict resolution, the individual needs a cooling-off period, or the issue is of a trivial nature (Rahim, 2002). Therefore, for handling TC, a collectivist co-worker may like to avoid. The literature extends a conditional support for compromising, i.e., when individuals are to decide on complex issues, reaching a consensus, or maintaining the mutual relationships (Rahim, 1983, 2002). However, the present study presents an argument that hierarchically, co-workers work at the same level bearing the same power and status as well as stakes. Therefore,

none of them can demonstrate power to dictate the other. Moreover, deciding complex issues at co-workers' level is rare. Thus, in the light of literature (e.g., Lee, 2008; Thomas et al., 2008) we expect that in TC, co-workers are less likely to compromise.

Relationship Conflict and Interpersonal Conflict Handling Style

RC triggers emotional or interpersonal issues. Therefore, it hinders group members' performance by limiting their ability to process the information and fostering antagonistic behavior (Jehn, 1995; Jehn et al., 1999; Rahim, 2001). Resultantly, individuals isolate, which counteracts integrating (Carmeli & Schaubroek, 2006; Li & Hambrick, 2005). Adding to above, in collectivism, individuals also possess a distinct social dexterity that helps them do away with isolation, especially, when they realize that isolation is not good for them. Resultantly, they attempt to minimize dissimilarities and highlight the similarities among them (Yuan, 2010) and try to lower the intensity of RC by obliging each other (Friedman et al., 2000).

Consistent with the argument presented for obliging, social dexterities sharpen the political intellect of individuals. Therefore, their behaviors keep on changing in an unpredictable way instead of sticking to one style. Because of this, they may prefer self to others, hence, dominate. The literature also supports this argument but in specific situations, e.g., when the co-worker is assertive or ignorant (Papa & Canary, 1995), or one's own following is strong (Drory & Ritov, 1997).

As a consequence of RC, integrating and avoiding styles represent two extremes on the choice line, the former being the least and the latter as the most desired one. Since RC represents interpersonal issues, individuals expect an unfavorable response of the adversary (Lee, 2008) may prefer avoiding style. Unlike the above four styles, compromising represents the middle course (Rahim, 2002). This state of affairs is desired in RC, especially when co-workers bear equal power and status at the workplace (Lee, 2008). Therefore, we assume the positive association between RC and compromising but as a last resort. For analyzing the effects of ICHS on organizational outcomes, the present study includes three constructs in the research model, i.e., continuance commitment, normative commitment, and trust. The study does not include affective commitment that refers to an individual's attitude based on the quality and nature of his or her association with the workplace

(Oliver, 1990). The workplace-related constructs are likely to predict affective commitment more significantly than interpersonal ones.

Continuance commitment (CC) reveals an employee's readiness to remain with an organization based on his or her prior investments in the workplace. This is because an employee develops an attachment with his or her own actions instead of the organization (Oliver, 1990). Hence, it "…refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1997, p. 11).

Normative commitment (NC) refers to an individual's feeling to be obliged when his or her organization is perceived to be facilitating, helpful, faithful and trustworthy for its employees. Then, in return, they exhibit greater NC (Williams, 2004). Hence, it is an individual's feeling that he/she ought to remain in the organization (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002).

Generally, trust is considered as an individual's positive expectations about others' intent and behaviors. These expectations are established based on roles, relationships, experiences, and interdependencies between individuals. When it comes to trusting among co-workers, organizations promote intra-group trust as it enhances collaboration among them (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; McAllister, 1995) that leads to organizational success (Connell, Ferres, & Travaglione, 2003). Some scholars (e.g., Han & Harms, 2010) point out that most of the research on trust has emphasized vertical direction (the relationship between employees and boss), whereas the horizontal direction (the relationship between co-workers) has not received adequate attention. For filling this gap, the present study investigates ICHS in connection with trust among co-workers.

Interpersonal Conflict Handling Style, Continuance, and Normative Commitments

The existing literature confirms the relationship between ICHS and organizational commitment, but in a piecemeal fashion. For example, some scholars maintain that the manager's dominating style is positively associated with the subordinate's organizational commitment but negatively associated with their own (Thomas et al., 2005). Some studies situate integrating as influenced by the commitment (e.g., Tjosvold, Hui, & Law, 2001). Some argue for relatedness of commitment with obliging, avoiding (Coote, Forrest, & Tam, 2003), and integrating (Ohbuchi, Suzuki, & Hayashi, 2001). However, when it comes to confirming relationships between ICHS

and components of organizational commitment, especially of our interest, literature reveals an obvious gap. Nevertheless, the literature helps develop a line of logic for this, as it maintains that individuals on higher hierarchical levels are prone to exhibit integrating and dominating styles, whereas those on lower hierarchical levels are apt to demonstrate obliging, avoiding, and compromising styles (Brewer, Mitchell, & Weber, 2002; Drory & Ritov, 1997). Based on this, we maintain that use of integrating and obliging styles by the collectivist co-workers bearing no power (lower hierarchical levels) is less likely to reveal high CC but more likely to bring out NC. In case of dominating and compromising styles, co-workers bearing a little but equivalent amount of power (higher hierarchical levels) are likely to experience high and low levels of CC and NC respectively. We assume this because CC manifests little, whereas NC shows greater concern with interpersonal relationships. However, use of avoiding style by co-workers with a balanced amount of power and concern with interpersonal relationships is more likely to predict both high CC and NC.

Interpersonal Conflict Handling Style and Trust

Regarding the relationship between ICHS and trust, literature provides only a few clues, which are in a scattered form. For example, a style representing negative emotionality (Amason, 1996), revealing threatening expressions (Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981), or demonstrating weak or no interpersonal communication (Jehn, 1995) causes the negative effect on the trust perception of an adversary, whereas a style revealing cooperation positively associates with trust (Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999).

Based on the above discussion, we develop the following hypotheses in context of the present study:

1. Task conflict has positive relationship with integrating, obliging, and avoiding styles, whereas it has negative relationship with dominating and compromising styles.

2. Relationship conflict has positive relationship with dominating, obliging, compromising, and avoiding styles, whereas, it has negative relationship with integrating style.

3. Employees who use dominating, avoiding, and compromising styles are more likely to exhibit high continuance commitment than those who use integrating and obliging styles.

4. Employees who use integrating, obliging, and avoiding styles

are more likely to exhibit high normative commitment than those who use dominating and compromising styles.

5. Employees who use integrating, obliging, and compromising styles are more likely to exhibit high trust than those who use dominating and avoiding styles.
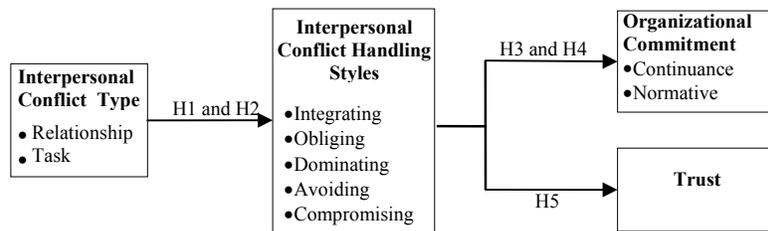

Figure 1. The research model.

Method

Participants

Participants were 402 employees of service sector organizations such as education, banking, telecommunication, information technology, hotel, transportation, hospital, media, postal services, and trade and industry organizations. Out of 700 distributed survey questionnaires, 450 were received back. Questionnaires having more than 25% blanks were excluded (Sekaran, 2003) leaving with 412. Finally, after excluding outliers, 402 questionnaires were left for further data analysis (For the aggregate profile of the participants, see Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic Description of Participants

Variables	f	%
Gender		
Male	257	63.9
Female	145	36.1
Age (Years)		
18 – 25	117	29.1
26 – 35	180	44.8
36 – 45	76	18.9
46 and above	29	7.2

Variables	*f*	%
		Continued…
Education		
Higher Secondary	38	9.5
Graduation	138	34.3
Masters	186	46.3
M. Phil/MS/Equivalent	26	6.5
PhD	14	3.4
Professional Organizations		
Education	38	9.5
Banking	84	20.9
Telecommunication	53	13.2
Information Technology	39	9.7
Hotel	31	7.7
Transportation	2	0.5
Hospital	105	26.0
Media	34	8.5
Others (Postal Services, trade and industry organization etc.)	16	4.0

The rationale behind selecting employees of service sector organizations had two major reasons: Firstly, employees working in the service sector organizations are boundary-spanners who interact with humans both inside (bosses and peers) and outside (clients) of the organization more than their manufacturing counterparts (Ross, 1995). We expected that more the human-interaction was, the higher the chances of conflict would be. Secondly, job demands for service sector employees are of variable nature that exposes them to the issues of conflicts more than those whose jobs demand less direct worker/client interaction, workplace autonomy, variable performance criteria, and indescribable output (Mills & Dalton, 1994).

Measures

For adapting measures, we considered two aspects, i.e., ensuring consistency between measures included in the questionnaire and the respective construct of interest and incorporating slight modifications to help participants acclimatize with the study. The following measures were used:

Task and relationship conflicts. For both TC and RC, we used Jehn's (1995) scales comprising three items each (e.g., 'my colleagues argue a lot about how work should be done' and 'how often do disagreements result in emotional outburst, respectively). These were

scaled on five points, i.e., from *strongly disagree* = 1 to *strongly agree* = 5 and from not at all = 1 to a *great deal* = 5, for task and relationship conflicts, respectively. The participants were asked to indicate the degree of agreement (for TC) and occurrence (for RC) of the situation stated in each item regarding their interpersonal relationship with co-workers. Higher scores corresponded to higher levels of task and relationship conflicts and vice versa. Reliability coefficients for these scales were .76 and .74 respectively.

Trust.   For measuring trust, we used Ayoko and Pekerti's (2008) scale comprising three items (e.g., I trust my co-workers). One item was reverse scored. These were scaled on five points, i.e., from *strongly disagree* = 1 to *strongly agree* = 5. Participants were asked to indicate the level of agreement with each statement. Higher scores corresponded to higher levels of trust perceptions about co-workers and vice versa. Reliability coefficient for this scale was .72.

Continuance and normative commitments.   For measuring CC and NC, we selected three items for each from Meyer and Allen's (1997) scale (e.g., 'Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now' and 'jumping from organization to organization does not seem at all unethical to me' respectively). Two items were reverse scored. Both measures were scaled on five points, i.e., from *strongly disagree* = 1 to *strongly agree* = 5. Participants were asked to self-report their level of agreement to each statement. Higher scores corresponded to higher levels of continuance and normative commitment and vice versa. Reliability coefficients for these scales were .88 and .68, respectively.

Interpersonal conflict handling styles.   Five ICHS were represented as paragraphs based on Rahim (1983) and Thomas and Kilmann (1974) and used by Zigarovich (2007). The respondents were asked to keep their co-workers in mind, while indicating their probable use of each ICHS, i.e., Integrating, Obliging, Dominating, Avoiding, and Compromising. A 5-point scale ranging from *unlikely* = 1 to *likely* = 5 was placed against each paragraph. Participants were asked to indicate the likelihood of occurrence of each situation stated in the paragraph. Higher scores corresponded to higher likelihood of respective ICHS being demonstrated by the participant and vice versa.

Psychometric Properties of Measures

The reliability of five constructs was found to be acceptable, as

Cronbach's alphas and composite reliability coefficients offered values greater than .60 (Tang, 2008) and .70 (Lee, Huang, & Hsu, 2007) respectively. For validating constructs, we confirmed convergent and discriminant validities. The standardized factor loadings well above the threshold of .5 at $p < 0.05$ provided evidence of convergent validity (Fraj, Martinez, & Montaner, 2006). Moreover, the square root of each construct's average variance extracted was found to be larger than its corresponding correlation coefficients. This revealed evidence of discriminant validity (Lee et al., 2007). For details see Table 2.

Table 2

Correlations, Reliabilities, and Validities of Task Conflict, Relationship Conflict, Trust, Continuance Commitment, and Normative Commitment

Variables	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability	TC	RC	Trust	CC	NC
TC	.76	.88	-				
RC	.74	.70	.70	-			
Trust	.72	.73	-.15*	-.14*	-		
CC	.88	.76	-.21**	-.17*	-.07	-	
NC	.68	.75	.40**	.27**	-.11	.052	-
$\sqrt{AVE}$			.85	.66	.68	.71	.70

Note. TC= Task Conflict; RC = Relationship Conflict; CC = Continuance Commitment; NC = Normative Commitment.

*p < .05. **p < .001.

Procedure

For data collection, a team of six undergraduate students was lead by the second author. These students had clarity about the data collection process as they had attended a course on research methods. Moreover, their specialization was Human Resource Management; therefore, they were able to interact with participants, especially for answering their queries, if any. To ascertain role of the concerned organizations, a direct method of distribution and collection of questionnaires was applied after taking prior permission from the concerned heads of departments or seeking cooperation from the contact persons. Students only assisted to get surveys completed by employees working in identified organizations.

Participants were approached in their offices situated within twin-cities, i.e., Rawalpindi and Islamabad (the capital of Pakistan) and Karachi. They were briefed about the survey completion time, i.e., maximum 30 minutes, the study purpose, and ethical issues such as confidentiality and anonymity. The survey questionnaire comprising two sections was distributed. The first section was aimed at eliciting responses from the participants on the study constructs, whereas, the second section was arranged to obtain demographic information. Volunteers were ensured that data would be used for the academic purposes only. The questionnaires were completed by employees and collected during the same meeting by the concerned members of survey team.

To ensure that no participant would face any uncalled for consequences, we undertook certain ethical principles, especially during the process of data collection. Utmost care was practiced to ensure the participants' confidentiality and anonymity and acts of deceiving individuals for eliciting data, causing discomfort, and embarrassment for participants was avoided. All participants were informed about study objectives and benefits; they were informed about their rights and protections. Moreover, verbal informed consent from the participants (i.e., disclosing the procedure of the survey) was obtained.

Data Analysis Approach

Data were analyzed by using a two-step approach of structural equation modeling i.e., estimating the measurement model followed by the structural model. This was done because using the existing measures needed ensuring their appropriateness for the population included in the study (Ho, 2006). The analysis was carried out in AMOS. Before attaining results, we assessed normality, identified outliers, and ensured the sample adequacy for the purpose of minimizing the possibility of empirical under-identification, heteroscedasticity, and the likelihood of technical problems in the analysis (Kline, 2011). The assumption for univariate normality was satisfied as none of the items revealed the absolute value of kurtosis greater than 10 (Harrington, 2009).

For identifying and treating outliers, we used Mahalanobis D^2 statistic and eliminated 10 cases (Byrne, 2010). Sample adequacy was demonstrated by using both subjective and objective criteria. Subjectively, the sample size of the present study met the minimum requirement for being appropriate, i.e., greater than 200. Furthermore,

well above the threshold (5:1) defined by the widely used ratio for maximum likelihood estimation, i.e., N:q (where N = number of cases and q = number of parameters that require statistical estimates), the sample size of the present study satisfied the assumption as it proved to be 402:40 revealing approximately 10:1 (Kline, 2011). Here 402 represent the number of cases while 40 represent the number of parameters respectively.

Results

It is noteworthy that while satisfying assumptions and assessing fitness of measurement and structural models, we did not rely only on the critical ratios and p values as in large samples these were considered to be overly sensitive to issues like non-normality and/or high statistical power endangering rejection of theoretically reasonable model(s) (Ho, 2006).

Table 3

Model Fitness Indices for Measurement and Structural Models

Fit indices	Measurement Model		Structural Model	
Absolute Fit Indices				
χ^2 / df	132.85 / 80 = 1.66*	(good fit)	401.96 / 149 = 2.69*	(good fit)
GFI	.96	(good fit)	.91	(good fit)
RMSEA	.04	(good fit)	.07	(good fit)
Incremental Fit Indices				
NFI	.94	(good fit)	.85	(acceptable fit)
RFI	.92	(good fit)	.80	(acceptable fit)
IFI	.97	(good fit)	.89	(good fit)
TLI	.97	(good fit)	.87	(acceptable fit)
CFI	.97	(good fit)	.89	(good fit)

*p < .001.

Table 3 shows a good and acceptable fit of measurement and structural models. These results unveil the appropriateness of hypothesized relationships. The benchmarks are: for χ^2/df < 2; for GFI, NFI, RFI, IFI TLI, and CFI 1 stands for perfect or exact fit, close to or > 0.90 or > 0.95 represent good fit, and 0 means no or poor fit); for RMSEA 0 stands for perfect or exact fit, < .05 or between .05 to

.08 represent good fit, .08 to .10 reveals mediocre fit, and > .10 means poor fit) (Byrne, 2010; Ho, 2006; Harrington, 2009).

Table 4

Hypotheses Testing representing Causes and Outcomes of Interpersonal Conflict Handling Styles

Hypotheses	DVs		IV	β
1	Integrating	←	TC	.48 ***
	Obliging	←	TC	.37 ***
	Dominating	←	TC	-.27 ***
	Avoiding	←	TC	.21 **
	Compromising	←	TC	-.05 ns
2	Integrating	←	RC	-.21 **
	Obliging	←	RC	.19 **
	Dominating	←	RC	.31 ***
	Avoiding	←	RC	.36 ***
	Compromising	←	RC	.11 ns
3	CC	←	Integrating	-.04 ns
	CC	←	Obliging	-.15 ***
	CC	←	Dominating	.15 ***
	CC	←	Avoiding	.05 ns
	CC	←	Compromising	.09 *
4	NC	←	Integrating	.09 *
	NC	←	Obliging	.08 ns
	NC	←	Dominating	-.23 ***
	NC	←	Avoiding	.27 ***
	NC	←	Compromising	-.17 ***
5	Trust	←	Integrating	.11 *
	Trust	←	Obliging	-.07 ns
	Trust	←	Dominating	-.17 ***
	Trust	←	Avoiding	-.08 ns
	Trust	←	Compromising	.06 ns

Note. ns = nonsignificant.

*$p < .10$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

Causes of Interpersonal Conflict Handling Style

Table 4 and Table 5 represent the variances and hypotheses results respectively. Hypotheses 1 and 2 pertain to relationships between conflict types and ICHS. For hypothesis 1, results from Table 4 indicate that TC causes significant positive variation in integrating

style, obliging style, and avoiding style, whereas, it explains significant negative variation in dominating style. Results reveal the negative impact of TC on compromising but it is nonsignificant. For hypothesis 2, results from Table 4 indicate that RC causes significant negative variation in integrating style, whereas it explains significant positive variation in obliging style, dominating style, and avoiding style. Results reveal the positive impact of RC on compromising but it is nonsignificant.

Effects of Interpersonal Conflict Handling Style

Hypotheses 3, 4, and 5 pertain to the relationships between ICHS and organizational outcomes i.e., CC, NC, and trust. Regarding Hypothesis 3, results from Table 4 show that dominating and compromising styles explain significant positive variation in CC, respectively, whereas, obliging style explains significant negative variation in CC. Results reveal the nonsignificant negative impact of integrating style and the positive effect of avoiding style on CC. For Hypothesis 4, results from Table 4 show that integrating and avoiding styles explain significant positive variation in NC, whereas. dominating and compromising styles explain significant negative variation in NC. The variation explained by obliging in NC is nonsignificant. Regarding Hypothesis 5, results from Table 4 show that integrating style explains significant positive variation in trust while dominating style explains significant negative variation. However, variances explained by obliging, avoiding, and compromising styles are nonsignificant.

Supplementary Analyses

During supplementary analyses, we sought answers of three questions. The first is: What is the pattern of inter-correlations among ICHS? Relationships among ICHS reveal that scores of integrating style are significantly correlated with obliging style ($r = .27$), avoiding style ($r = .23$) and compromising style ($r = .27$, $p < .01$). Relationships between obliging style and avoiding style ($r = .45$) and dominating style and compromising style ($r = .17$) are also significant at $p < .01$. The rest is insignificant and trivial ($r < 1.07$).

The second question is: Do employees of service industries in Pakistan adopt one style more than others? Results from Figure 2 indicate that percentages of participants' likelihood of using compromising, dominating, and integrating styles are greater than

their unlikelihood. Contrary to this, percentages of their unlikelihood of using avoiding and obliging styles are greater than their likelihood.
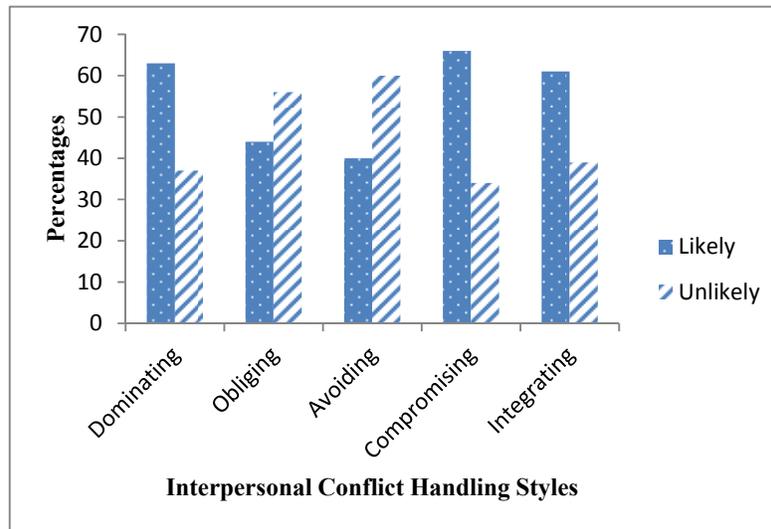

Figure 2. Percentage of participants' likelihood and unlikelihood of using each Interpersonal Conflict Handling Styles.

The final question is: Do employees of service industries in Pakistan adopt different styles for different conflicts? Results shown in Figure 3 indicate that percentage of participants' likelihood of using dominating style is greater when RC is high (37%) as compared to when RC is low (27%). Contrary to this, likelihood of using dominating style is smaller when TC is high (30%) as compared to when TC is low (34%). Similarly, percentage of participants' likelihood of using compromising style is greater when RC is high (36%) than when RC is low (31%). Contrary to this, likelihood of using compromising style is smaller when TC is high (29%) than the case where TC is low (37%). This reveals that participants' selection and use of dominating and compromising styles are different for different types of conflict. However, although degree of usage in terms of percentages is different, the pattern for choosing remaining ICHS, i.e., integrating, avoiding, and obliging, is consistent for both types of conflict.
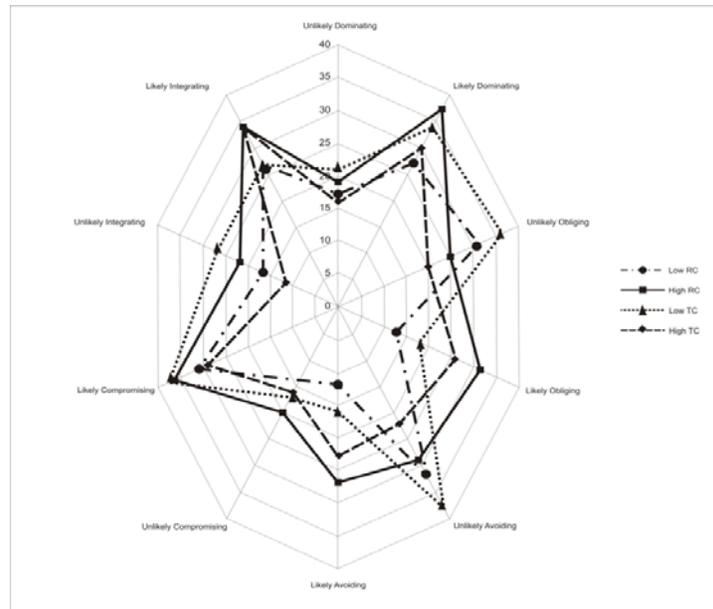
Figure 3. Percentage of participants' likelihood and unlikelihood of using each ICHS in response to high and low levels of RC and TC

Discussion

Evading conflicts has never been easy. This is because, on the one hand, organizational conflicts occur with such a high frequency that escaping all of them is almost impossible. On the other hand, organizational conflicts generate a range of useful choices for managers (Eisenhardt, Kahwajy, & Bourgeois, 1997). Therefore, they maintain that demonstrating conflict engagement is essential, especially when it is in the open. Thus, it is learnt that understanding, and then handling conflicts better lead to positive outcomes. Based on this argument, the present study aimed at developing an understanding about causes and effects of the ICHS. Beyond rhetoric, the study focused on proposing a framework for assessing the predictability of conflict types toward ICHS. Furthermore, it was aimed to assess the predictability of these styles on three major organizational outcomes, i.e., CC, NC, and trust.

Interpretations of Outcome

During conflict, an individual's behavior is determined by the way conflict is manifested. Therefore, ICHS are referred to an

individual's expected way of dealing with the conflict (Robbins & Judge, 2009). When it comes to relating conflict types to its handling styles, our findings with respect to hypothesis 1 and 2 H1 and H2 substantiate the view that collectivist co-workers believe in we-ness (Hui, 1988). Regarding Hypothesis 1, integrating is found to be the relatively most influenced ICHS among the ones having been significantly affected by the TC. This style is followed by obliging and avoiding, whereas dominating is found to be negatively affected. This indicates that in case of TC, co-workers prioritize cooperative behaviors.

Therefore, they integrate considering the best and oblige deeming next to the best alternative. Scores on avoiding style indicate that in TC, the possibility of coming across such situations when one does not feel like interacting with the colleague(s) is also there. We, being part of this society, can understand that people who are inclined more towards collectivist mind set do face difficulty in saying "No" However, consistent with our expectations, growing with TC significantly lowers the possibility of using dominating style. The realization of one's own power and status in the organization is expected to be the major reason for this. For RC hypotheses 2, avoiding is found to be the relatively most influenced ICHS, followed by dominating and obliging, whereas integrating is found to be negatively associated. This supports the literature maintaining that in collectivist cultures, there is a greater preference for avoiding but very little for dominating than individualistic ones (Leung, 1997).

This also points out that in case of RC, co-workers either pass up at all or try to take over. This is done, either to suppress their own feelings or oppress the other's emotions. Scores on obliging style indicate that in a relationship, the possibility of coming across such situations when one expects some give and take is also there, especially if both or at least either of the co-workers is politically intelligent. Moreover, consistent with our expectations, growing with RC significantly lowers the possibility of using integrating style. This offers support to the view that collectivists exhibit weak interpersonal communication (Jehn, 1995).

The findings related to the effects of ICHS on CC and NC hypothesis 3 and 4 unveil an interesting situation. As far as the nature of relationships is concerned, the results on the relationship between TC and ICHS are similar to the relationship between ICHS and NC. Similarly, the results on the relationship between RC and ICHS are partially similar to the relationship between ICHS and CC. On NC, avoiding, followed by integrating, is found to be relatively more influential ICHS, whereas dominating and compromising styles show

the negative effect. This finding is valuable because the literature maintains that the conflict, by its nature, results in stress, rivalry, and discontent among individuals that adversely affect their commitment (Amason & Sapienza, 1997). However, this study provides a solution that using avoiding and integrating, and dominating and compromising styles for handling a conflict elevates NC and CC, respectively.

Moreover, evading dominating and compromising, and obliging styles ensue the same respectively. It may be argued that the basis of Hypothesis 5 was imprecise as findings do not confirm posited relationships in total. The construct of trust is found to be negatively and positively influenced by dominating and integrating styles, respectively. The possible reason for the former is what Rau (2005) maintains that individuals threatened from hostile individuals do not trust them, whereas the latter exhibits collectivists' urge for maintaining relationships (Komarraju et al., 2008). These findings can be helpful in developing an understanding that using integrating and evading dominating styles can help convert distrust into trust.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study provide a rationale for elevating levels of favorable organizational outcomes. Therefore, its findings can be used for imparting training to the employees so that conflicts between co-workers are converted into positive outcomes. The results can also have implications, particularly for Pakistani service organizations and generally for societies having similar cultural dimensions, for implementing new policies to develop employees' organizational commitment and up skilling to achieve peaceful interpersonal conflict handling. The implications of this study can lead top managers and practitioners to build commitment and enhance the conflict management skills of employees for a well-functioning management environment. It may also enable them to understand the dynamics of commitment and become more competent in conflict resolution for a healthy environment. The overall results suggest a symptomatic treatment for conflict-related problems, particularly in the context of this study. The professionals may learn that there is no single ideal style that fits every situation. All the ICHS can be equally effective subject to the use of the right style, at the right time, and in the right situation. Management scholars have also realized the importance of "Situational Approach", which is a hallmark of contemporary management. Therefore, they prefer this over the "one-best strategy" approach (Rahim, 2002).

Limitations and Suggestion for Future Research

The implications drawn from this study must be viewed in the light of limitations inherent to this research. Although, we used ex-ante and ex-post approaches to suppress the effect of common method bias, it cannot be eliminated completely as the data were collected from single source. For the former, we used different scales for different measures, tried to control length of the questionnaire, assured anonymity and confidentiality to the participants, etc.; for the latter, we diagnosed common method variance at analysis stage. We applied Harman's one-factor test, also known as single-factor and found that the percentage of variance extraction sums of squared loadings was 21% revealing no threat of common method bias (Chang, Witteloostuijn, & Eden, 2010; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

Moreover, our study was conducted in the developed regions of Pakistan. Indeed, the cultural contexts and their effects on individuals' or social groups' behaviors may differ from place to place. As pointed out in the literature (e.g., Tjosvold et al., 2001) culture and socialization processes are directly related to the interpersonal conflict handling behaviors and the commitment of individuals. In this respect, results in this study need to be interpreted cautiously by considering the dynamic nature of culture. Possibly, a longitudinal design would capture the dynamic nature of the perception process and its outcomes in a more comprehensive manner. Moreover, future studies may also have comparisons with culturally diverse organizations and cross-cultural replication of the current study. Having discussed the relationship between conflict types and ICHS in the context of this study, we expect that this particular domain of knowledge can bring out more possibilities if the same relationship is studied with the moderating role of 'hierarchical levels.

Future studies may examine additional variables for more theory building. A longitudinal study is required to empirically examine how innovation would impact effectiveness using objective as well as subjective criteria. Importantly, future research might investigate the causal link between the three innovation dimensions, as it is leadership that articulates and encourages innovation, by creating vision and influencing the environment and finally inducing innovation on a personal level. Future studies might also focus on gauging innovation at the group and organizational level for a more complete model.

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