Asian Ways of Managing Conflicts: A Cross Cultural Examination of Tactical Behaviors in Interpersonal Conflicts

Assoc. prof. GRAŽINA ČIULADIENĖ
The Content

• Conflict management styles

• Culture’s impact on conflict behaviour

• Asians preferences of strategies to manage interpersonal conflicts
DEFINITION(S)

• the perceived and / or actual incompatibility of values, expectations, processes, or outcomes between two or more parties over substantive and/or relational issues” (Ting-Toomey, 1994).

• a communicative exchange between at least two interdependent parties who have different, opposite, or incompatible opinions and goals and who perceive that the other is interfering in the achievement of his or her goals (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995).

• incompatible activities, where one person’s actions are interfering, obstructing, or in other ways making the behavior of another less effective (Deutch).
DEFINITION(S)

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE

- an overall approach to conflict interaction / an overall picture of a person’s communication orientation toward conflict.

- Patterned responses or clusters of behavior, that people use in conflict

- **Individuals have a predominant conflict style**

- The classification schemes range from the two-style approach to the ten-style approach.
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**How do you prefer to manage conflicts?**  
**CONFLICT STYLE MANAGEMENT**
1. I avoid being put on the spot. I keep conflicts to myself.
2. I use my influence to get my ideas accepted.
3. I usually try to split the differences in order to resolve an issue.
4. I generally try to satisfy the others’ needs.
5. I try to investigate an issue to find a solution acceptable to us.
6. I usually avoid open discussion of my differences with people.
7. I use my authority to make a decision in my favor.
8. I try to find a middle course to resolve and in pass.
9. I usually accommodate the others’ issues.
10. I try to integrate my ideas with the other to come up with a decision.
11. I try to stay away from disagreement.
12. I use my expertise to make decisions that favor me.
13. I propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.
14. I give in to other persons’ ambitions.
15. I try to work with others to find solutions that satisfy both our expectations.
16. I try to keep my disagreements to myself in order to avoid hard feelings.
17. I generally pursue my side of an issue.
18. I negotiate with others to reach a compromise.
19. I often go with the others’ suggestions.
20. I exchange accurate information with others so that we can solve a problem together.
21. I tried to avoid unpleasant exchanges.
22. I sometimes use my power to win.
23. I use give and take so that a compromise can be reached.
24. I try to satisfy the others’ expectations.
25. I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that issues can be solved.
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<td>ACCOMMODATION</td>
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The styles of conflict management (Thomas 1976; Kilmann and Thomas 1975)

Concern for other vs. Concern for self

Low cooperation - Low aggressiveness

- requesting, insisting, demanding one’s own position over the others’
- criticizing, rejecting the statements of partners, hostile questioning, threats, putting-downs

High cooperation - High aggressiveness

Domination / Competition
The styles of conflict resolution

- Concern for other
  - Low cooperation
  - High cooperation

- Concern for self
  - Low aggressiveness
  - High aggressiveness

Collaboration / Integration / Problem solving

attempting to find a mutually agreeable solution:
discussing the conflict,
sharing views openly,
listening to both positions,
maintaining problem-solving attitudes,
emphasizing commonalities,
empathy
The styles of conflict resolution

Concern for other

Low cooperation

High cooperation

Concern for self

Low aggressiveness

High aggressiveness

Obliging
Accommodating

putting the other party’s interests first, conceding to the other’s demands renouncing one’s own needs and interests
The styles of conflict resolution

denial of conflict, change of topic, topic and / or person avoidance;

Avoiding
The styles of conflict resolution

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<th>Concern for self</th>
<th>Concern for other</th>
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<tr>
<td>Low cooperation</td>
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<td>High cooperation</td>
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Low aggressiveness                  High cooperation

High aggressiveness                  Low cooperation

Copromise
The styles of conflict resolution

(Thomas 1976; Kilmann and Thomas 1975)

- **Accommodation**
- **Collaboration**
- **Compromise**
- **Avoidance**
- **Competition**

Concern for self

Low cooperation → High cooperation

Concern for other

Low aggressiveness → High aggressiveness
How we define the conflict problem, how we “punctuate” the triggering event that leads to the conflict problem, and how we view the goals for satisfactory conflict resolution are all likely to vary across cultures, situations, and individuals (Ting-Toomey and Oetzel, 2001, p.1).

The link between culture and conflict strategies is unique.
• It is valuable to understand how culture influences the way people manage conflict.

• Findings can be a valuable source in predicting conflict resolution patterns.

• Success and failure of international collaborations not only depends on managing economic and legal obstacles, but also on the effective handling of cultural differences in conflicts (Oudenhoven et al., 1998).
Among the cultural factors that may strongly affect the way people attempt to manage conflicts are VALUES they seek to achieve and expectations regarding the efficacy of various tactics in achieving the values (Ohbuchi et al., 1999).

Variations in conflict management as a function of country can be understood in terms of the cultural dimensions on which these countries vary. According to Hofstede (2001), national cultures may be distinguished along four fundamental dimensions.
INDIVIDUALISM

COLLECTIVISM

GROUP GOALS

PERSONAL GOALS

HARMONY

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

PERSONAL GOALS

ASSERTIVENESS

AUTONOMY

CONCERN FOR THE SELF

CONCERN FOR THE OTHER

AVOIDING

COMPROMISING

DOMINATING

COLLABORATING

STUDY | RESPONDENTS | Notes
--- | --- | ---
Oetzel, 1995 | Americans vs. Japanese | 
Ohbuchi et al., 1999 | Americans vs. Japanese | 
Kim-Jo et al., 2010; Lee and Rogan, 1991 | American vs. Koreans | AVOIDING
Oetzel and Ting-Toomey, 2003 | Chinese, Japanese vs. German and Americans | 

Notes:
- Oetzel, 1995: Study on individuals from different cultures.
- Ohbuchi et al., 1999: Study comparing Americans and Japanese.
- Kim-Jo et al., 2010; Lee and Rogan, 1991: Study comparing Americans, Koreans, and other cultures.
- Oetzel and Ting-Toomey, 2003: Study on cultural differences in assertiveness and autonomy.
POWER DISTANCE HIGH

AUTHORITY
OBEDIENCE
CONFORMITY
PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING
EQUALITY

POWER DISTANCE LOW

CONCERN FOR THE SELF

STUDY
Oudenhoven, Mechelse and de Dreu (1998)

RESPONDENTS
Danish, Dutch, Belgian and British

Notes
MASCULINITY – FEMININITY DIMENSION

- HIGH
  - ACHIEVEMENT
  - SUCCESS
  - HUMILITY
  - HARMONY
  - HELPFULNESS
- LOW

CONCERN FOR THE SELF

- CONCERN FOR THE OTHER
  - AVOIDING
  - COMPROMISING
  - ACCOMMODATING
  - COLLABORATING
  - DOMINATING

**Notes**

Oudenhoven, Mechelse and de Dreu (1998)

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<th>STUDY</th>
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<td>Danish, Dutch, Belgian and British, Spanish</td>
<td>AVOIDING - moderte</td>
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</table>
Oudenhoven, Mechelse and de Dreu (1998) Danish, Dutch, Belgian and British
Do Asians differ in preferences for the various conflict management styles?

- Who are more likely to use a dominating style to solve an interpersonal conflict?

A) Chinese  B) Japanese  C) Koreans

D) there are no significant differences among Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese in dominating style
Do Asians differ in preferences for the various conflict management styles?

- Who are more likely to use an integrating style to solve an interpersonal conflict with their supervisor?

A) Chinese  B) Japanese  C) Koreans

D) there are no significant differences among Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese in integrating style
Do Asians differ in preferences for the various conflict management styles?

• Who are more likely to use an avoiding style to solve an interpersonal conflict with their supervisor?

A) Chinese  B) Japanese  C) Koreans

D) there are no significant differences among Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese in avoiding style
WHY it might be assumed that there are differences?

CONFLICT BEHAVIOR

CULTURAL VALUES
Because of differences of CULTURAL VALUES

CONFLICT BEHAVIOR

CULTURAL VALUES: INDIVIDUALIS - COLLECTIVISM DIMENSION
Because of differences of CULTURAL VALUES (1)

CONFLICT BEHAVIOR

CULTURAL VALUES: POWER DISTANCE DIMENSION

Hong Kong: 68
Vietnam: 70
Thailand: 64
Taiwan: 58
Japan: 54
Because of differences of CULTURAL VALUES (1)

CONFLICT BEHAVIOR

CULTURAL VALUES: MASCULINITY (FEMININITI) DIMENSION

95
66
57
45
40
39
34
Asians differ in preferences for the various conflict management styles.

• Who are more likely to use a dominating style to solve an interpersonal conflict?

  A) Chinese  B) Japanese  C) Koreans

• Where /How cultural values can explain country differences in conflict management styles among Asians (the Japanese, Koreans, Chinese)?
The relationship between conflict style and cultural dimensions

Which **dimension** is to be regarded as the **most correlated** to preference for a **dominating** style?

There are **conflicting expectations** regarding the relative preferences of the nationalities being studied for the various conflict management styles.
The relationship between conflict style and cultural dimensions

To overcome *conflicting expectations* Onishi and Bliss (2006) suggested to compute composite MASCULINITY scores predicting preference for dominating style.

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<td>China =</td>
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### Dominating

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|       |                   |             |          |         | Kim et al., 2007  
(Conf. with supervisors) |
|       |                   |             |          |         | Onishi and Bliss, 2006  
(Conf. with co-workers) |
|       |                   |             |          |         | Chiu et al. (1998)  
(In general) |
|       | Demand-withdraw   | hostility    |          |         | Lee et al, 2013  
(couples) |
|       | defense            |             |          |         | Oetzel et al., 2001  
(students) |
|       |                   |             |          |         | Miyahara et al., 1998  
--- |
|       |                   |             |          |         | Tjosvold et al., 2001  
(co-workers) |
Asians differ in preferences for the various conflict management styles.

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• Who are more likely to use an avoiding style to solve an interpersonal conflict with their supervisor?

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WHY there are differences?

CONFLICT BEHAVIOR

how an individual views his or her relationship to others is affected by that person's culture's individualist and collectivist tendencies

NATIONAL CULTURE VALUES (culture level analysis)

/ one draw his/her values and norms from cultural premises.

INDIVIDUAL VALUES (Individual level analysis)

cultural values have a direct effect on facework behaviors and an indirect effect on facework behaviors that is mediated through individual-level factors (Oetzel et al., 2001)
The Chinese reported significantly higher concern for the self than Koreans who also reported significantly higher concern for the self than the Japanese.

The Japanese were seen to be more likely to sacrifice individual goals and interests for their group than the Chinese and Koreans.
CULTURAL VALUES: POWER DISTANCE DIMENSION

Hong Kong: 68
Chinese: 70
Japanese: 60
Koreans: 64
Taiwan: 58
Japan: 54

Kim et al., 2007
CONCLUSIONS

• It is true that Asian nations may be more similar to each other than to Western countries. However, characterizations of an “Asian” or “Eastern” approach to conflict management masks important differences that exist in the behavioral orientation of Asians.

Style preference develop over a person’s lifetime based on complicated blend of genetics, life experiences, family background, and personal philosophy. Thus subject level values are to be considered as more important than culture level values while understanding references for conflict management.