

A comparison of conflict management styles of male and female managers in a bank in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

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The study was conducted as a case study within a bank in South Africa. The research, by using gender as a construct to study conflict management styles, sought to determine whether there were significant differences between male and female managers' prevalent conflict management styles in a bank in South Africa by administering an already developed and tested questionnaire called the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) which, through plotting the responses from the administered questionnaires, determined the prevalent conflict management styles of respondents. The instrument was used to assess and categorize the conflict management styles of 45 male managers and 45 female managers in a major bank in South Africa.

The key findings were that there is no significant difference in the prevalent conflict management styles of the two gender groups and in fact the results mirrored one another showing great homogeneity as a group of managers rather than within the respective gender groups.

The key indication from the research was that gender does not act as a strong determinant toward the prevalence of conflict management styles. This finding contributed to the understanding of the dynamics of gender conflict management styles, specifically as an example of a bank studied in South Africa.

DECLARATION

I, _____, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Aaron Farai Muchenje

Signed at

On the day of 2014

DEDICATION

To my hardworking Grandfather

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge my supervisor, for her patience and my wife, family and friends who have encouraged me to complete the journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	II
DECLARATION.....	III
DEDICATION	IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	V
LIST OF TABLES.....	IX
LIST OF FIGURES	IX
 1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	 1
1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	1
1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY.....	2
1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT	3
1.3.1 MAIN PROBLEM	3
1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	4
1.5 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	6
1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS	7
1.7 ASSUMPTIONS	7
 2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	 9
2.1. INTRODUCTION	9
2.2. DEFINITION OF TOPIC OR BACKGROUND DISCUSSION.	9
1.8 WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES OR SIMILARITIES IN THE PREVALENCE OF MANAGEMENT STYLES BETWEEN THE MALE AND FEMALE MANAGERS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN BANK BEING STUDIED?	12
1.8.1 INFLUENCE OF GENDER-BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS AND SOCIAL ROLE THEORY ON MALE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES.....	12
1.8.2 AUTHORITY AND POWER INFLUENCE IN MANAGERS' CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES.....	13
1.8.3 CULTURE IMPACT ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES.....	14
1.8.4 POWER BASE DYNAMICS INFLUENCING THEIR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES	15
1.8.5 INTEGRATION OF FEMALE MANAGERS INTO THE SOUTH AFRICAN CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT	18
1.8.6 THE EFFECT OF FEMALE EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES ON FEMALE MANAGERS CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES	20
1.8.7 MODE OF CONFLICT	20
1.8.8 GENDER EXPRESSION	21
1.8.9 CONFLICT HANDLING STYLES ACROSS CULTURES AND COUNTRIES	22
1.8.10 CONCLUSION OF THE MAIN PROBLEM LITERATURE REVIEW	23

2.3.	CONCLUSION OF LITERATURE REVIEW	24
3.	CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	26
3.1	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY / PARADIGM	26
3.2	RESEARCH DESIGN	27
3.3	POPULATION AND SAMPLE.....	28
3.3.1	POPULATION	28
3.3.2	SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHOD	29
3.4	THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT	30
3.5	PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION.....	32
3.6	DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	33
3.7	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	34
3.8	VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY	35
3.8.1	EXTERNAL VALIDITY	35
3.8.2	INTERNAL VALIDITY	36
3.8.3	RELIABILITY	37
4.	CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS	39
4.1	INTRODUCTION	39
4.2	DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	39
3.3.2	RESPONSES USED	42
4.3	RESULTS PERTAINING TO DIFFERENCES OR SIMILARITIES IN THE PREVALENT CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES OF MALE AND FEMALE MANAGERS IN A BANK IN SOUTH AFRICA	45
4.3.1	PREVALENCE COUNT COMPARISON	45
4.3.2	COMPETING/FORCING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE.....	48
4.3.3	COMPROMISING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE.....	48
4.3.4	AVOIDING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE	48
4.3.5	ACCOMMODATING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE.....	49
4.3.6	COLLABORATING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE.....	49
4.3.7	PREFERENCE DISTRIBUTION	49
4.3.8	STATISTICAL ANALYSIS.....	50
4.4	SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS	56
5.	CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS.....	57
5.1.	INTRODUCTION	57
5.2.	DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	57
5.3.	DISCUSSION PERTAINING TO WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES OR SIMILARITY IN THE PREVALENT MANAGEMENT STYLES OF MALE AND FEMALE MANAGERS IN A BANK IN SOUTH AFRICA.....	57
5.3.1.	CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE HOMOGENEITY ACROSS GENDER.....	57
5.3.2.	CORPORATE CULTURE IMPACT.....	58
5.3.3.	THE POWER EFFECT.....	59
5.3.4.	MALE MANAGERS SLIGHTLY MORE COMPETING	60
5.4.	CONCLUSION	60

6.	CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	63
6.1	INTRODUCTION	63
6.2	CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY	63
6.3	RECOMMENDATIONS	64
6.4	SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	65
	REFERENCES	67
	APPENDIX A.....	80
	ACTUAL RESEARCH INSTRUMENT	80
	EXTRA NOTES	82
	APPENDIX B.....	83
	SCORING	83
	APPENDIX C.....	84
	TABLE 10: CONSISTENCY MATRIX.....	84

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Power bases (Raven, 1993).....	15
Table 2: Profile of respondents (Planned).....	29
Table 3: Profile of respondents	40
Table 4: Initial analysis results on valid responses.....	42
Table 5: Female managers' prevalent conflict management style results per respondent.....	43
Table 6: Male managers' prevalent conflict management style results per respondent.....	44
Table 7: Chi- squared test of independence results.....	51
Table 8: Fisher's Exact test results.....	53
Table 9: Comparison of prevalence count per category of conflict management style across genders	55
Table 10: Consistency matrix.....	84

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Conflict Management styles (showing dimensions).....	31
Figure 2: Prevalent Count Comparison (Male vs. Female Managers).....	46
Figure 3: Comparison of Prevalent Conflict Management Styles	47
Figure 4: Comparison of the points distribution across the different Conflict	

Management Styles	50
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1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research was to identify the conflict management styles prevalent amongst the male and female managers within a bank in South Africa and to determine if there were any significant differences. The research also allowed for the comparison of its findings with findings of other similar research worldwide. The research not only had the purpose of studying and comparing the conflict management styles of the different gender groups in the bank, but also worked to provide a base toward determining whether there could be any geographical, contextual or cultural determinants that affect the conflict management styles in general or, specifically, the conflict management styles of either of the genders.

The research provides a foundation for further research to determine whether there is any basis for gender-based conflict resolution solutions or interventions that could be introduced in the corporate space and if so, providing the starting point from which such solutions could be determined.

In line with the above, the research also assists with working toward the identification of potential conflict management development needs of either of the genders in the effective execution of their role as managers. The identification of these needs could act as preparation for responding appropriately to conflict-inherent environments in ways that could be beneficial for the organisation.

Since conflict is inherent in workplaces, as expected in areas where different entities come together to work towards individual and organisational goals, the resolution of conflict and the manner in which it is handled is important in maintaining productivity and motivation within the workplace. This existence of conflict in the workplace and need to manage it supports the need for study in this knowledge area.

1.2 Context of the study

The study was conducted in South Africa, twenty years after South Africa moved from an apartheid state, a political system that separated the different races and gave privileges to those of European origin (Microsoft, 2002), to a democratic political state in which, through government and social programmes such as the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) programme (The Banking Association South Africa, 2012), there was deliberate effort to change the composition of workplaces, both in terms of gender and race to allow for more female as well as African, Coloured and Indian race representation in management roles. These changes in the workplace at managerial level introduced factors that could influence behavioural responses to conflict and conflict management (Booyesen, 2007; Bettinger, 1989; Brown, 1992; Fiol, 1991; Kilmann, 1989; Petrock, 1990; Sherwood, 1988; Whipp, Rosenfeld, & Pettigrew, 1989).

The context of the changing managerial pool from a male-dominated pool to one with greater female representation also allowed for both inter and intra gender group dynamics to define the context in which the research was conducted. The amalgamation of the diverse historical backgrounds into one pool of managers also potentially influenced the conflict managing styles that would prevail in the managerial pool. The research allowed for the testing of this.

The above mentioned background of the apartheid policy of separation of races and the move to a racial and gender inclusive society in the country and workplaces provides an interesting study in the context of the 20 years of the described social change.

The research, therefore, occurred after the endeavoured transformation of the workforces from the previously largely stratified corporate structures that provided that human resources of female gender and of colour, i.e. African, Indian and Coloured races occupied generally lower non-managerial positions and managerial positions occupied mainly by male and white human resources to a more inclusive workforce structure (Booyesen, 2007).

After the years of transformation into a non-segregated and inclusive society this research could be viewed as an assessment of whether there is homogeneity within the now integrated managerial staff, or whether the conflict handling styles find homogeneity in the gender groupings (Booyesen, 2007).

The banking industry, from which the case being studied is part of, is over 50 percent of the overall financial services sector of South Africa that has assets of over 6 trillion rands (The Banking Association South Africa, 2012). The banking industry has given particular attention to demographic changes required in the country and has instituted policies that give focus on “financial inclusion,” an initiative to give banking access to previously financially excluded groups which predominately include black, coloured and Indian communities and to an extent women (The Banking Association South Africa, 2012). This suggests the industry would be well aligned with the transformation aspirations of the country with initiatives like the Financial Sector Charter (FSC) and the Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Act having been adopted in the sector as pillars of transformation the sector (The Banking Association South Africa, 2012).

The research case is one of the large four banks in South Africa, with values and policies that foster diversity and upliftment of female employees. The bank is committed to both the sector wide and its own female managerial composition targets and now has female representation at its highest executive management level.

1.3 Problem statement

1.3.1 *Main problem*

The problem for this research was to determine whether there were any differences or similarities in the prevalent management styles of male and female managers in a bank in South Africa.

1.4 Significance of the study

The study, as defined, fills a gap in that it seeks to extend the already existing research on conflict management style into the South African corporate environment, which has specific contextual circumstances, as described in Section 1.2.

Although similar studies have been conducted in other African countries like Uganda (Manyak & Katono, 2010), the historical context of South Africa as well as the transitional aspects of the South African corporate population provided a unique context both in Africa and worldwide.

Conflict, as a serious problem in modern organisations, wastes precious time and human resources that would be better directed to other activities, such as the primary work of the organisation. Indeed, surveys of managers suggest that they spend more than 20% of their time dealing with conflict or its aftermath (Thomas & Schmidt, 1976). The significant time spent handling conflict indicates the importance of research on conflict and its management in an effort to optimise working environments.

Although there has been considerably significant research on conflict management styles in various parts of the world with varying views and approaches (Ohbuchi & Suzuki, 2003; Mavin & Grandy, 2011; Mavin & Grandy, 2012; Billing, 2011; Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011; Kelan, 2010; Messerschmidt, 2009; West & Zimmerman, 2009; Mavin & Grandy, 2012; Doucet, Jehn, Weldon, Chen, & Wang, 2009; Metcalfe, 2008; Manyak & Katono, 2010; Gilbert, Burnett, Phau, & Haar, 2010), there is little understanding and literature of the conflict management styles prevalent in the South African workforce from which to build a basis for predicting common dynamics of conflict situations in the South African corporate space. The research from researchers such as Tedeschi, Schlenker and Bonoma (1973), Lippitt (1982) and Rahim (2001) on conflict can be used as a base for understanding and deriving a possible hypothesis for testing in the South African corporate context to enable the groundwork for a wider view on conflict management in African corporate environments. This study is of a different focus from researchers

such as like Day et al (1988) whose work was contextual to conflict in regards to buyer-seller engagements.

Although research does exist outside South Africa that focuses on the differences between conflict managing style of men and woman (Baxter & Shepard, 1978; Yelsma & Brown, 1985), there had not been research to test the same in a South African corporate environment and to establish whether the results are similar or not.

Some research findings indicate a distinctive preference of less dominant conflict handling styles in women (Ilmer, 1980; Kilmann & Thomas, 1977; Ruble & Stander, 1990; Rosenthal & Hautaluoma, 1988). This research tested whether the above findings were true in the context of the case study or if there were significant differences from the above findings.

The study provides guidance to organisational development resources in their understanding and work towards organisational development, as well as work as a base for developing probable interventions for organisations to better prepare for or handle conflict situations in the workplace.

The research-specific gender-based context also assists in assessing the level of homogenisation of the conflict management styles of the different genders and as a management group as a whole. The research provides evidence as to whether managers' prevalent conflict management styles suggest inclinations toward their function as managers or toward their genders. This inclination toward their function as managers or toward their gender gives an indication of whether gender is stronger as a determinant than role or function as a manager.

The understanding of whether there are significant differences in the manner males manage conflict when compared to females would reflect possible gender-specific development or training toward the adoption of new conflict behavioural patterns.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

The research topic focused on a particular bank in the South African banking industry. It drew a sample of managerial respondents of both genders within this bank and used the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) as the tool of assessment.

1.6 Definition of terms

Apartheid state

A political system in South Africa from 1948 to the early 1990s that separated the different people living there and gave privileges to those of European origin.

Conflict

Although there are many variations in the definition of 'conflict' (Rahim, 2001), this research will define conflict according to Tedeschi et al. (1973) as "an interactive state in which the behaviors or goals of one actor are to some degree incompatible with the behaviors or goals of some other actor or actors" (p. 232), a definition that Roloff (1987) agrees with. This definition is preferred to the definition that simply defines conflict as perceived incompatibilities of parties' views, wishes and desires as defined by Jehn (1995) and Dreu et al. (1999). The later definition by Jehn (1995) and Dreu et al. (1999) is devoid of the understanding that conflict includes some form of interaction between the parties in question.

Conflict management / conflict handling / conflict resolution

Conflict management, conflict handling and conflict resolution will be defined as the manner in which people respond to a conflict situation. The terms "conflict management" and "conflict handling" are used inter-changeably in this report and refer to the same.

1.7 Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in respect to the research

- The respondents would respond honestly to the questionnaire and would have no compelling reason to respond otherwise.
- The respondents would have adequate understanding of the questions being asked to them to respond appropriately to the questionnaire.

- The sample was adequately representative of the population the research sought.

2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The literature review is structured into topics and themes that were derived from the reviewed literature and is structured towards the research question.

The theoretical concept utilised by the research to approach the problem of understanding conflict and conflict resolution was that of 'gender behaviour.' The literature review is therefore using this perspective to understand the dynamics of conflict management in general and gives particular attention to aspects related to this theoretical concept and how gender behaviour potentially influences the conflict handling styles that develop.

Each topic, presents the information gathered that is specific to understanding that particular topic, which in turn helped in arriving at the appropriate proposition.

2.2. Definition of topic or background discussion.

Conflict at managerial levels of an organisation is unavoidable (Eisenhardt, Kahwajy, & Bourgeois, 1998) and, as most scholars agree, conflict has both functional (Jameson, 1999; Rahim, 2002; Rahim, Magner, & Shapiro, 2000; Wall & Callister, 1995) and dysfunctional outcomes and therefore requires management and understanding (Jehn, 1995; Mitroff, 1998; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999).

The management of conflict usually falls within the spectrum of the following constructs: reduction, resolution, or minimisation (Rahim, 2002). Across the spectrum there is a need for the determination of how different people handle and manage conflict in general. Taking into account that research has proven that young and middle-aged adults experience significant interpersonal challenges at work (Demick & Miller, 1993; Levinson, 1996; Weitzman, 2001), this shows the importance of the study in the way the interpersonal challenges

are addressed in regard to conflict in the workplace and more so at managerial levels.

Some literature classifies the conflict into *Relationship conflict* (also known as Affective or Emotional conflict) (Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999), which relates to interpersonal or socio-emotional disagreement (Amason, 1996; Jehn, 1997; Jehn, Chadwick & Thatcher, 1997; Pelled et al., 1999) and viewed as detrimental to the organisation (Jehn, 1997; Jehn et al., 1997, 1999; Langfred, 2007; Pelled et al., 1999; Rispens, Greer, & Jehn, 2007; Wilhelm, Herd & Steiner, 1993); and *Task-related conflict*, which is concerned with improving performance and decision making in organisations (Amason, 1996; Cosier & Rose, 1977; Jehn, 1997; Schweiger, Sandberg, & Rechner, 1989). This Study made no distinction between the two types of conflict. Rather it focused on determining the conflict management styles across both the two classifications. Further study could look at researching on whether these distinguishable classifications of conflict influence what conflict management styles are employed and what relationships are identifiable between the two aspects.

By the definition of conflict adopted by the research, that conflict is an interactive state in which the actions or objectives of one or more individuals are to some extent not compatible with the actions and objectives other individual or individuals (Tedeschi et al., 1973) one can appreciate the difficulty that arises in effectively executing the company's mission in an environment where conflict is not resolved, especially at the coalface of the business. Some research has been done in terms of defining the different types of conflict that may exist in organisations and in many cases different researchers concur about the two mentioned categories of 'task' and 'relationship' conflicts (Pinkley, 1990). Conflict in both these forms and in modern organisations consumes capacity in terms of human resources that would be better directed to other activities, including the primary work of the organisation. Surveys of practising managers confirmed that they spend more than 20% of their time dealing with conflict or its aftermath (Thomas & Schmidt, 1976).

Lippitt (1982) research highlights the attention and awareness of conflict at executive level but neglects to weigh the conflict handling propensity at other

levels of the organisation. This gap has since been addressed to an extent by other studies (Baril, Korabik, & Watson, 1993; Portello & Long, 1994)

South Africa's past could point towards peculiar issues of conflict within organisations, where the previously marginalised groups, such as women, are now part of the social and economic system of the country (Horwitz, 1990). As Whittaker (1999) suggests, the structures of segregation that were in place impact on the social structures to an extent that translates into an ideological creed that is deep rooted. Further, the process of the current integration adds to factors that can influence the dynamics and social interaction in the environment being studied. The more gender-mixed workforce at managerial level beckons research on how these resources deal with conflict especially with the female managers perceived has to have behavioral traits that limit their effectiveness (Shockley-Zalabak, 1981).

The perception that the history of South Africa represents a situation where negative emotions could exist between groups and between individual representatives of groups. Bell and Song (2005), even though argued that these negative sentiments would not influence conflict management styles as much as positive emotions do, did indicate that resentment could be felt by people for whom change is not unbeneficial. This context supports the choice of utilising gender as the theoretical concept used to seek to understand the issues of conflict as some of changes in South Africa are gender based and would inherently have the above described dynamics to be test.

It is generally agreed that conflict-resolution strategies emanate from combinations of levels of self-concern and concern for others. (Follett, 1941; Blake & Mouton, 1964; De Dreu et al., 2001; Deutsch, 1973; Ruble & Thomas, 1976; Rahim 1983; Van de Vliert & Kabanoff, 1990), which would translate to levels of assertiveness and cooperation reflected in the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) tool to be used in the research and reflected in Figure 1.

1.8 What are the differences or similarities in the prevalence of management styles between the male and female managers in the South African bank being studied?

This section of the research focuses on the main problem and on forming a proposition on whether there are similarities or not in the conflict management styles that are prevalent for male managers and those prevalent for female managers in the South African bank being studied.

The various topics and themes that affect the proposition are discussed below.

1.8.1 Influence of Gender-Behavioural patterns and Social role theory on male conflict management styles

General gender behavioural patterns can allude to what conflict management styles will be prevalent in the respective genders. Some studies show males are more aggressive and competitive (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). By understanding the construct of the Kilmann instrument (that is, that it has a measure of assertiveness and competitiveness as a measured attribute of determining the resultant conflict management style) deductions can be made from this research that the most probable prevalent styles would be Competing and Collaboration. This is confirmed by the research done by Berryman-Fink and Brunner (1987) in that even though both sexes in their study more often used accommodating conflict handling style in interactions with females, males mostly used the competing conflict handling style and females mostly used the Compromising style.

The Social role theory indicates that through social learning, genders tend to assimilate their behaviour and that this is the source of the differences between genders (Eagley, 1987), which is supported by the reciprocal interaction with the environment and society noted in Bandura's (1999) research. Social theory, therefore, alludes to the fact that the different genders are potentially similar, as supported by Mavin and Grandy, (2011), but are different only due to the influence the environment and society have on the respective genders. Other researchers further assert that the resultant differences are the result of

genetics and culture. (Eagley, 1987; Shafiro, Himelein, & Best, 2003; Hicks, Johnson, Iacono, & McGue, 2008). This theory and view would therefore suggest that the proposition on the behaviours of the respective genders and therefore in part the conflict management style, can be arrived at by analysing the culture and societal constructs of the populations being studied.

Although some studies do indicate that there are more similarities between males and females rather than differences (Epstein & Feist, 1988; Hyde, 2005; Macoby & Jacklin, 1974), the determination of the conflict management styles would require analysis of the social constructs of understanding and handling conflict in the respective societies and if there are distinctive expectations toward the different genders. So even though differences between male and female managers in the context of South African banking institutions may be small, the differences may indeed be in the subject matter; i.e. in conflict management styles.

1.8.2 Authority and Power Influence in managers' conflict management styles

One of the determinants of managerial behaviour as Kreitner and Kinicki (1992) identified is the level of power and authority managers have. These authors distinguish two concepts when exploring the dimensions of power stating that whilst power is the demonstrated ability to achieve compliance authority on the other hand is simply the right or obligation to seek compliance. This distinction could have a significant impact on the conflict management styles that managers portray. By virtue of the first definition of power, 'demonstrated ability to achieve compliance,' male managers who predominately have been in the management role longer and more extensively than their female counterparts do have a more demonstrative account of the power (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1992). The muscularity of the male manager and the above-stated enforced societal view that males generally pose strength provides male managers with a wider power base to female managers. Male managers have a preconceived legitimate power and presumption of Inherent power. This Inherent power base

give male managers a certain pre-positioning to comparatively more assertive conflict management styles.

Interestingly, Kreitner and Kinicki (1992), in discussing the type of manager that progresses up the hierarchy versus the ones that does not, quotes research conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership that made a distinction that managers that failed to progress were insensitive, abrasive and had a bullying style, all traits of a competing conflict management style. The successful manager instead showed the opposite of these traits – specifically the ability to work with others, which leans towards the collaborative conflict management style.

1.8.3 *Culture impact on Conflict Management Styles*

Considerable literature supports the impact of culture on organisations (Bettinger, 1989; Brown 1992; Fiol, 1991; Kilmann, 1989; Petrock, 1990; Sherwood, 1988; Whipp, Rosenfeld, & Pettigrew, 1989) and some authors state that culture is the sole determinant of an organisation's success (Peters & Waterman, 1982). Other research has associated gender differences with culture value systems (Hofstede, 1980; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), perhaps because societies through reward and sanction based on culture systems make culture determine behaviour (Manyak & Katono, 2010) of individuals or any group the cultural system identifies in its value system. Some research concludes that collectivist cultures such as that of Chinese have prevalent Avoiding conflict management styles more than other cultures, such as those in the United States (Graham, 1985) thereby showing the impact of culture on conflict handling styles.

Even though this is the case, cultures do display stratified behaviours across gender groups within the specific cultures. This display in stratified behaviours across gender groups is mainly a construct of the different expectations and perceptions of the different genders. (Hofstede, 1980; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004)

As Lin and Germain (1998) found, cultural similarity relates positively to problem solving as does conflict resolution strategy. Culture, as a determinant of the conflict management styles expected, would therefore relate to both the congruence of the gender groups in their cultural disposition and the perceived or experienced similarity of culture across the groups. In such a case both genders would display similar conflict management styles within and across the groups irrespective of whether the cultural disposition is similar or not between the gender groups. Since the context in which Lin and Germain's (1998) considered 'cultural similarity' was in the context of companies, their research suggested that the context in which South Africa is would less likely find the relevant players adopting a conflict management style that's universal and most probably that of compromising conflict management style.

However, Lu (2007) notes in her research that when one dominating party, tends to use a forcing strategy, the other party tends to choose a Comprising conflict handling strategy, supporting the stratification of groups. This stratification seems in line with the research that noted that women often tend not to display forceful negotiation positions or competing conflict management styles because they fear retaliation from male counterparts or parties they are contending with (Amanatullah, 2006).

Having stated the above and even through there are some who have questioned whether male and female managers differ at all in their preferred conflict management style (Baxterand & Shepard, 1978; Yelsma & Brown, 1985), some studies have supported the long-standing stereotypical view that women have a more cooperative orientation to conflict than men and that men are more competitive than women (Rubin & Brown, 1975).

1.8.4 *Power base dynamics influencing their conflict management styles*

Below are the various power bases as defined by Raven (1993).

Table 1: Power bases (Raven, 1993)

Legitimate Power

Legitimate Power refers to power of an individual because of the relative position and duties of the holder of the position within an organization. Legitimate Power is formal authority delegated to the holder of the position. It is usually accompanied by various attributes of power such as uniforms, offices etc. This is the most obvious and also the most important kind of power.

Referent Power

Referent Power means the power or ability of individuals to attract others and build loyalty. It is based on the charisma and interpersonal skills of the power holder. Here the person under power desires to identify with these personal qualities, and gains satisfaction from being an accepted follower. Nationalism or Patriotism counts towards an intangible sort of referent power as well. For example, soldiers fight in wars to defend the honor of the country. This is the second least obvious power, but the most effective.

Expert Power

Expert Power is an individual's power deriving from the skills or expertise of the person and the organization's needs for those skills and expertise. Unlike the others, this type of power is usually highly specific and limited to the particular area in which the expert is trained and qualified.

This type of power is further broken down later on as Information Power.

Information Power

While the difference between expert power and information power is subtle, people with this type of power are well-informed, up-to-date and also have the ability to persuade others. Another difference would be that people with Expert Power are perceived by his/her image of expertise to show credibility (i.e. a qualified doctor in a doctor uniform), while one with Information Power does not have a strict need to 'look the part of a professional', but they must keep up to date with new research, and have confidence in debating, or are persuasive.

Reward Power

Reward Power depends upon the ability of the power wielder to confer valued material rewards, it refers to the degree to which the individual can give others a reward of some kind such as benefits, time off, desired gifts, promotions or

increases in pay or responsibility. This power is obvious but also ineffective if abused. People who abuse reward power can become pushy or become reprimanded for being too forthcoming or 'moving things too quickly'.

Coercive Power

Coercive Power means the application of negative influences onto employees. It might refer to the ability to demote or to withhold other rewards. It's the desire for valued rewards or the fear of having them withheld that ensures the obedience of those under power. Coercive Power tends to be the most obvious but least effective form of power as it builds resentment and resistance within the targets of Coercive Power.

In contrast to the male power base drawn from their muscularity and societal views as well as the resultant expected conflict handling styles associated with this presumed power, there is literature supporting the opinion that people are cognisant of the power that other people may possess and would normally not do something that might cause a more powerful person (e.g. a boss) to use that power against them. The literature supports the view that the less powerful individual may engage in ingratiating or submissive behaviour in an attempt to resolve the conflict (Deutsch, 1985). This is supported by Weitzman's (2001) research highlighting that most women facing work-related conflict respond submissively in trying to resolve the conflict. This is a contributor to increased stress in the workplace (Pearlin et al., 1990; Vogele & Steptoe, 1992).

The inherent authority in managerial positions, whether it is a management position of appointment or that of having direct reporting staff as defined for purposes of this research, does suggest that there would be a level of assertiveness from managers, whether this is simply a realisation of the obligation that they have as managers or a realisation of the "right" that they have as managers over their subordinates. However the extent to which the assertiveness is displayed would be affected by the balance of authority and power amongst the two genders.

Female managers, despite having access to the Legitimate, Reward and Coercive power base, might fail to access this power as a result of viewing their gender as submissive and viewing such power as associated with masculinity (McDonald, Schleicher, & Yoder, 1998). Female managers might more likely access other power bases such as Referent power, due to their personality rather than their position, and they are also able to influence people and their situation through their charisma. This power base however suggests that the female managers are more cooperative than assertive and might prefer the Accommodating conflict handling style.

Another power base available to female managers is Expert power where individuals through their unique experience become an expert through their knowledge or skill. This power base does not seem to outwardly suggest that neither an assertive nor a cooperative stance be taken. You would probably, therefore, due to the balancing non-existence of the other powers find that there would be a balanced approach leading to Compromising conflict handling styles reflecting a balanced application of assertiveness and cooperation.

1.8.5 Integration of female managers into the South African corporate Environment

As Terjesen and Singh (2008) state, social, political and economic structures within the respective individual countries influence the make-up of corporate management and even the representation of females. In South Africa, there has been a deliberate effort to influence the make-up of corporate management. The relatively new corporate environment created after 1994 where the working environment in South Africa is now an integration of people from different social backgrounds and different social circumstances, suggested that there would be social friction between the various social groups, with different groups trying to assert themselves or their positioning over other groups. Particularly in terms of managers, the female managers would try to use more aggressive conflict management styles such as the competing style, similar to their male counterparts. Although Follett (1998) believes that friction between diverse groups of people can be used to drive the growth of their organisations since,

as she explains, the core of a social process is not likeness but harmonising of differences, the latter is crucial and determined by the conflict handling styles adopted by the different groups. The fact that the respective groups do not necessarily work as one singular group of males or females but as individuals tending to reflect individual assertions and subjective views and positions the dynamics therefore should be assessed at an individual capacity of female and male individuals.

The distinction of two types of conflict as *Cognitive Conflict*, which revolves around differences in decisions, and *Affective Conflict*, which generally is aimed at a person and not an issue, could help explain the conflict situations that might arise in South African corporate environments – especially in the context of the gender differences in managerial staff in South Africa where in some instances female managers are seen as now executing roles previously allocated to men or seen as masculine roles (McDonald, Schleicher, & Yoder 1998). Cognitive conflict is necessary for the development of high quality solutions (Harrison et al., 1995) and can escalate to Affective Conflict due to the mis-management of the conflict (Harrison et al., 1995). Again, this is very probable in the South African context where across the gender groups there might be a view that females are taking up roles not suitable to their role and mis-understanding between the newly integrated groups (McDonald, Schleicher, & Yoder, 1998). Even then, female managers might be perceived to have been placed into management positions without prior experience, due to affirmative recruitment and placement procedures or due to integrated work environment resources not knowing how to handle the diversity that now exists. Either way the emerging of Affective Conflict would indicate a move towards non-cooperative behaviour with a possibility of high assertiveness from resources of power and low assertiveness from non-powerful resources. This would reflect as Competing conflict handling styles for some and perhaps Avoiding conflict handling styles for others.

1.8.6 *The effect of female empowerment programmes on female managers Conflict management styles*

The programme that the South African government has undertaken to try and address the inequities and imbalances of South Africa's apartheid era had certain both profound and subtle implications. Profound in significance in that the programme seeks to change the work structures to both integrate and increase the number of female managers and managers of colour in the corporate and working structures. This initiative particularly in regards to the elevation of female resources into positions of power has relevance to our study.

As described in some literature, conflict is defined as a state in which parties exist in a state of disjointment and interdependence that leads to motives to compete and cooperate (Komorita & Parks, 1995; Messick & Brewer, 1983). Such a situation would suggest that either the competing and self-concern aspect would more emphasised and would probably be inherent within the management level, in an effort to either display legitimacy or assert authority. It follows that such legitimacy or authority could produce conflict handling styles of Competing and Collaborating rather than the less assertive styles. However, the extent to which gender as a construct interacts with these premises will determine if there are any differences evident between the gender groups. However, the fact that management (i.e. the general sample being studied) in the corporate structures having been predominately male and now having gone through the processes of introducing larger numbers of female managers does present a source for significant difference between the genders and result in different conflict management styles being adopted. Perhaps in terms of male managers generally more prepared and willing to be assertive in their styles. This expected difference was tested through the research.

1.8.7 *Mode of Conflict*

Beyond the consideration of the definition of what conflict is, there can be further consideration in terms of the mode or types of conflicts that exist. These may impact the conflict management styles and be determinants in whether

there are differences in male and female managers' conflict management styles.

Ohbuchi and Suzuki (2003) formulated a three-dimensional model of conflict issues of gain/loss, right/wrong and correct/incorrect.

In as much as these dimensions, considered in separation, may seem to be universal, for example that the sense of right and wrong is not gender based or the fact of whether an issue can be considered correct or incorrect, findings in research indicate that Correct/Incorrect issues evoked the concern for the group performance and encouraged collaborative strategies and that Right/Wrong issues evoked concern of group order resulting in more confrontational strategies (Ohbuchi & Suzuki 2003). This seems to indicate that the probably prevalent conflict management styles in the respective female and male manager groupings would depend on the mode of conflict being experienced irrespective of the gender. However, caution has to be taken in arriving at that conclusion as the group dynamics could not manifest since the study does not require the different genders to act as a consolidated female group or singular male group but rather as individuals that select the mode of conflict to be engaged in.

The gain/loss mode, which is more individualistic, could have more influence on the resultant group's prevalent conflict management style on the basis that individuals identify themselves more as females or males than according to other attributes and if the individuals perceive that their gain or loss is directly linked to their gender, which is highly probable in South Africa, considering the fact that social change in South Africa is, in part, driven by the gender of the individuals and the heightened attention on identification of individuals by their gender.

1.8.8 Gender Expression

Mavin and Grandy (2012) discuss the fluidity of gender in that the expression of muscularity or femininity changes depending on the roles being played by either females or males. This view is supported by earlier work of Mavin & Grandy

(2011) and Billing (2011). Further, Broadbridge and Simpson (2011) argue that gender, as a construct, would need to be paired with other attributes to stabilise its fluidity and to have the context and aim of studies about gender described. In the research case the managerial classification would be the construct paired with gender to do so.

This view of gender alludes to the fact that because of the inter-exchangeability of the two gender expressions, traits in behaviour can be expressed equally in both genders and in turn the conflict management styles cannot be attributable to the respective genders. Kelan (2010), Messerschmidt (2009), West and Zimmerman (2009) and Mavin and Grandy (2012) allude further to the fact that the different expressions of gender are but variations of those expressions that can be wholly attributable to the respective genders as opposed to having been borrowed from the other gender.

This view would need to contend with the assessment of whether; there are default traits that the genders naturally, despite the displays of alternative gender traits possess. This study could also add to the literature on the expression of fluid gender by ascertaining whether, in the context studied, there are indeed prevalent conflict management styles that are gender related.

1.8.9 *Conflict handling styles across cultures and countries*

In a study of conflict resolution styles in contrasting cultures Doucet, Jehn, Weldon, Chen, and Wang (2009) studied the conflict handling styles of Chinese and American managers. These authors found that the conflict resolution styles in these contrasting cultures were different; American managers exhibited more aggressive behaviour and an assertive conflict handling style such as the competing style.

Metcalf's (2008) study of women in Islamic nations found that religion and recognition of the family are important determinants of female identity and strongly influence behaviour.

Contrary to the notion that females exhibit different conflict management styles to that of males, a study in Uganda showed that there are no significant differences between female and male managers' conflict management style prevalence (Manyak & Katono, 2010). This similarity perhaps suggests that the determinants of behaviour, such as culture and religion have an equal and similar impact on females as they have on males resulting in the expectation in regard to behaviour being similar across genders.

As Gilbert, Burnett, Phau, and Haar (2010) indicate, gender behaviours that are experienced in a specific country do not necessarily hold true in other countries suggesting the significance of culture as a determinant of prevalent conflict handling styles.

1.8.10 Conclusion of the main problem literature review

The review of the literature reveals that although there is consensus in some groups of researchers, there is notably no universal finding on the conflict management styles of males. However, much research reports that men tend to exhibit more Competing conflict management styles than females do (Thomas, et al, 2008; Blake & Mouton, 1964; Ilmer, 1980; Kilmann & Thomas, 1977; Ruble & Stander, 1990; Rosenthal & Hautaluoma, 1988). The literature on social role theory on male behaviour discussed above also supports this.

In contrast to the literature on male conflict management styles, the literature suggested that, although there is little evidence to the contrary, overwhelming research indicates that female managers will show prevalent Avoidance/Withdrawing or Compromising Conflict management styles (Berryman-Fink & Brunner, 1987; Lu, 2007).

As an extension of the above there is an expectation that there are differences between the prevalent preferred conflict management styles of male managers and those of female managers in the South African bank being studied.

The proposition was therefore that the conflict management styles of male managers are significantly different to those of their female counterparts.

The proposition was as follows

Proposition:

Ho: Prevalent preferred Conflict Management Style for female managers in the South African bank being studied == prevalent preferred Conflict Management Style for male managers in the South African bank being studied

Ha: Prevalent Preferred Conflict Management Style for female managers in the South African bank being studied <> Prevalent Preferred Conflict Management Style for male managers in the South African bank being studied

2.3. Conclusion of Literature Review

The literature review revealed that there was considerable research on both conflict management styles and gender-based comparison. The consideration of corporate conflict and, in some instances, non-corporate context, highlights the importance of understanding the dynamics of managing conflict in managing performance and minimising distractions in the workplace. The gap the research explored was whether the same conventions and dispositions related to conflict management were applicable in the South African context, specifically in a banking corporate environment and whether the gender of respondents being studied would impact on behaviour in their conflict management styles.

Regarding the above, culture as a determinant of behaviour, has been a trend in the literature reviewed. This, however, expresses itself differently when the analysis of conflict-management styles is done at an individual level, when the different expectations from the genders were reflected in the results.

As noted in the literature review, findings have the potential to be different across different geographies. The research in South Africa, in the context of the unique history South Africa has and the push by the government to change the composition of the corporate management by the inclusion of more women poses a particularly interesting study in terms of the impact this country-wide

initiative against other determinants like culture and race. Below is the proposition for the research.

Proposition:

Ho: Prevalent preferred Conflict Management Style for female managers in the South African bank being studied == Prevalent Preferred Conflict Management Style for male managers in the South African bank being studied

Ha: Prevalent preferred Conflict Management Style for female managers in the South African bank being studied <> Prevalent Preferred Conflict Management Style for male managers in the South African bank being studied.

3. CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research methodology / paradigm

The research was a case study of a bank and was primarily rooted in a quantitative method of analysing responses obtained from administering the Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode instrument as a way of determining the prevalent preferred conflict handling styles of female and male managers in a bank in South Africa. The survey was conducted through a questionnaire that provided data for a quantitative analysis to determine any significant variances between the responses from the two genders. This quantitative analysis also provided to highlight any significant trends between the two gender groups.

Although the research was survey based, allowing for the advantages of being able to administer across larger samples and allowing for quick assessment and analysis of results, (Mitchell & Jolley, 2012), the case study nature of the research allowed for a closer and more in-depth review of the demarcated case (bank), as well as a more realistic inference from the results that is based on the particular case at hand (Naumes, 2006). The case study nature of the research also has an advantage that unlike other types of study that might be abstract in nature, a case study studies a real situation in its context and aids in the sampling of the population in that it classifies the units efficiently (Mustafa, 2008).

The limitations of case studies such as inherent un-organisation and qualitative nature of problems experienced in data collection (Mustafa, 2008) have been mitigated by adopting a survey-based approach that requires the tool of research to be a questionnaire allowing for quicker and less expensive collection of data (Mitchell & Jolley, 2012). The above mitigation steps are also supported by the quantitative approach that includes statistical analysis, which allows for a focus on the measures and amounts of the facets being studied (Thomas, 2003).

The following aspects of the research were applicable.

Distribution

The questionnaire was emailed to respondents along with the relevant instructions.

Execution and Collation

The respondents were asked to answer a self-rating questionnaire on how they handle or prefer to handle conflict. This was done with neither direct supervision nor interference from the researcher. Results were collated, analysed and interpreted against the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. The questionnaire was a self-assessment tool questionnaire for conflict-handling styles used by the Alberta Government. This questionnaire is specifically and solely designed to measure preference in conflict handling styles across the five predetermined styles; i.e. forcing/competing, compromising, avoiding, accommodating, and collaborating. After the completion of the questionnaire, the results were then collated to reflect the respondents' preferred conflict handling style.

The questionnaires obtained from the respondents were, before collation and statistical analysis, individually scrutinised to ensure that there were no obvious anomalies such as a person making use of the same rating for all questions.

Lastly once collated the prevalent conflict handling style in each of the gender groups was determined.

3.2 Research Design

The methodical approach that the research took was that of a survey where the research drew a sample from the population of corporate managers in a specific South African bank. These were asked to respond a 30-question Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument questionnaire that was used as the instrument of measure.

The questionnaire was appropriate in that it allowed a relatively faster method of obtaining data across a multitude of respondents, allowing the research to cover

more ground or a bigger sample than if an in-depth interview-based method had been adopted (Mitchell & Jolley, 2012).

The anonymity of the survey process also gave an opportunity to the respondents to respond freely to the questionnaire as opposed to the interview situation where observation might have impacted the responses provided.

Questionnaire-based surveys are also relatively easy to administer and interpret through the use of descriptive and inferential statistics (Mitchell & Jolley, 2012).

The disadvantages of surveys include the possibility of non-response or non-participation and also the reliance on the respondents' honesty and memory (Groves, 1989). This was reflected in the response rate that experienced in this research.

3.3 Population and sample

3.3.1 Population

As indicated earlier, the population researched was that of the managers of a major bank in the South Africa. This population was approached as having two distinct groups of female managers and male managers.

The managers studied included different levels of management, from junior, middle and senior management. No executives were included as part of the sample or seen as part of the population.

This population was comprised individuals of different ethnicities, ages and backgrounds; as well as different cultures and religions and languages, with English as one of their utilised language.

Access to the population for the case study was relatively easy, as the researcher works for the bank in question and had access to the population.

3.3.2 Sample and sampling method

Sampling method was stratified sampling where respondents were randomly selected from within two specific groups; i.e. female managers and male managers. This sampling method allowed the research to draw equal and sufficient numbers of respondents from both categories to be studied, hence allowing comparison across the two groups (Reefat, 2010). The sample, in accordance to the population to be studied, was drawn from the management pool of resources in a specific bank in the South African banking industry.

Identification of appropriate respondents was done by using human resource online tools and resources within the bank studied.

The random sampling within the female and male population respectively eliminated any bias towards any specific subsets of the two categories and enhances how representative the sample is of the population (Reefat, 2010). The selection was drawn utilising the organisational structure chart that reflects all employees and their managerial status.

Were required the sampled respondents were contacted to encourage them to participate and explain the research aspects as well as assure them of the confidentiality.

Below is the table reflecting the intended profile and number of respondents.

Table 2: Profile of respondents (Planned)

Description of respondent type	Number to be sampled
Female managers working in a specific South African Bank	50
Male managers working in a specific South African Bank	50

3.4 The research instrument

This research utilised an already developed and tested questionnaire called the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (Thomas & Kilmann, 2001). The instrument was used to both gather and interpret the data received to categorise the respondents into their preferred conflict management style groups.

On interpretation, the instrument maps each respondent across defined five dominant orientations or modes of dealing with conflict management (i.e. competing, accommodating, collaborating, sharing, and avoiding), as depicted in Figure 1 below. This classification was the determinant of the conflict managing styles for the various respondents (Thomas & Kilmann, 2001).

“The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument has been the leader in conflict resolution assessment for more than 25 years with many researchers using it as an instrument of choice (Johnson, 1997; Volkema & Bergmann, 1995; Jain & Solomon, 2000). This non-restricted instrument requires no special qualifications for administration, and it is used by Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development (OD) consultants as a catalyst to discuss and facilitate learning about how conflict handling styles affect personal and group dynamics” (Kilmann, 2006)

The classification on the instrument is based on the level of self-concern and concern for others plotted on an axis of assertiveness and cooperation. The result is the five categories shown and described below in Figure 1. (Blake & Mouton, 1964; De Dreu et al., 2001; Deutsch, 1973; Follett, 1941; Rahim, 1983; Ruble & Thomas, 1976; Van de Vliert & Kabanoff, 1990).

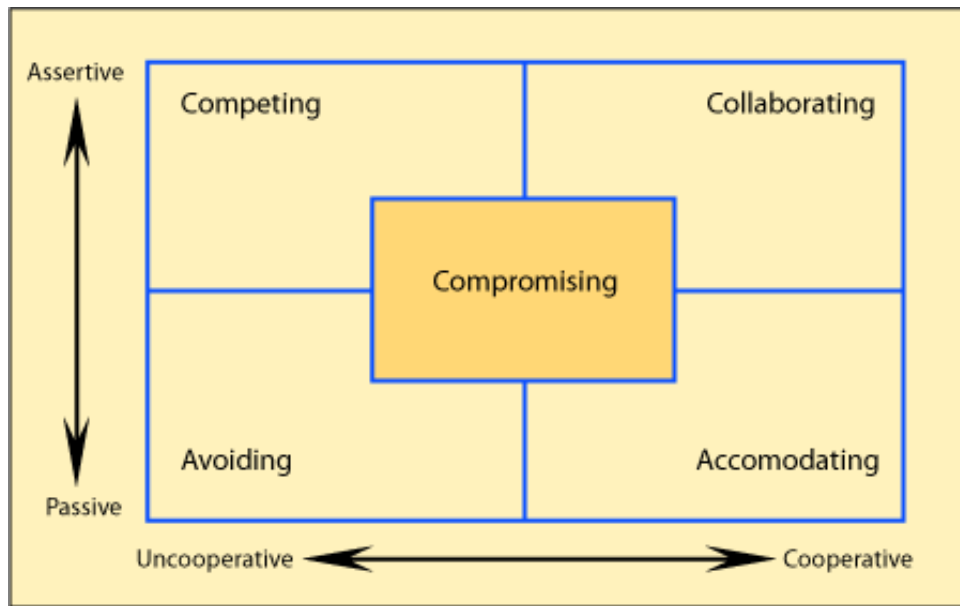


Figure 1: Conflict Management styles (showing dimensions)

(Thomas & Kilmann, 2001).

***NB.** The Competing conflict management style is also known as “Forcing”. These terms are used interchangeably in this research.*

Competing/Forcing is assertive and uncooperative, a power-oriented mode. When competing, an individual pursues his or her own concerns at the other person’s expense, using whatever power seems appropriate to win his or her position. Competing might mean standing up for your rights, defending a position you believe is correct, or simply trying to win (Thomas & Kilmann, 2001).

Collaborating is both assertive and cooperative. When collaborating, an individual attempts to work with the other person to find a solution that fully satisfies the concerns of both. It involves digging into an issue to identify the underlying concerns of the two individuals and to find an alternative that meets both sets of concerns. Collaborating between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other’s insights, resolving some condition that would otherwise have them competing for resources, or

confronting and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem (Thomas & Kilmann, 2001).

Compromising is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. When compromising, an individual has the objective of finding an expedient, mutually-acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties. Compromising falls on a middle ground between competing and accommodating, giving up more than competing but less than accommodating. Likewise, it addresses an issue more directly than avoiding but doesn't explore it in as much depth as collaborating. Compromising might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position (Thomas & Kilmann, 2001).

Avoiding is unassertive and uncooperative. When avoiding, an individual does not immediately pursue his or her own concerns or those of the other person. He or she does not address the conflict. Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation (Thomas & Kilmann, 2001).

Accommodating is unassertive and cooperative—the opposite of competing. When accommodating, an individual neglects his or her own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person; there is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode. Accommodating might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person's order when you would prefer not to, or yielding to another's point of view (Thomas & Kilmann, 2001).

3.5 Procedure for data collection

The following was the procedure in which the data gathering was conducted. These were the step by step activities followed:

1. Identification of the female managers from the existing online organisational structure (sampling frame).
2. Identification of the male managers from the existing online organisational structure (sampling frame).

3. Potential respondents were randomly selected, with the invitation and questionnaire emailed to the randomly selected potential male and female respondents.
4. Respondents complete and email back their questionnaires.
5. Receipt of completed questionnaires and initial review of the individual questionnaires for incorrectly entered data or forms.
6. Respondents' responses are plotted against the five dimensions of Conflict management Styles to determine the preferred conflict management style per individual (using the Thomas & Kilmann classification tool).
7. Prevalent conflict management style per group is determined.
8. Statistical analysis of the consolidated respondents' results.
9. Inference against the research problems.
10. Compilation of the research report.

The data collected was in the form of questionnaire responses and was analysed to determine the respondent group's prevalent preferred CHS – Conflict Management styles. The analysis results were the basis of inferences of the study.

The questionnaire and the cover letter to potential respondents can be viewed in the appendix.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

The scoring and categorisation was done according to the Thomas -Kilmann Instrument as illustrated in the Scoring section in Appendix A. Section 4.4.2.

Descriptive Statistics were used in terms of describing and summarising the data (Burns, 2008). This was done by having the data collated for each individual to depict each respondent's modal conflict handling style. This was

done for each respondent within each category of both male and female managers.

To analyse the data further an overall collation of data per sample category was done across all individual responses to reflect a collated summation of responses across the different conflict resolution style categories. This was put into a histogram per each sample category of female and male managers. Descriptive assertions were made from this analysis in regards to the comparison.

To further analyse the data and test the significance of the descriptive statistics inferential statistics were employed to infer and further understand the population under research (Lee, 2000). A collation of the results for both female and male managers were analysed to see if there was a significant difference between the two groups' prevalent conflict handling style using the chi squared test. This served to statistically answer the research question below.

- *Are there any significant differences or similarities in the prevalent preferred conflict management styles of male and female managers within the South African bank?*

3.7 Limitations of the study

Although the nature of case study seem to imply that it is one measure on a singular subject, (Eckstein, 1975) this limitation needs to be understood in the light that the measure' is, in fact, comprised of multiple observations within a well demarcated instance of environment or aspect (Sprinz & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2004). The extent to which inferences can be made and to what extent the research would be externally valid is in fact strong in the population the case study is drawn from because of the specificity and focused-nature of case studies (Eckstein, 1975; Sprinz & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2004).

The perceived limitation that even though strong inference could be made in relation to the studied bank's management resources, less can be confidently inferred into the greater population as you move away from the locality of the

study is partly true in respect to the strength of inference but as noted by Flyvbjerg (2006), this is an misunderstanding.

Another limitation is that definition and understanding of what constitutes managerial staff differs and varies across countries, organisations and bodies of knowledge, as it does from individual to individual. To cater for this limitation the interpretation of the results and conclusions should be done in view of the context of the research and in the manner in which managers were defined in the research. This extends to the fact that extrapolation of the results and findings of the research should be done with cautionary reference of the definitions stipulated in the research.

The fact that the instrument used was self-administered, possesses another limitation in that as reported, some self-reports are poor predictors of behaviour (Baril, Korabik, Watson, Grencavage, & Gutkowski, 1990; Bass, 1990). This limitation is partly addressed in that the instrument does not directly ask for the managers to classify themselves, but does the classification through a set of questions that are later analysed to determine the conflict management styles.

Lastly, by mainly focusing on the prevalent conflict management styles, the research limited its reach to exclude a view of the conflict management styles as battery of interchangeable and sometimes concurrently exhibited conglomerated conflict behaviour that combines different styles when handling conflict (Van de Vliert, Euwema, & Huismans, 1995). This limits the inferences that can be made about the population from portraying a more holistic picture of conflict management styles, which may be a mixture of styles exhibited by the same individuals.

3.8 Validity and reliability

3.8.1 External validity

External validity is the degree to which the results from the research can be generalised to other settings and participants (Mitchell & Jolley, 2012). The research's defined parameters in terms of scope help demarcate the level of

inference that can be made and strengthens the level of external validity to the immediate population of the case study i.e. the bank in question. The fact that the research was specific to banking corporate managers in a South African bank clearly stipulates that, to a certain extent, some inferences can be made to the general specified banking group. However because sampling is used and that it is done in a specific bank as the environment being studied, the validity of the research cannot be held to represent all banking environments as the situations and structures of the organisations might differ. Validity is strong in the universe or specific demarcated area of study (Kane, 1982). The generalisation to have the research represent all South African Corporates will have to be done with less certainty than the inferences within banking sectors, however insignificantly so because the function of management is a general function existing across organisation and executed relatively similarly. This supports that the external validity in that inference is strong, especially because the sample of managers would be drawn from the same society and are, as mentioned executing the same roles.

External validity to other countries will be in fact the study of the research and the results from research will, with comparisons found in other countries help determine whether in further generalisation can be made across countries or whether there are specific differences in the findings across countries.

External validity to the population studied was improved by conducting random sample selection within the population elected (Kane, 1982).

3.8.2 Internal validity

Creswell (2003) identified internal validity as the threat of which the researcher might make incorrect inferences from the data or observation due to incorrect procedures, wrong treatments or participants experiences during the acquiring of data or during the experiment. This can be due to issues of inadequate procedural rigor such as the changing of instruments during the experiment or observation period.

To ensure that the above is mitigated, and ensuring that the goal of the research is maintained (Schram, 2006), the following steps were put in place to limit issues that might affect internal validity:

- Random selection of participant.
- The application of the questionnaire was done simultaneously in areas where respondents were not in the same locality. This minimised interaction between respondents and limited the possibility of respondents influencing one another in their questionnaires.
- The same standard unaltered questionnaire was used for all respondents.
- Prior to the survey, respondents were not briefed on the types of conflict handling styles that exist to avoid manipulation toward desired results.
- Clear instructions on how to answer the questionnaire were available in the front of the questionnaire in order for respondents to avoid confusing the response method.

The respondents submitted their responses confidentially, with no focus given to the identity of the respondents in such a way that the respondents are not identifiable once the analysis of the submitted questionnaire began. For example: the questionnaires were saved in an electronic folder without names annotated them. This confidentiality and non-identification commitment was stipulated to the respondents as a way to minimise the cases where responses may be influenced by fear of being identified.

3.8.3 Reliability

Reliability is the consistency of a set of measurements or measuring instruments, often used to describe a test. This can either be whether the measurements of the same instrument give or are likely to give the same measurement (test-retest). In the case of more subjective instruments, such as personality or trait inventories, it is whether two independent assessors give

similar scores (inter-rater reliability). Reliability is inversely related to random error (Rudner, et al., 2001).

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument is a commonly used psychological assessment tool (Shell, 2007). Reliability data for the Thomas-Kilmann instrument has been reported as ranging from .61-.68 for the test-retest (which measures the change in results between measurements done using the same instrument on two separate occasions) and .43-.71 in the Cronbach alpha, (which measures the average correlation two halves of the sample as per all possible permutations of splits) (Rahim, 2001). This indicates that the instrument is a highly reliable device for such assessments.

As mentioned, this instrument is a widely used and accepted tool to grade the conflict resolution styles of an individual and in specifically determining the preference in conflict handling styles of a representative sampled population.

The questionnaire came with an interpretation guide and there was therefore no room for subjective interpretation of the results. This predetermined interpretation model prevented interference from the researcher on the interpretation of the results thereby increasing the reliability of findings.

4. CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results that the research obtained and examines the analysis that was done. The chapter first goes through the brief discussion of the demographic profile of the actual respondents, indicating the final numbers of those that participated in the research and their demographics. Thereafter, the actual results will be presented, starting with the plotted responses, the high level graphical descriptive presentations of the findings and comparisons between the genders' prevalent conflict management styles. This is followed by the statistical analysis confirming the significance of the findings.

4.2 Demographic profile of respondents

The population from which the respondents were drawn was a specific major bank in South Africa (The name of the bank has been withheld to allow for confidentiality of the company and its employees). The sample comprised of managerial staff of different races and different managerial levels. The respondents all managed resources in the organisation. Although the envisaged sample sizes were 50 male and 50 female managerial respondents, slightly fewer respondents were obtained as indicated on the next page. Further demographical data beyond the two descriptors of gender and managerial status was collected i.e. Race of respondents and managerial level of the respondents as represented in Table 3. These however are represented independently to allow for the confidentiality restrictions stipulated by the bank studied i.e. not to represent data in such a way that identifies individuals but rather represent the data to represent the groups through percentages and count across the attribute categories.

Table 3: Profile of respondents**Number of Respondents per Gender group**

Description of respondent type	Planned Number of Respondents	Actualised Number of Respondents
Female managers working in a specific South African Bank	50	45
Male managers working in a specific South African Bank	50	45

Race distribution

Description of respondent type	Black	Coloured	Indian	White
Race distribution (Count)	30	14	9	36
Race distribution (Percentage)	33%	16%	10%	40%

Management Level

Description of respondent type	Junior Managers	Middle Managers	Senior Managers
Management Level distribution (Count)	34	37	18
Management Level (Percentage)	38%	41%	20%

The response rate to the emails sent to potential respondents of the questionnaire was 0.346 i.e. of the 260 emails sent out, 90 responded by

completing the questionnaire. In the context of the explanation given later in section 5.2, this can be taken as an acceptable response rate. Notably, no generally agreed response rate exist and it is uncommon to get response rates of 0.1 (Denscombe, 2010).

One respondent replied indicating that he was not interested in responding to the questionnaire. The rest either did not respond at all or did complete the questionnaire as requested.

Three respondents requested further assistance in understanding how to complete the questionnaire. This was done by restating the instructions already written on the questionnaire. These three respondents eventually did complete the questionnaire and were included in the research. The assistance given to these respondents was entirely specific to understanding the instructions and not in terms of what responses to give to the questions, hence allowing their responses to remain valid and useable for the research.

3.3.2 Responses Used

Below is the indication of the responses that were valid and were used for the analysis.

Table 4: Initial analysis results on valid responses

Case Processing Summary						
	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Gender * Prevalent Conflict Handling style	90	100.0%	0	0.0%	90	100.0%

The above table shows the information about the sample size (90 respondents) and that all respondents completed the questionnaires satisfactorily (i.e. in accordance to the instructions provided with the questionnaire, answering all relevant questions).

The table above shows the results obtained from the fifth step of the data collection procedure stipulated in section 3.5, where, following the first four steps of data collection and on receiving the questionnaires, there was an initial review of individual questionnaires to ensure that they are usable and completed correctly.

The following tabulation was obtained from plotting the results from the questionnaires.

Table 5: Female managers’ prevalent conflict management style results per respondent

Female Managers Results									
	Forcing	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating	Collaborating		Prevalent Score	Prevalent Category	Prevalent Style
Respondent ID	1	2	3	4	5				
1	31	38	21	21	41		41	5 Collaborating	
2	10	44	28	25	44		44	2 Compromising	
3	32	30	16	26	45		45	5 Collaborating	
4	38	31	25	18	42		42	5 Collaborating	
5	14	45	26	25	40		45	2 Compromising	
6	16	34	33	27	42		42	5 Collaborating	
7	32	43	18	24	34		43	2 Compromising	
8	20	50	20	25	35		50	2 Compromising	
9	41	32	19	20	38		41	1 Forcing	
10	25	29	31	30	36		36	5 Collaborating	
11	33	42	12	21	43		43	5 Collaborating	
12	28	28	26	22	47		47	5 Collaborating	
13	25	27	29	31	39		39	5 Collaborating	
14	32	35	20	22	42		42	5 Collaborating	
15	41	43	16	11	41		43	2 Compromising	
16	29	44	18	27	35		44	2 Compromising	
17	28	35	26	24	36		36	5 Collaborating	
18	24	31	25	26	46		46	5 Collaborating	
19	20	42	19	25	47		47	5 Collaborating	
20	43	25	16	14	50		50	5 Collaborating	
21	49	38	4	15	42		49	1 Forcing	
22	33	34	28	17	38		38	5 Collaborating	
23	19	42	19	26	47		47	5 Collaborating	
24	31	31	26	22	40		40	5 Collaborating	
25	24	36	26	23	44		44	5 Collaborating	
26	25	44	20	21	42		44	2 Compromising	
27	17	36	31	24	41		41	5 Collaborating	
28	30	36	23	28	34		36	2 Compromising	
29	17	36	31	24	41		41	5 Collaborating	
30	30	36	23	28	34		36	2 Compromising	
31	39	39	13	23	38		39	1 Forcing	
32	24	42	19	27	40		42	2 Compromising	
33	25	39	27	24	35		39	2 Compromising	
34	31	35	27	27	31		35	2 Compromising	
35	24	33	28	25	41		41	5 Collaborating	
36	24	42	14	24	50		50	5 Collaborating	
37	46	33	13	18	41		46	1 Forcing	
38	42	34	22	14	38		42	1 Forcing	
39	26	28	22	30	45		45	5 Collaborating	
40	29	31	24	33	33		33	4 Collaborating	
41	32	33	7	24	56		56	5 Collaborating	
42	16	22	43	37	34		43	3 Avoiding	
43	32	25	31	26	38		38	5 Collaborating	
44	26	28	30	36	30		36	4 Collaborating	
45	17	37	28	28	42		42	5 Collaborating	

The table above shows tabulation of results for female managers that responded to the questionnaire. The respondents are marked 1 to 45 in first column marked “Respondent ID” to distinguish the respondent followed by the columns showing how many points were allocated to each of the Conflict Handling styles, namely, Forcing, Compromising, Avoiding, Accommodating and Collaborating. The Prevalent Score column shows the highest score allocated to Conflict Handling Style for each respondent. This translates to the corresponding Prevalent Style indicated on the last column.

Table 6: Male managers’ prevalent conflict management style results per respondent

Male Managers Results									
Respondent ID	Forcing	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating	Collaborating	Prevalent Score	Prevalent Category	Prevalent Style	
1	25	35	27	28	37	37	5 Collaborating		
2	33	31	14	25	48	48	5 Collaborating		
3	28	45	21	20	39	45	2 Compromising		
4	21	40	17	27	48	48	5 Collaborating		
5	33	31	25	28	33	33	1 Forcing		
6	23	31	26	25	46	46	5 Collaborating		
7	42	34	28	37	41	42	1 Forcing		
8	30	29	25	28	38	38	5 Collaborating		
9	26	35	28	24	38	38	5 Collaborating		
10	37	37	21	14	40	40	5 Collaborating		
11	35	28	30	24	32	35	1 Forcing		
12	37	24	22	30	38	38	5 Collaborating		
13	35	28	18	24	40	40	5 Collaborating		
14	31	35	25	23	40	40	5 Collaborating		
15	31	31	29	21	37	37	5 Collaborating		
16	30	36	23	28	34	36	2 Compromising		
17	31	31	20	27	44	44	5 Collaborating		
18	18	38	29	29	41	41	5 Collaborating		
19	42	37	9	23	41	42	1 Forcing		
20	31	33	25	27	34	34	5 Collaborating		
21	24	40	26	24	36	40	2 Compromising		
22	37	29	19	23	42	42	5 Collaborating		
23	33	32	25	27	33	33	1 Forcing		
24	27	32	26	29	36	36	5 Collaborating		
25	16	44	18	28	45	45	5 Collaborating		
26	33	32	24	18	44	44	5 Collaborating		
27	28	28	15	27	55	55	5 Collaborating		
28	25	42	19	26	41	42	2 Compromising		
29	33	32	24	18	44	44	5 Collaborating		
30	18	38	29	29	41	41	5 Collaborating		
31	33	35	18	20	46	42	2 Compromising		
32	32	33	23	27	36	36	5 Collaborating		
33	26	28	28	31	37	37	5 Collaborating		
34	24	35	27	24	43	43	5 Collaborating		
35	38	32	20	23	39	39	5 Collaborating		
36	26	39	20	23	43	43	5 Collaborating		
37	37	29	20	23	40	40	5 Collaborating		
38	39	35	17	21	39	39	1 Forcing		
39	39	29	20	28	35	39	1 Forcing		
40	35	34	13	28	41	41	5 Collaborating		
41	21	34	31	31	34	34	2 Compromising		
42	23	37	27	31	33	37	2 Compromising		
43	38	28	27	25	33	38	1 Forcing		
44	35	36	13	27	42	42	5 Collaborating		
45	37	37	21	16	38	38	5 Collaborating		

The table above shows tabulation of results for male managers that responded to the questionnaire. The respondents are marked 1 to 45 in first column marked “Respondent ID” to distinguish the respondent followed by the columns showing how many points were allocated to each of the Conflict Handling styles, namely, Forcing, Compromising, Avoiding, Accommodating and Collaborating. The Prevalent Score column shows the highest score allocated to Conflict Handling Style for each respondent. This translates to the corresponding Prevalent Style indicated on the last column.

4.3 Results pertaining to differences or similarities in the prevalent conflict management styles of male and female managers in a bank in South Africa

4.3.1 *Prevalence count Comparison*

The count (i.e. total number) of how many respondents reflected the respective Conflict Management styles as their prevalent style is shown below. As indicated by the figures below, there is a clear indication that the Collaborating style is the mode and style with the highest count across both genders.

Similarities can also be seen in the general count across the other styles, with Avoiding and Accommodating styles being the least count and the Forcing and Compromising styles followed by the Collaborating style.

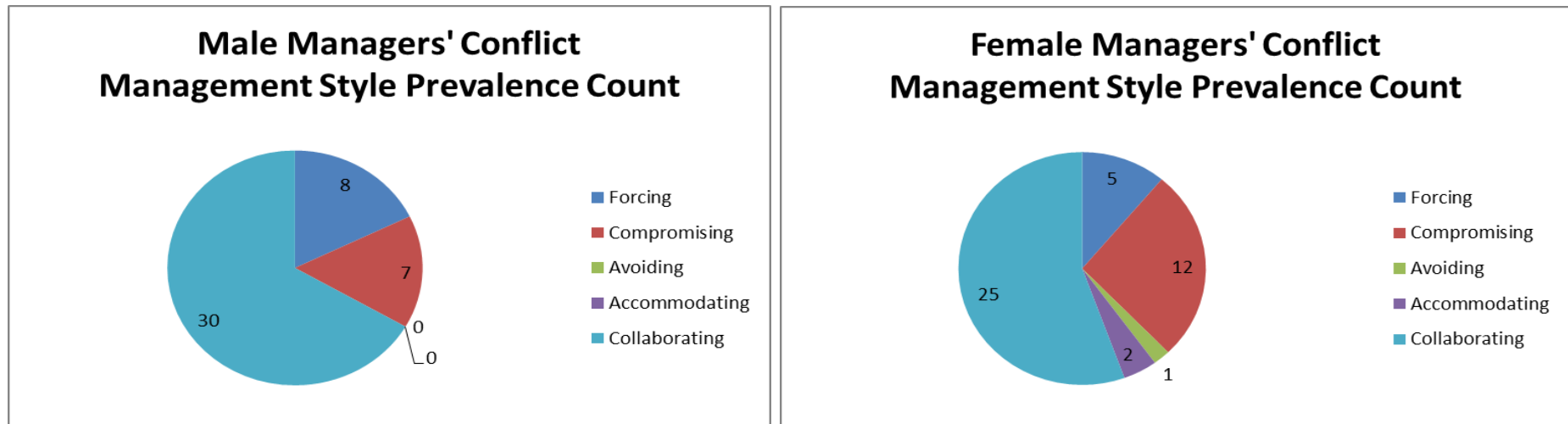


Figure 2: Prevalent Count Comparison (Male vs. Female Managers)

The Pie-Charts presented above in Figure 2 show the comparison of the number of times the different Conflict handling styles proved to be the prevalent styles in the various individual assessments of their questionnaire submission/responses. The charts reflect the distribution of Conflict Management style prevalence of the 45 male managers and 45 female managers on the right pie chart. The charts show that there were 30 male and 25 female respondents that rated Collaborating as their prevalent conflict management style, 8 male respondents and 5 female respondents with Forcing Conflict Management style as prevalent, and 1 and 2 female respondents with Avoiding and Accommodating respectively. As reflected above the conflict management style that was most commonly prevalent in both genders was the Collaborating style. The least most common styles were Avoiding and Accommodating in both genders, with Compromising and Forcing scoring similarly in the middle for both genders. Below is a bar graph presenting the same data.

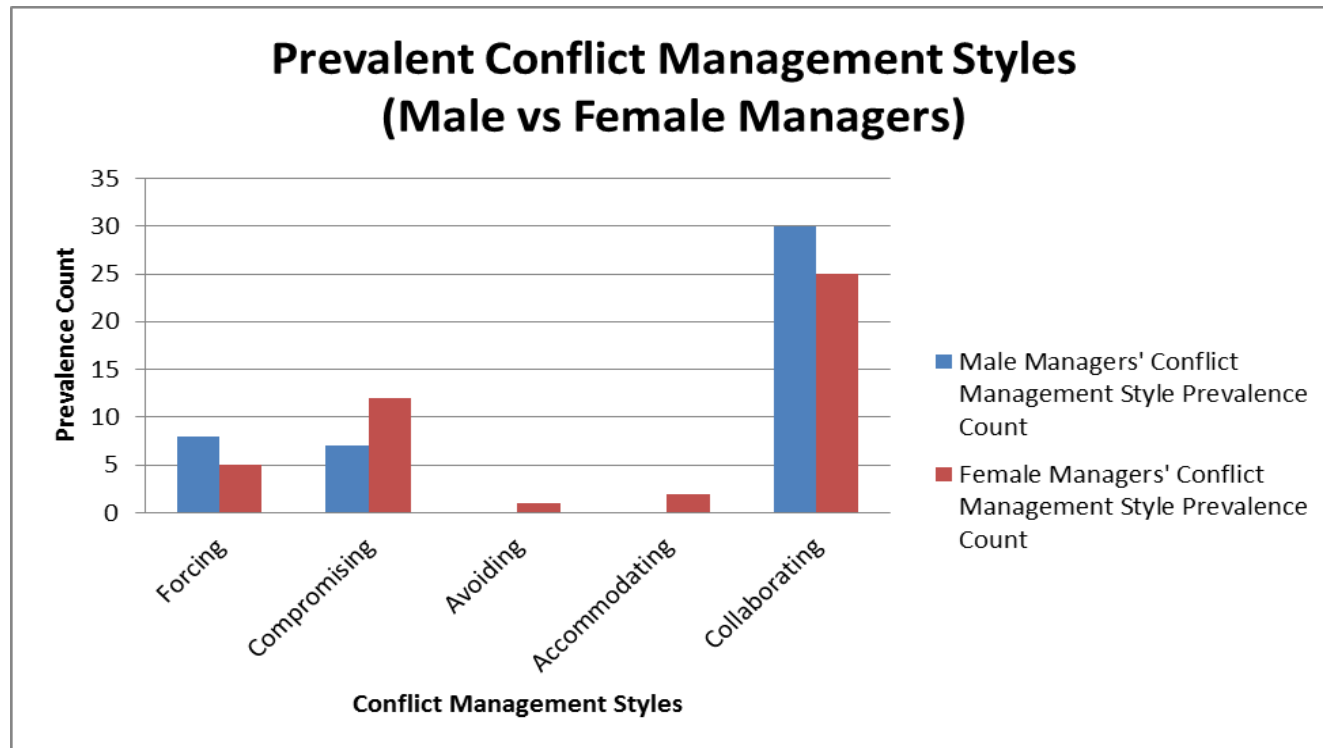


Figure 3: Comparison of Prevalent Conflict Management Styles

4.3.2 Competing/Forcing Conflict Management Style

The Competing/Forcing conflict management style, which is a result of low cooperativeness and high assertiveness traits, rated relatively low in prevalence for both male and female managers with less than 10 respondents in both gender categories having it as their prevalent style. Although male managers did rate 3 respondents higher in the category, when compared to the other conflict management styles the rating between the two genders seem to be comparable and similarly rated.

4.3.3 Compromising Conflict Management Style

The Compromising conflict management style, which results from medium cooperativeness and medium assertiveness, similarly to the Forcing conflict management style, also rated relatively low, although in this case female managers did rate 5 respondents higher than the male managers. Again, when compared across other styles, both genders seem to be behaving in the same manner.

4.3.4 Avoiding Conflict Management Style

The Avoiding conflict management style, which results from low cooperativeness and low assertiveness, scored the lowest in both the gender groups with the least number of both male and female managers having Avoiding as their prevalent conflict management style.

Interestingly, no male manager had Avoiding as their prevalent conflict management style and only one female had Avoiding as their prevalent style. This, however, does not mean that the respondent did not reflect characteristics of attributable to Avoiding Conflict management style as a review of the points distribution in Figure 4 below will indicate that both male and female managers did allocate some points to this conflict management style.

4.3.5 Accommodating Conflict Management Style

The Accommodating conflict management style, resulting from high cooperativeness and low assertiveness, scored the second lowest in overall ratings across the gender groups with only 2 female managers having this as their prevalent style. No male managers had Accommodating conflict management style as their prevalent style. This is however, despite that both gender respondent did allocate points toward this style although not adequate to make it the prevalent conflict management style.

4.3.6 Collaborating Conflict Management Style

The Collaborating conflict management style, resulting from high cooperativeness and high assertiveness, is by far the most prevalent conflict management style that is dominant in both gender groups. It is both the style with the most number of points attributed to it in both the male and female groups and also is the style that features most as the prevalent conflict management style overally and for the different gender groups. In both male and female managers' prevalent counts show that the number of respondents that reflected Collaboration as their prevalent style is more than the summation of the other four styles counts. This means more respondents had Collaborating style as their prevalent conflict management style than the number of respondents that did not have it has their prevalent style. This shows the significant dominance of the Collaborating style as the prevalent conflict management style across both gender groups and across the whole sample. See Figure 2 and 3 for a graphical presentation.

4.3.7 Preference Distribution

The following chart shows the allocation of points across the various Conflict Management styles. This shows, how in their responses, the respondents indicated to what extent they preferred the respective conflict management styles.

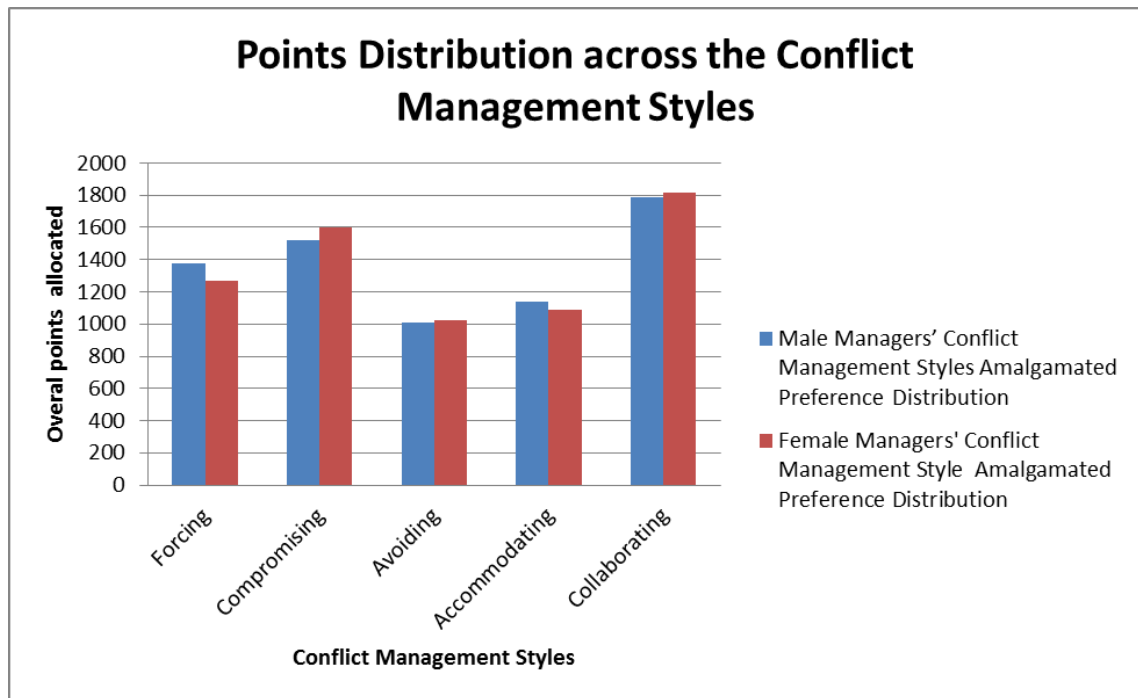


Figure 4: Comparison of the points distribution across the different Conflict Management Styles

The chart in Figure 4 clearly shows Collaborating Style dominance in the respondents' allocation. This matches the prevalence count trend.

As you can see the distribution of preference points for Female managers match very closely to the distribution for male managers.

4.3.8 Statistical Analysis

To do the statistical analysis on the data, a commonly used statistical tool called SPSS was used. The Statistical analysis was to confirm whether there was any statistical difference of the between the male and female manager conflict handling style results and if that difference constituted statistical significance. This determination would test whether there was any association or dependence between 'Gender' and 'Prevalent Conflict Handling style' variables. This statistical analysis was to further analyse whether the similarity shown in the graphical presentation in Figures 2 and 3 in section 4.3.1 to determine if the similarity can be statistically proven. That is, if there can be confidence level to

assert that there are similarities between the prevalent conflict management styles of male and female managers.

a. ***Chi-Square Test***

The Chi-squared test of independence of Categorical variables and the additional Fisher's Exact Fisher test were used to determine this.

The Chi-square statistics is used to determine if there is a statistically significant relationship between two categorical variables, 'Gender' and 'Prevalent Conflict handling style'. This test indicates whether the relationship is statistically significant but not to what strength (Morgan, 2001). The following results were obtained.

Table 7: Chi- squared test of independence results

Chi-Square Test Results			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.335^a	4	.175
Likelihood Ratio	7.540	4	.110
Linear-by-Linear Association	.409	1	.522
N of Valid Cases	90		

a. 4 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .50.

Table 7 above shows the results of the Chi-squared test. The result shows a chi-squared statistic of 6.335 with 4 degrees of freedom and two-tailed p-value of 0.175. Since this p-value, reflecting the Asymptotic significance, is above 0.05 we would have failed to reject the Ho as this means there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the gender of the managers influences their

respective Prevalent Conflict Management styles. The same would have applied considering the results shown by using the alternate calculations for association using the Likelihood Ratio were 7.54 and the p value of 0.11 which depicts no significant association.

The Linear-by-Linear Association results that test for trends also were above 0.05 depicting no significant trends detected.

However, one of the assumptions for the Chi-squared test is that there is a large number of respondents in each cell, and since the test did issue an indication that 40 percent of the of the cells (i.e. four of the cells) had frequencies less than 5, this violates one of the Chi-square test requirements stating that at least 80 percent of the cells should have above five frequencies (Cochran, 1954). The above statement means that the Chi-squared test results are unreliable and unusable in terms of determining whether there is significant statistical relationship between the categorical variables of Gender and Prevalent Conflict handling style. Since there was that limitation on applying the Chi-squared test to our research results the Fisher's Exact test had to be utilised.

b. ***Fisher's Exact Test***

The Fisher's Exact Test was done to cater for the limitations of the Chi-squared test indicated above. Fisher's Exact Fisher Test, also tests whether there is significant statistical relationship between the categorical variables, Gender and 'Prevalent Conflict handling style,' in the event that, as in this case, the Chi squared test limitations rendered itself unusable (Morgan, 2001).

Table 8: Fisher's Exact test results

Fisher's Exact Test Results					
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.335 ^a	4	.175	.130	
Likelihood Ratio	7.540	4	.110	.119	
Fisher's Exact Test	5.837			.144	
Linear-by-Linear Association	.409 ^b	1	.522	.566	.283
N of Valid Cases	90				

The Fisher's Exact Fisher test produced the results reflected above in Table 8. The p value of 0.144 shows that there is insufficient evidence to reject the H_0 below as it is above the 0.05 significance being sought after.

H_0 : Prevalent Preferred Conflict Management Style for female managers in the South African bank being studied == Prevalent Preferred Conflict Management Style for male managers in the South African bank being studied

This means that there is no statistical proof that there is significant interaction between the gender and 'prevalent conflict management styles' and by inference, that there is no difference in the prevalent conflict management styles of females and conflict management styles of male managers studied.

The Linear-by-Linear association test which test for trends remained above 0.05 (from 0.522 observed under the chi test to 0.566 observed under the Fisher's Exact test) meaning that no significant trends were detected.

The Likelihood ratio results also remain above 0.05 showing no significant association between 'Gender' and 'Prevalent Conflict management style'

All 90 cases as reflected in both test runs remained valid.

c. ***Comparison of Prevalence Count per Category of Conflict Management Style***

Furthermore, the following results in Table 9 below were obtained, confirming the Prevalent Conflict Management styles were similar irrespective of gender, showing that there was no significant difference between the results for male managers and female managers in respect to their prevalent conflict management style results. The subscript letter e.g. ^a. below denotes a subset of the prevalent Conflict Management style categories whose column proportions do not differ statistically significantly from each other at the significance level of 0.05, showing a confidence level of 95%. Notably all columns have subscript letters meaning that the different subsets of conflict management styles i.e. Forcing, Avoiding, Accommodating, Compromising and Collaborating, display no significant difference between the genders. This is the statistical confirmation of the visual indication observed by the initial Figures 2, 3 and 4 that showed similarities between the female and male managers' conflict management style prevalent counts.

Table 9 depicts the comparison between observed counts denoted as 'Counts,' which are the actual number of managers that had the respective conflict management style as prevalent and the 'Expected Counts,' which are the number of managers that would have been expected in the case where the variables, 'gender' and 'conflict management style' were independent and not associated. (E.g. statistically 6.5 were expected to have Forcing as their prevalent Conflict Management Style but 5 female managers and 8 male managers were observed to have Forcing as their prevalent Conflict Management Style.) Notably, as confirmed above, there is no significant difference between the observed and expected counts, meaning that the variables are indeed significantly independent and that there is no association between gender and the prevalent conflict management styles and the prevalent conflict management styles are not dependent on the gender of the managers.

Table 9: Comparison of prevalence count per category of conflict management style across genders

Gender * Prevalent Conflict Management Style Cross tabulation								
			Prevalent Conflict Handling style					
			Forcing	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating	Collaborating	Total
Gender	Female	Count	5 _a	12 _a	1 _a	2 _a	25 _a	45
		Expected Count	6.5	9.0	.5	1.0	28.0	45.0
		% within Gender	11.1%	26.7%	2.2%	4.4%	55.6%	100.0%
	Male	Count	8 _a	6 _a	0 _a	0 _a	31 _a	45
		Expected Count	6.5	9.0	.5	1.0	28.0	45.0
		% within Gender	17.8%	13.3%	0.0%	0.0%	68.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	13	18	1	2	56	90
		Expected Count	13.0	18.0	1.0	2.0	56.0	90.0

	% within Gender	14.4%	20.0%	1.1%	2.2%	62.2%	100.0%
Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Prevalent Conflict Handling style categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the .05 level.							

4.4 Summary of the results

The results indicate that the prevalent conflict management styles of female managers are similar to the conflict management styles of male managers. This similarity is visible both in the prevalent conflict handling styles which show the most dominant style, as well as the general levels of the subsequently ranked conflict management styles, which are the general distribution of points across the remaining conflict management styles.

Across both genders, the Collaborative Conflict Management Style has been the most prevalent with the Avoiding and Accommodating Conflict Management styles being the least frequently prevalent.

The statistical tests described above in section 4.3 confirm that there is no sufficient evidence to support that there is a significant difference between the prevalent Conflict Management styles of male and female managers, as well as no difference in the general distribution of the conflict management styles for female managers and male managers at the studied bank.

This means that the hypothesis that there is no difference between the prevalent conflict management styles of female managers and that of male managers has been accepted as no significant difference can be inferred. Therefore, the Null hypothesis below is accepted.

Ho: Prevalent Preferred Conflict Management Style for female managers in the South African bank being studied == Prevalent Preferred Conflict Management Style for male managers in the South African bank being studied.

5. CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter will begin by discussing the dynamics of acquiring respondents and the reasons particular to the final demographic of those that responded. This will then be followed by the discussion of results pertaining to the main problem and the conclusion thereof.

5.2. Demographic profile of respondents

The slight shortfall of 5 female and 5 male respondents from the planned number is shown in Table 3, in section 4.2, as well as the relatively lower than expected response rate can be attributed to the fact that, although the research was sampled from the organisation where the researcher worked, the randomness in the selection of respondents resulted in having to send requests to people the researcher had no authority or influence over. This, together with the fact that the research was done over the holiday period (December) when most potential respondents would leave work and not have access to their work email, contributed to the low response rate.

5.3. Discussion pertaining to what are the differences or similarity in the prevalent management styles of male and female managers in a bank in South Africa

5.3.1. Conflict management style homogeneity across Gender

The results obtained from the female and male managers in regards to both the most frequently prevalent conflict management style and the general levels of the subsequent next frequently prevalent conflict management styles indicate that the Null hypothesis below is to be accepted as no significant evidence exists to reject it.

Ho: Prevalent Preferred Conflict Management Style for female managers in the South African bank being studied == Prevalent Preferred Conflict Management Style for male managers in the South African bank being studied

Contrary to significant literature that seemed to suggest that male and female respondents have different conflict management styles (K. W. Thomas, G. F. Thomas & Schaubhut, 2008; Blake & Mouton, 1964; Ilmer, 1980; Kilmann & Thomas, 1977; Ruble & Stander, 1990; Rosenthal & Hautaluoma, 1988), male and female respondents seemed to display strong similarities in their patterns regarding their prevalent Conflict Management styles.

The results are contrary to the literature that suggested that males display more aggressive and competitive behavioural traits (K. W. Thomas, G. F. Thomas, & Schaubhut, 2008; Blake & Mouton, 1964; Ilmer, 1980; Kilmann & Thomas, 1977; Ruble & Stander, 1990; Rosenthal & Hautaluoma, 1988; Hofstede, 1980, 2001; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), which would have been reflected in their prevalent style, this being predominately the Competing conflict management style. Instead the male managers' most prevalent style indicated is the Collaborating conflict management style, which means a display of high assertiveness and high cooperativeness traits when plotted against the Kilmann Conflict handling style graph (Thomas & Kilmann, 2001). The unexpected rating of male respondents of being highly cooperative is what is mainly responsible in maintaining the null hypothesis wherein the two genders are similar.

Notably, none of the male managers rated Avoiding and Accommodating as their prevalent style and only 1 female manager had Avoiding and 2 female managers had Accommodating as their conflict management style.

5.3.2. Corporate Culture Impact

The observation of high cooperativeness and assertiveness in male managers as well as the diminished display in the trait of being competitive seem to suggest that the corporate culture of the organisation encourages alternative behaviour of collaboration, and is a strong determinant of behaviour, with

significant impact on organisations and the people that make the organisation (Bettinger, 1989; Brown, 1992; Fiol, 1991; Kilmann, 1989; Petrock, 1990; Sherwood, 1988; Whipp, Rosenfeld, & Pettigrew, 1989). This is supported by the observations in earlier studies indicating that culture is a strong influence and determinant of behaviour (Manyak & Katono, 2010).

The assertion made from some researches that culture value systems impact gender behaviour may be applicable in the case of the bank studied on the basis that this impact is imparted by virtue of application of the culture value system (Manyak & Katono, 2010).

The above notion is supported by the evidence reflected in the value system of the bank that was studied, that is the value system is applied consistently across both gender groups. The Bank's values of collaboration and team work are entrenched in the company's performance system. The bank has explicit values of working in teams and respecting colleagues as part of its core corporate values. These values of collaboration and working in teams are constantly communicated to employees and assessed periodically as part of the performance appraisals. This is not only reflected in the company's objectives and values, but also reflected in the bank's performance management rating system where traits such as teamwork and collaboration are rated as part of the companies 'have to have' behaviours and key performance indicators. The promotion of this corporate culture could be the reason for males adopting a more cooperative behaviour and collaborating conflict management styles and for females to maintain the same behaviour and styles.

5.3.3. The Power Effect

The results also concur with the view that because our population was of managers and not general staff, that would have been in the category of people with less power and naturally, may engage in ingratiating or submissive behaviour in an attempt to resolve the conflict (Deutsch, 1985). Understandably, the managers who possess authoritative power and other powers, as noted in the literature, would display more assertive behaviour which

coupled with the cooperativeness noted result in both groups having collaborating conflict-management styles.

5.3.4. Male Managers slightly More Competing

Even though the results indicated that the rating of 'Competing' conflict-management style was generally low, they also show distinctively that, as some literature found, males generally show more competing conflict-management styles than their female counterparts. (Thomas, et al, 2008; Blake & Mouton, 1964; Ilmer, 1980; Kilmann & Thomas, 1977; Ruble & Stander, 1990; Rosenthal & Hautaluoma, 1988). The results reflected this both in the results of the prevalence count in Figure 3., where males had more counts of prevalent competing conflict-management style and also in the points distribution shown in Figure 4, where more males allocated points to the competing conflict-management style than female managers did.

This however, was not of statistical significance as the difference could not be proven with confidence as is shown by the statistical analysis done in section 4.3.8.

5.4. Conclusion

The research, in an effort to create an opportunity to further understand conflict management in South Africa, particularly significant difference between the prevalent conflict-management styles of female and male managers in a South African bank. The results obtained from the research clearly aligned with the findings of some previous studies (Baxter and Shepard, 1978) showing strong similarity between the two genders and no significant difference. This could be because of the strong corporate culture the respondents' organisation has, as well as the assertion made by previous studies on the culture being a strong influencer to behaviour (Manyak & Katono, 2010).

The key findings were, similar to the assertions by other researches (Baxter and Shepard, 1978), that there is no significant difference in the prevalent conflict-

management styles of the two genders and in fact the results mimicked one another showing great homogeneity as a group of managers.

Interestingly, although some researches did affirm the influence of culture to result in the difference in conflict handling style between the genders (Hofstede, 1980; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), however, further literature (Manyak & Katono, 2010) affirmed that the application of the cultural value system by means of reward and sanctions was the true determinant of the behaviour. The results of this research and general consistent application of the value system within the case bank seemed to indicate that the impact to be equal between the two gender groups resulting in similar results in both male and female managers' prevalent conflict-management styles and conflict-management styles in general. In other words, even though some research inferred to say that culture, in its traditional sense i.e. as interlinked to ethnicity, would influence the conflict-management styles of female managers to be different to that of male managers genders (Hofstede, 1980; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), the fact that the bank being studied applied this cultural value system of expecting both the male and female managers to work collaboratively in teams and to be measured and rewarded on that basis, irrespective of their gender, suggests that the influence of culture value system was the same for both genders - resulting in both genders reflecting the same behaviours, and in this case, having the same conflict handling styles as Manyak and Katono, (2010) found.

The social role theory which asserts that through social learning, different expectations of the genders results in different social behaviour (Eagley, 1987) is in fact strengthened by the findings of this research in that because the social expectation of the two genders in this case were similar in the way they play a managerial role. Their social learning of both genders was therefore the same and was supported by the reciprocal interaction with the environment and society (Bandura, 1999) which reaffirmed this expectation through the existing corporate values and performance measurement systems applicable to both genders. In other words, as social role theory affirms, the conflict-management

styles of male and female managers were similar because the role expectations were similar.

The key inference from the research was that gender does not act as a strong determinant toward conflict-management styles in the case study of the South African Bank. This finding contributes to the body of knowledge on conflict management in general, specifically in the further understanding of the South African banking industry conflict dynamics as the findings contributed, as a case, to the general understanding of conflict and conflict management in a South African perspective and within the banking sector.

6. CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter looks to provide conclusions from the research as well as recommendations on the utilisation of the research findings. The chapter also gives suggestions of studies and research that could be further conducted to provide additional knowledge in this field of study.

6.2 Conclusions of the study

The results and research concludes that there are no differences between prevalent conflict-management styles of female managers and male managers in the studied population. This is affirmed by the “Prevalent Count Comparison (Male vs. Female Managers)” in Figure 2, “Comparison of Prevalent conflict-management Styles” in Figure 3 and the “Comparison of the Points distribution across the different Conflict-management Styles” in Figure 4, as well as the descriptive statistics obtained from the Fisher's Exact Test Results that tested for the statistical significance difference.

The homogeneity of the results for the prevalent conflict-management style across both the female and male gender results could be attributed to the strong corporate culture that encourages behavioural modification at work. This can be further tested as a hypothesis, however the research does confirm that the case studied showed no difference in the prevalent disposition of the two genders and no significant correlation existed between gender and conflict-management style.

This finding is similar to the studies done in Uganda (Manyak & Katono, 2010) on gender and conflict handling styles where similar results were found. In general, this research provides some learning on conflict-management in

corporates in South Africa, specifically with some inference in the South African banking sector as a singular example in that industry and country.

The findings do support the notion that the integration government has done to include more females in the management roles of corporates has been achieved, at least in part and possibly with the assistance of the initiatives being run both within the banking sector (The Banking Association South Africa, 2012) and within the bank that was studied, in that there is some homogeneity achieved regarding to how managers as a whole respond to conflict management.

6.3 Recommendations

The results of the research indicate that Organisational Development resources can potentially treat managers without gender distinctions regarding conflict management. The similarity shown by the research indicates that there is no gender-based intervention that would necessarily be required in up-skilling managers in the corporate environment. As a form of organisational development, the promotion of specific corporate cultures could be used as a tool and construct to encourage required or favoured behaviour in people. The development can be designed in the understanding that there are no gender-related differences in conflict-management style prevalence, allowing the development to take similar approaches across the genders.

Another recommendation would be for the South African government, in the effort to transform workplaces and get more balanced and population-representative workforces, could build and encourage compliance of the gender and race quotas through the development of corporate culture programmes reflecting they would want to achieve. This can similarly be done through influencing the corporates' value systems which in turn will impact behaviour.

In general, organisations should be encouraged to create and foster cultural value systems from which they can create a basis of encouraging specific behaviours. This, as Manyak & Katono (2010) indicates, can be reinforced by the offering of rewards.

Social role learning and social role theory (Eagley, 1987) as inferred from the results in this study can be the basis from which behavioural traits can be obtained. In this light, recommendation on communicating role expectations and reinforcing these expectations through consistent feedback and reward mechanisms could yield the expected behavioural patterns (Bandura, 1999). This is reflected in the case studied.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

Considering that the tool used in this research was a self-administered tool, further study on conflict management could include the confirmation of these self-rated styles by means of executing an observation-based research to inquire how managers of different gender groups would in fact manage conflict in reality. This type of study would extend the assessment from being a study of how people perceive themselves to observable behaviour and traits.

Further research and study can also be done using corporate culture as a construct/concept and studying how strong corporate culture is as a determinant of behaviour. This can be in the form of a research question such as 'The impact of corporate culture on conflict-management styles' or more broadly: 'The impact of corporate culture on management styles.' The former would seek to confirm the findings of this result and the later explore further the impact of corporate culture on management in general.

Another study would be to research if the impact of corporate culture is a construct that is permeating across the organisation, ensuring that the observed similarity is not by virtue of the organisational ranking of the respondents. So perhaps a study of non-managerial resources should be considered. Furthermore, other variables such as *race* could be studied to see if they too would be independent.

Research may also be replicated in other banks to support this case study and may also be done in other industries outside the banking sector within South Africa to see whether there is consistency in findings across the spectrum of South African workforce and also in environments where there is distinctive

cultural diversity within the population for example at shopping centres where no concerted effort was placed in providing a singular cultural value system.

Other demographical constructs can be used to further study conflict-management styles. For example research topics such as “Comparison of conflict-management styles of African and European managers in the banking sector” could explore the impact of race or geography within the same field or work. Level of seniority in management can also be a dimension to be researched under the same conflict-management field researching the difference between junior management and perhaps executive management conflict-management styles.

In building from the finding that the collaborating conflict management style is mostly prevalent across the management spectrum, further organisational development research can be done to determine this conflict management style effectiveness. Additional research can also be done on determining what development steps need to be administered to managers where a differently conflict management style is required.

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APPENDIX A

Actual Research Instrument

Instructions

Each numbered item contains two statements that describe how people deal with conflict. Distribute 5 points between each pair of statements. The statement that more accurately reflects your likely response should receive the highest number of points. For example, if response (a) strongly describes your behaviour, then record		
a.	5	First statement
b.	0	Second statement
However, if (a) and (b) both apply to you, but (b) is slightly more characteristic of your behaviour than (a), then record		
a.	2	First statement
b.	3	Second statement
Please make sure all questions are marked GREEN when complete. RED marked questions indicate that you have not distributed up to the required 5 points that need to be shared between the 2 options (a & b)		
Enter Selections here (a. and b. should add up to 5)		
		

Questions

1	a.	I am most comfortable letting others take responsibility for solving a problem.
	b.	Rather than negotiate differences, I stress those points for which agreement is obvious.
2	a.	I pride myself in finding compromise solutions.
	b.	I examine all the issues involved in any disagreement.
3	a.	I usually persist in pursuing my side of an issue.
	b.	I prefer to soothe others' feelings and preserve relationships.
4	a.	I pride myself in finding compromise solutions.
	b.	I usually sacrifice my wishes for the wishes of a peer.
5	a.	I consistently seek a peer's help in finding solutions.
	b.	I do whatever is necessary to avoid tension.
6	a.	As a rule, I avoid dealing with conflict.
	b.	I defend my position and push my view.
7	a.	I postpone dealing with conflict until I have had some time to think it over.
	b.	I am willing to give up some points if others give up some too.
8	a.	I use my influence to have my views accepted.
	b.	I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.
9	a.	I feel that most differences are not worth worrying about.
	b.	I make a strong effort to get my way on issues I care about.
10	a.	Occasionally I use my authority or technical knowledge to get my way.
	b.	I prefer compromise solutions to problems.
11	a.	I believe that a team can reach a better solution than any one person can working independently.
	b.	I often defer to the wishes of others.
12	a.	I usually avoid taking positions that would create controversy.
	b.	I'm willing to give a little if a peer will give a little, too.
13	a.	I generally propose the middle ground as a solution.
	b.	I consistently press to "sell" my viewpoint.
14	a.	I prefer to hear everyone's side of an issue before making judgements.
	b.	I demonstrate the logic and benefits of my position.
15	a.	I would rather give in than argue about trivialities.
	b.	I avoid being "put on the spot."
16	a.	I refuse to hurt a peer's feelings.
	b.	I will defend my rights as a team-member.
17	a.	I am usually firm in pursuing my point of view.
	b.	I'll walk away from disagreements before someone gets hurt.
18	a.	If it makes peers happy, I will agree with them.
	b.	I believe that give-and-take is the best way to solve any disagreement.
19	a.	I prefer to have everyone involved in a conflict generate alternatives together.
	b.	When the team is discussing a serious problem, I usually keep quiet.
20	a.	I would rather openly resolve conflict than conceal differences.
	b.	I seek ways to balance gains and losses for equitable solutions.
21	a.	In problem-solving, I am usually considerate of peers' viewpoints.
	b.	I prefer a direct and objective discussion of any disagreement.
22	a.	I seek solutions that meet some of everyone's needs.
	b.	I will argue as long as necessary to get my position heard.
23	a.	I like to assess the problem and identify a mutually agreeable solution.
	b.	When people challenge my position, I simply ignore them.
24	a.	If peers feel strongly about a position, I defer to it even if I don't agree.
	b.	I am willing to settle for a compromise solution.
25	a.	I am very persuasive when I have to be to win in a conflict situation.
	b.	I believe in the saying, "Kill your enemies with kindness."
26	a.	I will bargain with peers in an effort to manage disagreement.
	b.	I listen attentively before expressing my views.
27	a.	I avoid taking controversial positions.
	b.	I'm willing to give up my position for the benefit of the group.
28	a.	I enjoy competitive situations and "play" hard to win.
	b.	Whenever possible, I seek out knowledgeable peers to help resolve disagreements.
29	a.	I will surrender some of my demands, but I have to get something in return.
	b.	I don't like to air differences and usually keep my concerns to myself.
30	a.	I generally avoid hurting a peer's feelings.
	b.	When a peer and I disagree, I prefer to bring the issue out into the open so we can discuss it.
Gender		Male
	Y	Female

Extra Notes

Important Notes
1. <i>This information will only be used solely for research purposes.</i>
2. <i>The organisation you work for will not be associated expressly to the research results nor indicated or identified by name in the research process and therefore should not be held responsible against the finding and managing of the results attained.</i>
3. <i>No personal information identifying participants other than their gender will be captured or distributed as part of this research.</i>
4. <i>Responding to this questionnaire is an indication that you as a participant agree with the above.</i>
I agree with the above CLICK TO SUBMIT
Click here to submit 

APPENDIX B

Scoring

Record your responses (number of points) in the space next to each statement number below and then sum the points in each column.

	Forcing		Compromising		Avoiding		Accommodating		Collaborating
3(a)	_____	2(a)	_____	1(a)	_____	1(b)	_____	2(b)	_____
6(b)	_____	4(a)	_____	5(b)	_____	3(b)	_____	5(a)	_____
8(a)	_____	7(b)	_____	6(a)	_____	4(b)	_____	8(b)	_____
9(b)	_____	10(b)	_____	7(a)	_____	11(b)	_____	11(a)	_____
10(a)	_____	12(b)	_____	9(a)	_____	15(a)	_____	14(a)	_____
13(b)	_____	13(a)	_____	12(a)	_____	16(a)	_____	19(a)	_____
14(b)	_____	18(b)	_____	15(b)	_____	18(a)	_____	20(a)	_____
16(b)	_____	20(b)	_____	17(b)	_____	21(a)	_____	21(b)	_____
17(a)	_____	22(a)	_____	19(b)	_____	24(a)	_____	23(a)	_____
22(b)	_____	24(b)	_____	23(b)	_____	25(b)	_____	26(b)	_____
25(a)	_____	26(a)	_____	27(a)	_____	27(b)	_____	28(b)	_____
28(a)	_____	29(a)	_____	29(b)	_____	30(a)	_____	30(b)	_____
Total	_____	Total	_____	Total	_____	Total	_____	Total	_____

Next, carry over the totals from the column totals and then plot your total scores on the following chart to show the profile of your conflict-management styles. A total score of 36 to 45 for each style, such as the forcing style in column 1, may indicate a strong preference and use of that style. A total score of 0 to 18 for each style, such as the compromising style in column 2, may indicate little preference and use of that style. A total score of 19 to 35 for each style may indicate a moderate preference and use of that style.

APPENDIX C

Table 10: Consistency matrix

(PTO)

A comparison of conflict management styles of male and female managers in a bank in South Africa					
Main-problem	Literature Review	Hypotheses or Proposition or Research questions	Source of data	Type of data	Analysis
What are the differences or similarity in the prevalent preferred management styles of male and female managers in a bank in South Africa	Hofstede, 1980, 2001; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Berryman-Fink & Brunner, 1987; Eagley, 1987; Bandura, 1999; Mavin & Grandy, 2011; Eagley, 1987; Shafiro, Himelein, & Best, 2003; Hicks, Johnson, Iacono, & McGue, 2008; Epstein & Feist, 1988; Hyde, 2005; Macoby & Jacklin, 1974; Kreitner & Kinicki, 1992; Bettinger, 1989; Brown 1992; Fiol, 1991; Kilmann, 1989; Petrock, 1990; Sherwood, 1988; Whipp, Rosenfeld, & Pettigrew, 1989; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Hofstede, 1980; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Manyak & Katono, 2010; Graham, 1985; Lin, & Germain, 1998; Lu, 2007; Amanatullah, 2006;;	<i>Ho: Prevalent Preferred Conflict Management Style for female managers in the South African bank being studied == Prevalent Preferred Conflict Management Style for male managers in the South African bank being studied</i> <i>Ha: Prevalent Preferred Conflict Management Style for female managers in the South African bank being studied <> Prevalent Preferred Conflict Management Style for male managers in the South African bank being studied.</i>	Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) Responses Questionnaire responses that will provide the data	Nominal, Descriptive Statistics; Nominal	Descriptive Statistics, Mode, Frequency table, Chi-square test,

	Baxterand & Shepard, 1978; Yelsma & Brown, 1985; Rubin & Brown, 1975; Raven, 1993; Deutsch, 1985; Weitzman, 2001; Pearlin et al., 1990; Vogeles & Steptoe, 1992McDonald, Schleicher, & Yoder, 1998; Terjesen & Singh, 2008; Follett, 1998; Harrison et al., 1995; Komorita & Parks, 1995; Messick & Brewer, 1983; Ohbuchi & Suzuki, 2003; Mavin & Grandy, 2012; Billing, 2011; Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011; Kelan, 2010; Messerschmidt, 2009; West & Zimmerman, 2009; Doucet, Jehn, Weldon, Chen, & Wang, 2009; Metcalfe, 2008; Manyak & Katono, 2010; Gilbert, Burnett, Phau, & Haar, 2010;				
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