SUPERIORS’ CONFLICT MANAGEMENT BEHAVIORS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THEIR LEVEL OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

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SUPERIORS’ CONFLICT MANAGEMENT BEHAVIORS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the proposed study was to examine the relationship between superiors and subordinates with respect to communicative behaviors. This study focused on subordinates’ perceptions of their superiors’ levels of communication competence; communication competence was studied as a function of the use of the five conflict management styles. In addition, this study addressed the following question: Is there a significant relationship in terms of superiors’ styles of conflict management and their respective subordinates’ perceptions of their ability to effectively communicate? The study was based on the communicative behaviors that leaders of an organization display and their potential to influence the manner in which they are perceived by those they lead. The underlying theories that framed this study are those of conflict management and communicative competence. The results of the study showed a significant relationship between the conflict management styles displayed by a supervisor and how he or she was perceived as a competent communicator by his or her subordinates. The post hoc analyses also demonstrated that there was a significant difference in the subordinates’ perceived communicative competence level of the supervisor between the conflict management styles of competing and accommodating and between the conflict management styles of avoiding and accommodating. Finally, the analysis revealed that supervisors who used an accommodating style of conflict management had significantly better communicative competence levels than the supervisors that used either competing
or avoiding styles of conflict management. Discussion of these findings and recommendations for future research are provided.
Keywords: conflict, conflict management styles, communication, communicative competence, superior’s style, conflict management
DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my late father, who always encouraged me to carry on.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Organizational life consumes over one-half of the lives of Americans (Farrell &
Geist-Martin, 2005). As a result, many people orient themselves around their experiences
that happen within organizations. There are many experiences that people may be
exposed to in an organization. For example, there are group dynamics, socialization
processes, group conflict, decision making, employee attitudes and performance,
disagreement, leadership, and social support. Another very significant occurrence is the
communicative relationship between superiors and subordinates. Madlock and Kennedy-
Lightsey (2010) studied the impact that superiors have on the subordinates that they
mentor. Infante and Gorden (1985) discovered that supervisors who display aggressive
verbal communicative behaviors are perceived in a less favorable way than supervisors
who display non-aggressive verbal communicative behaviors. Evidently, the
communicative behavior of superiors has profound effects on their subordinates and is an
experience worth noting.

Madlock and Kennedy-Lightsey focused their study on mentoring and the impact
that various forms of verbal communication, including verbal aggressiveness, had on the
perception of superiors by subordinates (Madlock & Kennedy-Lightsey, 2010). The
results of the study indicated that there is a strong relationship between the
communicative behavior of superiors and the resulting perception of superiors by their subordinates (Madlock & Kennedy-Lightsey, 2010)

A notable expected occurrence that characterizes most organizations is the existence and management of conflict (Rahim, 1982). Thomas (1978) proposed five styles of conflict management: competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance, and accommodation based on cooperation and assertiveness. There is a large body of research that indicates that conflict management styles have been a major concern of scholars in a wide variety of disciplines (Burke, 1970; Eckstein, 1998; Hendel, Fish, & Galon, 2004; Nicotera, 1996; Offermann & Hellmann, 1996; Pappa & Canary, 1995; Putnam, 1995; Putnam, 1998; Rancer, 1995; Richmond, Wagner, & McCroskey, 1983; Slabbert, 2003; Swierczek & Onishi, 2003; Thomas, 1992, 1976; Weider-Hatfield & Hatfield, 1996). Furthermore, it is hypothesized that conflict management influences individual well-being (De Dreu et al., 2001). Nevertheless, few studies have explored the relationship between conflict management behaviors displayed by superiors and the effect that it has on subordinates. Furthermore, no current research has explored the relationship between superiors’ conflict management styles and their communication competence, from a subordinates’ perspective.

The specific purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between conflict management behaviors displayed by supervisors and their communication competence levels, as it was perceived by their subordinates.
The previous chapter introduced this study, which investigated the relationship between superiors and subordinates with respect to communicative behaviors and conflict management therein. This chapter will discuss conflict and conflict management as constructs, communicator competence, the superior-subordinate relationship, and will conclude with the research questions that guided the study.

Conflict
Conflict is an inevitable aspect of life. If the process of conflict management is looked at as an opportunity for growth and change in a work environment, the potential for a positive outcome is more likely to occur. On an individual level, the ability to solve problems or manage change has a great effect on one's success (Daft, 2010). In the same way, the overall ability of an organization to solve problems through collaborative efforts may have a positive impact on the organization's overall success (Goh, 2002). Although conflict is a normal part of organizational life, providing numerous opportunities for growth through improved understanding and insight, there is a tendency to view conflict as a negative experience caused by a difference of opinion. This negative experience can be exacerbated in difficult circumstances. Many scholars have discovered that conflict is a part of human existence (Slabbert, 2004), that conflict management influences
individual well-being (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001), and that managers spend an average of 20% of their time managing conflict (Thomas & Schmidt, 1976).

Conflict is known as a difference in opinion that can exist even in the presence of convergent goals (Folger & Stutman, 2005). In the workplace, a simple disagreement between co-workers, if unresolved, may escalate into avoidance, inability to work together, verbal assaults, and resentment. Folger and Stutman (2005) reiterated that conflict can be defined as “interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatibility and the possibility of interference from others as a result of this incompatibility” (p. 4). The authors also noted that conflict is an important component of human interaction.

In addition to being a constant construct in human existence, most organizational and small group researchers view conflict as an inevitable and pervasive factor in organizational behavior. Baron (1990) stated that, “organizational conflict is an important topic for both managers and for scientists interested in understanding the nature of organizational behavior and organizational processes” (p. 198). Carter (1981) found that aggressive behavior on the part of individuals can create tension that develops into repression and anxiety. Similarly, Baron (1985) noted that rational arguments that develop into conflicts can rapidly deteriorate as emotions become more heavily involved. In these types of conflicts, negative feelings can be the predominant emotion (Baron, 1985). Conflict has also been viewed as an activity that interferes with coordination among organization subunits (Robbins, 1974) and induces shifts toward authoritarian rather than participative styles of leadership (Fodor, 1976). On the other hand, conflict can also be valuable to a work environment since it promotes innovative and creative
problem-solving, clarifies issues, and allows underlying problems to rise to the surface (Rahim, 1992). In addition, if conflict is managed properly it can lead to creative and rational decision making (Janis, 1976; Jones & White, 1985; Pood, 1980; Robbins, 1974) and enhanced organizational productivity and interpersonal relations (Chasnoff & Muniz, 1985).

Conflict Management

Conflict management is the principle that all conflicts cannot necessarily be resolved, but learning how to manage conflicts can decrease the odds of nonproductive escalation. Conflict management involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills, and establishing structure for management of conflict in one’s environment. Management of conflict is extremely important for the effective functioning of work environments and for the personal, cultural, and social development of human beings (Rahim, 1992). On the one hand, effective conflict management promotes motivation, enhances morale, and promotes individual and organizational growth. In contrast, ineffective conflict management has the propensity of generating more conflict and negatively affecting the organization as a whole (Rahim, 1986).

The way in which supervisors manage conflict has an effect on their subordinates and communication scholars suggest that conflict seems to be one of the major organizational experiences (Gross & Guerrero, 2000). The large body of research examining conflict management styles suggests that conflict management has been a major area of concern for researchers over the course of several decades (Burke, 1970; Eckstein, 1998; Fish, & Galon, 2004; Nicotera, 1995; Offermann & Hellmann, 1996;
Conflict may be managed with various styles of behavior. Mary Follett (1926/1940) found three main ways of dealing with conflict: domination, compromise, and integration. She also found other ways of handling conflict in organizations, such as avoidance and suppression. Blake and Mouton (1964) first presented a conceptual scheme for classifying the modes (styles) for handling interpersonal conflicts into five types: forcing, withdrawing, smoothing, compromising, and problem solving. They described the five modes of handling conflict on the basis of the attitudes of the manager: concern for production and concern for people. Their scheme was reinterpreted by Thomas and Schmidt (1976). He considered the intentions of a party (cooperativeness, i.e., attempting to satisfy the other party’s concerns; and assertiveness, i.e., attempting to satisfy one’s own concerns) in classifying the modes of handling conflict into five types. Thomas (1992) proposed five styles of conflict management. These five styles were further updated and discussed by Thomas (1992): accommodation, avoidance, collaboration, competition, and compromise based on cooperation and assertiveness.

The accommodating style of dealing with conflict involves a significant degree of cooperation (Thomas, 1992). This methodology may involve sacrificing one’s own needs or desires to end the conflict. Avoiding is the style of dealing with conflict by not dealing with conflict. It is often employed when the cost of dealing with the conflict is very high or the probability of winning is very low. Collaboration is the highest valued method of dealing with conflict as it is the only scenario in which both parties can win; however, it also requires trust in the other party. In collaboration, both parties work together toward a
common goal rather than framing the conflict as a win or lose scenario. Competition is
the opposite of collaboration in that it engenders the common win or lose scenario that
follows from a high degree of concern for self and a low degree of trust in the other party.
Finally, compromising is often the easiest method after avoidance of dealing with
conflict. It involves the realization that collaboration requires trust and competition can
result in a loss so it may be best to give up a little and end the conflict (Thomas, 1992).
The styles discussed in Thomas’s (1992) framework, while oriented around the
dimensions of assertiveness and cooperation also included the concern for self and the
concern for others. Since the original framework proposed by Thomas is useful in
measuring conflict with respect to assertiveness and cooperation, it is important to
present the research since this study involved personal relationships and, as a result,
required the use of a concern for self and others’ as a central framework.

As Hatfield (1988) confirmed, Rahim (1983) used the two dimensions of concern
for self and concern for others to frame the ROCI-II. The first dimension explains the
degree (high or low) to which a person attempts to satisfy his or her own concern. The
second dimension explains the degree (high or low) to which a person wants to satisfy the
concern of others. The framework shifts the conflict management style dimensions from
assertive and cooperative to the dimensions of concern. This shift resulted in the
alteration of the constructs from the five styles of Thomas (1992) to integrating, obliging,
dominating, avoiding, and compromising. The diagram below presents the theoretical
framework of conflict management used in this proposed study. The purpose of
examining these findings is to ascertain the origins of the various loci of the theoretical
framework of conflict management styles.
The five styles are indicated as follows: The first style is integrating which is associated with a high degree of concern for self and a high degree of concern for others. Integrating is related to openness, collaboration, information exchange, and an awareness of inter-party differences that is used to reach a mutually beneficial outcome (Rahim, 1992). This style is associated with the win-win approach to conflict management. The obliging style is associated with a low degree of concern for self and a high degree of concern for others. It is related to ensuring satisfaction of the other party while being vocally opposed to voicing of differences between parties (Rahim, 1992). The opposite of the obliging style is the dominant style, which indicates a high degree of concern for self and a low degree of concern for others. The dominating style is a win-lose style that attempts to force the other party to accept favorable terms to the dominating party (Rahim, 1992). Similar to the obliging style, the avoiding style indicates a low concern for self; however, it also reflects a low concern for others. The avoiding style, as its name suggests, avoids conflict and may result in a potentially negative outcome with respect to accomplishing a goal (Rahim, 1992). Finally, the compromising style is similar to the
integrating style in that it has a goal of win-win as the final outcome; however, there is often more concession and is lose-lose approach to conflict management (Rahim, 1992).

The investigation into conflict management styles is important because the method of dealing with conflict can have an impact on a variety of organizational imperatives. One such imperative is the role that conflict management styles play in mediating employee trust (Chan, Huang, & Ng, 2008). The authors found that employee attitudinal outcomes and employee trust can both be influenced by superiors’ conflict management styles. In addition to impacting employee attitudes and trust, Miller (2009) discussed a number of other key outcomes that are impacted by conflict management styles. These included how an organization successfully transitions through change, the effectiveness and productivity of subordinate teams, the successful implementation of new technologies, and overall organizational performance (Miller, 2009). Since conflict management styles are a key variable that were used in this proposed study, relevant literature where they were included as variables will briefly be discussed.

**Conflict Management Styles**

Since its development, conflict management styles have been used by academic researchers to investigate personnel issues in organizations (Morris et al., 1998). To conduct this research, conflict management styles have been used as key variables in a number of studies. A few of these studies will be presented and discussed here. Morris et al. (1998) utilized conflict management styles as the dependent variable while analyzing the differences across cultures. Morris et al. (1998) found that managers from China relied more heavily on an avoiding style due, in part, to their large degree of reliance on conformity and tradition. On the other hand, managers from the United States were found
to rely more heavily on a competing style due to their relatively high value placed on individual achievement.

Conflict management styles were also used as variables by Gobeli, Koenig, and Bechinger (2003). The authors studied conflict management in software development teams. One hundred and seventeen software professionals and managers were surveyed and their responses were analyzed with respect to team success, defined as software development success (Gobeli, Koenig, & Bechinger, 2003). It was found that avoidance, as a management style, was not statistically related to the success of the project team whereas confronting management styles were found to be statistically significantly related to the success of the project team (Gobeli, Koenig, & Bechinger, 2003).

Another study utilized conflict management styles as a means to determine the extent to which it impacted customer service (Mazaheri et al., 2011). This research study examined customer services through the lens of conflict management styles with respect to pre-existing attitudes in determining customer response to service failure. The purpose of the study was to examine whether various conflict management styles could improve customer responses to service failures. The study found that among customers who had a positive pre-existing attitude toward the company, collaborative conflict management styles were statistically significantly likely to have a positive result (Mazaheri et al., 2011). On the other hand, among customers who had a negative pre-existing attitude toward the company, none of the conflict management styles resulted in a positive outcome (Mazaheri et al., 2011).

In addition to its use as a variable based on survey data gathered from real-world participants (i.e. individuals acting in a company setting), the variable of conflict
management styles has also been studied in an experimental context (Paul et al., 2004). This study concentrated on the collaborative conflict management style and utilized an experimental design where global diverse virtual teams were studied in a laboratory context with respect to performance variables (Paul et al., 2004). The findings of this study indicated that for global and diverse virtual teams, a higher degree of collaborative conflict management styles was found to be related to higher team performance (Paul et al., 2004).

**Other Factors that Influence Conflict Management Styles**

The proposed research study will target the impact of conflict management on communicative competence. As a result, demographic information that previous research has shown may impact either of these variables should be included in the regression equations (Creswell, 2009). Research has shown that conflict management styles vary across cultures (Elsayed-Ekjiouly & Buda, 1996). In a comparative study of Arab and U.S. conflict management styles, Elsayed-Ekjiouly and Buda (1996) found that the Arab culture engenders more integrating and avoiding behaviors while the U.S. culture engenders more obliging, dominating, and compromising styles of behavior. This finding indicates that a proxy for culture, such as ethnicity or country of origin, should be taken into account in the comparative analysis of communicative competence and conflict management styles. Since ethnicity was controlled for, it is important to note what research was conducted regarding conflict management styles across cultures. Specifically, Caucasians, African Americans, and participants with Middle Eastern origins were sampled for this study.
In addition, gender should also be controlled for. Research using the ROCI-II found that gender role congruence indicated that societal perceptions often result in a correlation between males and more dominating styles and between females and more obliging styles (Korabik, Baril, & Watson, 1993). Sutschek (2002) utilized the ROCI-II with both gender and the superior-subordinate frameworks. The study involved the determination of the preferred conflict management style of managers, or superiors, with respect to gender. Sutschek (2002) found that males were actually more obliging than females while also being more dominating; however, the study had a relatively small sample size and thus its generalizability may be in question (Sutschek, 2002).

Finally, when comparing conflict management and communicative competence, gender was also found to potentially be an impacting variable. In an investigation into how males and females communicated the same picture book, Tenenbaum, Ford, and Alkhedairy (2011) found that females used more collaborative speech than males. The authors further found that females used more emotional labels than males (Tenenbaum et al., 2011). Overall, the above research demonstrates the relationship between communication and conflict management.

**Communicator Competence**

Communication competence is referred to as the ability to choose a communication behavior that is both appropriate and effective for a given situation (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). Interpersonal competency allows one to achieve their communication goals without causing the other party to lose face. A model that is most often used to describe competence is the component model (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984) which includes three components: 1) knowledge, 2) skill, and 3) motivation. Knowledge
means knowing what behavior is best suited for a given situation. Skill is being able to have the ability to apply that behavior in the given context. Motivation is being able to have the desire to communicate in a competent manner.

According to Cushman and Craig (1976), communicator competence involves the ability of individuals to demonstrate proficient skill in areas such as listening, and negotiating. Similarly, Stohl (1984) suggested that a communicatively competent individual is capable of making the best and most effective use of communicative resources such as language, gestures, and voice while in pursuit of social goals. From a leadership perspective, Shaw (2005) asserted that supervisor communicator competence includes the capacity to share information or respond in a timely manner, actively listen to other perspectives, communicate clearly and concisely to all levels of the organization, and effectively use different communication channels.

Communication competence is essentially a concept that includes various aspects of knowledge, motivation, skill, behavior, and effectiveness (Spitzberg, 1983). “Competent interaction can be viewed as a form of interpersonal influence, in which an individual is faced with the task of fulfilling communicative functions and goals (effectiveness) while maintaining conversational and interpersonal norms (appropriateness)” (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984, p. 1). Further, Harris and Cronen’s (1979) indicated that competent individuals must not only achieve their goals (be effective), but also that they do so appropriately.

Communicative competence was also found to be related to conflict strategies (Canary & Spitzberg, 1989). Canary and Spitzberg (1989) studied the relationship between strategic communication and conflict strategies. The authors found that there
was a positive correlation between communication and conflict management (Canary & Spitzberg, 2009). The study was focused on the structural equation model and rating which conflict management strategies were more competent than others. They found that integrative conflict strategies were more competent than distributive or avoidant strategies (Canary & Spitzberg, 2009). Most notably, a recent study on the subject demonstrates that conflict management is directly related to communication competence (Cupach & Canary, 2009). The authors discuss their proposed conceptual framework regarding the importance of communicative competence with respect to conflict management across a number of settings, including within the organization (Cupach & Canary, 2009).

**Superior Subordinate Relationships**

An examination of the superior-subordinate relationship presents a long-standing line of research in organizational communication (Jablin, 1979; Wert-Gray, Centers, Brashers, & Meyers, 1991). Rank et al. (2009) studied the relationship between supervisors and their subordinates as it relates to compulsive communication, communication apprehension, situational apprehension, nonverbal relational distance, communication satisfaction, and job satisfaction. They discovered that there is a significant link between the communicative behaviors of superiors and the way in which they are perceived by their subordinates. Superior-subordinate relationships characterize hierarchical organizations and are responsible for the division of labor, delegation of work, and accountability. While these relationships facilitate an organization's ability to fulfill goals through efficiently multiplying effort, they create emotionally charged bonds of interdependence.
Superior-subordinate dyads have been studied with respect to conflict that occurs in the workplace (Renwick, 1975). In one study (Renwick, 1975), 36 dyads (pairs) of superiors and subordinates across 10 subunits of an organization were examined. The results indicated that both superiors and subordinates held similar ideas regarding the sources and topics of the superior-subordinate conflict. The issues that were most commonly cited were administrative and technical with the cited reasons being predominately related to differences in perception and knowledge. In addition, Renwick (1975) found that there was a positive correlation between conflict management and status differences in addition to conflict management having an impact on conflict attitudes. The attitudes reported by the subordinates regarding a given conflict were found to change based upon the perceived managing of the conflict by the superior (Renwick, 1975). These findings provide evidence that there is a logical relationship between the association of conflict management and the superior-subordinate relationship.

Further evidence for the efficacy of analyzing superior-subordinate dyads with respect to conflict management comes from an empirical study of Malaysian companies (Lee, 2008). Lee (2008) investigated the relationship between conflict management styles and the satisfaction of the subordinate with his or her supervision. The results of the study indicated that integrating, compromising, and obliging styles related positively to a higher degree of satisfaction among subordinates while increased use of dominating and avoiding styles related to a lower degree of satisfaction among subordinates (Lee, 2008).

Another study conducted by McKinney, Kelly, and Duran (1977), whose findings revealed a positive relationship between concern-for-other and concern-for-issue conflict
management styles and certain dimensions of communication competence. Todd-Mancillas and Rossi (1985) conducted a study that related competent communication to conflict management styles with respect to gender. The authors found that female managers were more likely to initially utilize communication strategies to resolve disputes with subordinates while male managers were more likely to initially utilize dominating strategies to resolve similar disputes (Todd-Mancillas & Rossi, 1985). Female managers who did use dominating strategies did so only after trying other communicative strategies (Todd-Mancillas & Rossi). This study demonstrated that the superior-subordinate relationship can be at least an indirect determinant of conflict management strategies.

Subordinate Perception

Subordinate perception of their superiors or leaders is the final aspect of the purpose of this proposed research study. Subordinate perceptions, while not as commonly studied as conflict management styles or communicative competence, has been investigated. Dasborough & Ashkanasy (2003) conducted a qualitative investigation of subordinate perceptions of their leaders, focusing on emotional intelligence. Their study concentrated on the emotional uplifts that leaders provide to their subordinates and the subordinates’ resulting perception of those leaders. This study also touched on conflict management since one of the key factors mentioned by the participants was the way that leaders dealt with hassles (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2003). While the study focused on the qualitative relationship between leaders’ perceived emotional intelligence and their perceived effectiveness, it provided a point of reference for how subordinates perceive their superiors.
Another perception study that was conducted with respect to superiors and subordinates was a quantitative investigation into the convergence of superior and subordinate leader-member exchange (Zhou & Schriesheim, 2009). This study concentrated on the factors that explained the poor convergence between perceptions of superiors and subordinates. Zhou and Schriesheim (2009) found that information-processing and attributional biases were the key determinants of the difference in perception with respect to the leader-member exchange.

Further, a study examining the relationship between subordinate perceptions of supervisor’s communication skills, including communicator competence, and subordinate’s level of organizational identification was conducted by Myers and Kassing (1998). However, the current study differed from prior studies of communicator competence because it focused on whether the occurrence and management of conflict is a factor in organizational members’ reported levels of their supervisors’ level of communicative competence. Due to the unique focus of the current study, coupled with the limited amount of prior research, the following and research questions guided the study:

*Research Question 1:* In what way does a conflict management style displayed by a superior relate to how he or she is perceived as a competent communicator by his or her subordinates?

*Research Question 2:* Which conflict management styles are more highly correlated to communicative competence?
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A total of 128 respondents that included men and women, who were part-time or full-time for a variety of organizations, and have an immediate supervisor at work were included in the sample. The 128 respondents differed in terms of the demographic information of gender, age, part-time or full time employee, years working for a company, gender of immediate supervisor, age of immediate supervisor, and highest level of education. The sample breakdowns of the demographic information of the 128 sample were summarized in Table 1 (Appendix B).

First, the sample was almost equally divided in the two gender groups of male (50.8%) and female (49.2%). In terms of the difference of age, most of the respondents were aged around 18 to 24 years old (18%), 25 to 34 years old (28.9%), 35 to 45 years old (27.3%), and 45 to 54 years old (16.4%); while there were few that were aged 55 to 64 years old (6.3%) and age 65 or older (3.1%). More than half of the respondents were full-time employees at their firm which consisted of 82 out of the 128 (64%), and 46 (35.9%) were part-time employees. In terms of the duration of years working for their company, many had worked for only less than a year (17.2%), 1-5 years (26.6%) and 6-10 years (34.4%). A significant number had worked for 11-15 years (10.2%) and 16-20 years (9.4) in their firm, while a very
number had worked for more than 20 years (2.3%) in their company. Most of the 128 respondents had some college (24.8%), Associate’s degree (27.4), and Bachelor’s degree (18.8%) as their highest education level. A significant number had finished only up to high school/GED (15.4%); while a few had finished their Master’s degree (9.4).

There was an almost equal number of male (50.8%) and female supervisors (49.2%) evaluated. In terms of the age of the immediate supervisor, most of the supervisors were aged 25 to 34 years old (18.8%), 35 to 45 years old (21.4%), 45 to 54 years old (25.6%), and 55 to 64 years old (27.4%). There were only a few immediate supervisors that were 18 to 24 years old (4.3%) and 65 or older years old (2.6%).

Scale Reliability

Participants provided estimates for the conflict management styles of their supervisors using the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory II (ROCI-II). This scale consists of 35 items that asked the respondents about their supervisor’s use of the five conflict management styles consisting of competing (items no. 1 to 7 of ROCI-II), avoiding (items no. 8 to 14 of ROCI-II), compromising (items no. 15 to 21 of ROCI-II), accommodating (items no. 22 to 28 of ROCI-II), and collaborating (items no. 29 to 35 of ROCI-II). Each of the conflict management styles were measured with seven question items in the ROCI-II questionnaire and each were computed by obtaining the total summed scores of the responses of the seven question items. Participants also provided estimates of their supervisors’ level of communicative competence using the 12-item
Communicator Competence Questionnaire of Monge, Backman, Dillard, and Eisenburg (1982).

**Conflict Management Styles and Communicative Competence of the Respondents**

The reliability of the 35 item ROCI-II measured by the Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.93. This indicated a high level of internal consistency for the scale responses of the 128 respondents. The Cronbach’s alpha, measured at between .8 and .9, is considered excellent. The scores for each conflict management style can have possible values between seven and 35. Higher total scores of any particular conflict management style would indicate that the respondent’s supervisor practiced that particular conflict management style more often. Accommodating (M = 27.2812, SD = 4.908) and collaborating (M = 27.0313, SD = 4.209) were the conflict management styles that were more frequently practiced by the supervisors of the respondents while the least conflict management style practiced was competing (M = 25.8281, SD = 5.7918).

The reliability of the 12 item Communicator Competence Questionnaire was 0.642. This indicated a low reliability measure for the survey instrument. While no questions were removed from the survey, the low reliability may have been due to the participants’ understanding of the questions. The values fell within the questionable internal consistency range (0.6 and 0.7). The mean total scores of the encoding and decoding factors of communicative competence level were also summarized in Table 2. The total scores of each factor of communicative competence level can have possible values between seven and 35 for encoding; and between five and 25 for decoding. Higher total scores for each factor would indicate the subordinate respondents perceived their immediate supervisors to have a high level of communicative competence. The mean
total score of the encoding factor of communicative competence level (M = 25.6641, SD = 3.83986) is high since the mean value is in the upper portion of the seven to 35 range. The value was considered in the upper region since the value was higher than the midpoint value of 21 in the range. The mean total score of the decoding factor of communicative competence level (M = 20.5547, SD = 2.47446) was also considered high since the mean value is in the higher region of 5 to 25 range or was higher than the midpoint value of 15 in the range. The mean results suggested that overall the supervisors of the respondents were highly competent in how they expressed themselves in communicating to their supervisor (encoding) and were very good listeners to their subordinates (decoding). This finding was based on the comparison of mean response vector. The mean value does not represent all the participants, but the overall communicative competence level of the supervisors.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

The subordinate’s perceived communicative competence level of their supervisor consisted of two evaluating factors of encoding (items no. 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10) and decoding (items no. 2, 4, 6, 11, and 12). The encoding factor of communicative competence evaluates how the leader expresses oneself while the decoding factor measured how well the leader listens to his or her subordinates. The subordinate’s perceived communicative competence level of their supervisor was measured by obtaining the total summed score of the responses of the questionnaire of each respondent. The responses in items seven and nine of the Communicator Competence Questionnaire were reverse coded prior to summing the responses. A full list of the descriptive statistics including the mean and standard deviation for each conflict management styles and communicative competence level were reported in Table 2 (Appendix C).

Relationship of Conflict Management Styles and Communicative Competence

Research question one asked whether the conflict management style displayed by a supervisor was related to the subordinate’s perceived communicative competence level of their supervisors. In order to ascertain the style each participant perceived their supervisor as using most often, each respondent’s supervisor was coded with the particular conflict management style for which they scored the highest on the ROCI-II
measure. In the event that there was an unclear result and a supervisor was seen as using two or more styles at the same level, those supervisors were coded as having “NO Preferred CMS”. This process allowed collapsing the five scores into a single categorical variable with six possible categories for conflict management style. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between the means in the communicative competence level for each of the conflict management styles employed by the 128 supervisors.

With this categorization, the ANOVA was conducted along with post-hoc tests to determine which conflict management styles specifically differed in terms of the communicative competence level. The descriptive statistics of the subordinate’s perceived communicative competence level of their supervisors per conflict management style category were obtained and summarized in Table 3 (Appendix D). Again, higher total score would indicate that the supervisor had higher communicative competence level as perceived by their subordinates. The comparison of the mean total score showed that the mean scores of the communicative competence level differed in the styles of competing (M = 44.32, SD = 4.846), avoiding (M = 44.05, SD = 5.596), compromising (M = 46.29, SD = 4.239), accommodating (M = 49.04, SD = 6.660), collaborating (M = 46.35, SD = 4.846), and No preferred conflict management styles (M = 46.84, SD = 4.741). The conflict management styles that had the highest subordinates’ perceived communicative competence level of their supervisors were accommodating, no preferred conflict management styles, collaborating, and compromising, in order of which had higher score. Supervisors that had either competing or avoiding style of conflict
management had the least communicative competence levels as perceived by their subordinates.

The ANOVA analysis conducted determined whether the observed mean difference in the descriptive statistics presented were significant or not. The results of the ANOVA mean test of difference of the subordinates’ perceived communicative competence level of their supervisors of the conflict management styles of each categorical group of the was summarized in Table 4 (Appendix E). The ANOVA revealed significant mean difference existed in the subordinates’ perceived communicative competence level of their supervisors as the conflict management style categories of the supervisor varied (F (5) = 2.929; p = .016) because the p-value was less than the level of significance value of 0.05. The results of the ANOVA addressed research question one with the results showing that there was a significant difference in perceived communicative competence contingent upon the conflict management style displayed by a superior.

Table 5 (Appendix F) summarized the post hoc test results of the ANOVA test by conducting a Tukey’s test of difference of the subordinate’s perceived communicative competence level of their supervisors by conducting a multiple comparison in each of the conflict management style of the supervisor. The multiple comparisons Table showed which among the six categories of conflict management styles had significantly different communicative competence level. There was only a significant difference in the subordinate’s perceived communicative competence level between the conflict management styles of competing and accommodating (mean difference = -4.417; p = .017) and between the conflict management styles of avoiding and accommodating (mean
difference = -4.988 p = .023). A significant difference was observed based on the level of significance of 0.05. The results of the post hoc test suggested that those supervisors who tend to use accommodating style of conflict management (M = 49.04, SD = 6.660) were seen as statistically significantly higher in terms of communicative competence level than those who use competing (M = 44.82, SD = 4.846) and avoiding (M = 44.05, SD = 5.596) style of conflict management since it has a significantly higher communicative competence mean total score. Competing and avoiding styles of conflict management were statistically significantly less likely to be seen as communicative competent.

**Conflict Management Styles Highly Correlated to Communicative Competence**

Research question two asked which conflict management styles were more highly correlated to communicative competence. The Pearson’s correlation statistical test was conducted to measure the strength and direction of association existing between two variables. The Pearson’s correlation test results to address research question two was summarized in Table 6 (Appendix G).

Statistical analysis of the data suggested that the overall subordinates’ perceived communicative competence level of their supervisors were significantly correlated with avoiding (r = .236, p < 0.01), accommodating (r = .332, p < 0.01), and collaborating (r = .337, p < 0.01) style of conflict management. The correlations were significant based on the 0.05 level of significance. The directions of the correlation between variables were all positive.

Also, it was observed that both encoding and decoding factor of communicative competence level were significantly correlated with certain conflict management styles. Avoiding style of conflict management was also significantly positively correlated with
both encoding ($r = 0.215$, $p= 0.015$) and decoding ($r = 0.190$, $p = 0.032$) factors of communicative competence. Accommodating style of conflict management was also significantly positively correlated with both encoding ($r = 0.297$, $p< 0.01$) and decoding ($r = 0.227$, $p < 0.01$) factors of communicative competence. Collaborating style of conflict management was also significantly positively correlated with both encoding ($r = 0.315$, $p < 0.01$) and decoding ($r = 0.259$, $p < 0.01$) factors of communicative competence. The correlations were all positive. Lastly, the correlation statistic was able to provide statistically significant evidence for a negative correlation existing between decoding factor of communicative competence and competing style of conflict management ($r = -0.230$, $p < 0.01$). This meant that the supervisor becomes a poorer listener to his or her subordinates when the supervisor becomes more competing in his or her conflict management style. The results of the Pearson’s correlation test addressed research question two. Encoding and decoding factor of communicative competence level and the overall subordinate’s perceived communicative competence level of their supervisors were similarly correlated with avoiding, accommodating, and collaborating style of conflict management styles.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

This study proposed two research questions. The first research question explained the possible relationship between superiors’ styles of conflict management and the subordinates’ perceptions of supervisors’ ability to effectively communicate. The second research question examined which among the five conflict management styles were highly correlated with the overall communicative competence level of the supervisors.

*Impact of Conflict Management Styles to Communication Competence*

Using the ROCI-II questionnaire and 12-item Communicator competence questionnaire of Monge, Backman, Dillard, and Eisenburg (1982), the ANOVA results showed a significant relationship between the conflict management styles displayed by a supervisor and how he or she was perceived as a competent communicator by his or her subordinates. This result suggests that the conflict management style of a supervisor influences the individual well-being of the subordinates based on how they perceived the appropriateness and effectiveness of the communication used by a supervisor during conflict management. How an individual deals with conflict affects the communication satisfaction and judgments of perceived competence (Canary, Cupach, & Serpe, 2001). Conflict management impacts the relational outcomes between a supervisor and subordinate (Renwick, 1975). This study used the communication effectiveness and appropriateness used by the supervisor as perceived by their subordinates as the outcome
of the conflict management. Another study by Canary and Spitzberg (1989) found out that communicative competence was related to conflict strategies. The findings of this study support the conclusions that a significant relationship between conflict management styles of a leader and their communicative competence level as perceived by their subordinates exists.

Conflict management has contributed to the relationship between a superior and subordinate. According to Rahim (1992), conflict management is extremely important for the effective functioning of work environments and for the personal, cultural, and social development of employees in an organization. Poor and ineffective conflict management negatively affects an organization. Several bodies of research explored the relationship between conflict management behaviors displayed by superiors and its effect towards their subordinates, but there was no existing research that explored the relationship between superiors’ conflict management styles and their communication competence from their subordinates’ perspective (Myers & Kassing, 1998). The results of this study provided a fresh perspective for the use of conflict management styles that are effective in today’s workplaces from the point of view of the subordinates.

The Tukey’s post hoc test of the ANOVA showed that there was a significant mean difference in the subordinates’ perceived communicative competence level of the supervisor between the conflict management styles of competing and accommodating; and between the conflict management styles of avoiding and accommodating. The post hoc test also showed that the supervisors that used accommodating style of conflict management are perceived as having higher levels of communicative competence than the supervisors that used either competing or avoiding style of conflict management. The
results of the analysis will be discussed in connection to claims of existing studies for
discussion purposes.

According to Thomas (1992), competing is the conflict management style that creates a win or lose scenario wherein it shows a high degree of concern for self and a low degree of trust in the other party. The avoiding style of conflict management deals with conflict by not dealing with conflict; while the accommodating style of conflict management deals with conflict by showing a significant degree of cooperation with the other party. Individuals that use either competing or avoiding style of conflict management would eventually experience higher levels of task conflict due to poor communication between a leader and subordinate, while a leader employing an accommodating style would experience lesser task difficulty since the leader shows effective communication skills and acts as a good listener to their subordinates (Friedman, 2002). This is because a leader employing either competing or avoiding style of conflict management shows only high concern for oneself and none to their subordinates. The accommodating style of conflict management involved showing concern for both parties by a leader. According to Rahim (1983), the competing style of conflict management only shows high degree of concern for self and low concern for the other party while avoiding style would allow leader to let the other party to dominate with the leader exemplifying nonassertive and cooperative behavior to its subordinate. Slabbert (2004) considered both styles as a win-lose orientation and forces behavior to win one’s position. Both the competing and avoiding styles of conflict management are negatively perceived by the receiving party since a leader shows dominance to others,
acts irritated, or blame others. Accommodating style is the opposite since it requires a leader to cooperate with the subordinate.

Communication competence is the ability of an individual to choose a communication behavior that is both appropriate and effective for a given situation (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). According to Monge, Backman, Dillard, and Eisenburg (1982), a leader must share and respond to information in a timely manner, actively listen to other points of view, communicate clearly and succinctly, and utilize differing communication channels in order to be perceived as competent communicators. The findings of this study suggest that the communication competence of a leader might decline as a result of the actions of a leader employing competing and avoiding styles of conflict management; while a leader is a highly competent communicator when he or she is accommodating since it employs good communication skills and listening by a leader to its subordinates (Korabik, Baril, & Watson, 1993). Thus, the finding that a leader that used an accommodating style of conflict management is more communicative competent than being competing and avoiding is supported on the basis of existing literature. Similarly, the results of the study of Zhang, Harwood, and Hummer (2005) involving a participant of younger Chinese adults showed that the communication competence level of the young workers became distinct and less using the avoiding and competing styles. This also validates the results of the current study of the relationship between the conflict management styles and the communicative competence level due to the statistical difference observed in the competing, avoiding and accommodating.
Conflict Management Styles Highly Correlated with Communication Competence

The accommodating style of dealing with conflict involves a significant degree of cooperation which employs a strategy by a supervisor to sacrifice one’s own needs or desires to end the conflict; while collaborating style involves the realization that collaboration requires trust; and competition can result in a loss so it may be best to give up a little and end the conflict (Thomas, 1992). The Pearson correlation test results showed that the conflict management styles of avoiding, accommodating, and collaborating were positively correlated with the overall subordinates’ perceived communicative competence level of the supervisor. This implied that the subordinates’ perceived communicative competence level of their supervisor increases as they practice more of avoiding, accommodating, and collaborating style of conflict management.

Interestingly, the avoiding style of conflict management leads to better increased subordinates’ perceived communicative competence level of their supervisor. This finding was in contrast to the findings in study of Friedman et al. (2002) which showed that there was an indirect relationship between the avoiding style and the communicative competence of the supervisor to address task conflict. Ignoring the conflict instead of resolving them meant that a supervisor has low concern for self and for the subordinate which implied that a supervisor has little desire to solve the problem. However, the results of the current study do not support this position. These contradictory findings need to be re-examined in future research.

The positive correlation between accommodating style of conflict management and subordinates’ perceived communicative competence level of their supervisor meant that the significant degree of cooperation between a supervisor and subordinate by the
accommodating conflict resolution may lead to an effective communication between both parties (Thomas, 1992). A supervisor practicing more of accommodating style of conflict management was also seen as a more highly competitive communicator. According to Slabon (2009), employing a more cooperative and unassertive style of conflict management satisfies the wants of both parties. Both parties are allowed to dominate which require a higher level of communication effectiveness (Slabbert, 2004).

The significant positive correlation between collaborating style of conflict management and subordinates’ perceived communicative competence level of their supervisor was also logical since leaders who use a more collaborating style contributed positive results to a company (Mazaheri et al., 2011). Communication competence is high in collaborating style since a leader practices high concern for self as well as the other party involved in the conflict through a series of communication (Rahim, 1983). The end result of the collaboration will eventually yield a solution to resolve the conflict. The ability of an organization to solve problems through collaborative efforts may have a positive impact on the organization's overall success since different parties in the organization would work together to achieve a common goal (Goh, 2002).

Collaboration style of conflict management is the highest valued method of dealing with conflict as it is the only scenario in which both parties can win (Rahim, 1992). Collaboration is where both the supervisor and the subordinate works together to achieve a common goal rather than engage in a win or lose situation. The subordinates’ perceived effectiveness and appropriate communication by a supervisor increases when a supervisor is more collaborating. This may be the case since a subordinate would experience a more cooperative and assertive environment during conflict
management in which the subordinate and the supervisor would eventually settle on what both parties want (Slabon, 2009). High concern for both self and other by a supervisor through the practice of a collaborating style of conflict management leads to an effective resolution in the conflict and also the communication satisfaction of both supervisor and subordinates (Rahim, 1983).

The results also revealed that both the subordinates’ perceived communicative competence factors of encoding and decoding of their supervisor were also significantly positively correlated with the avoiding, accommodating, and collaborating style of conflict management. Thus, conflict management styles affect both how a leader expresses oneself (encoding) and how well the leader was listening their subordinates (decoding) in the subordinates’ perceived communicative competence of their leader. A study by Canary and Spitzberg (2009) also found a positive correlation between communication and conflict management.

Lastly, the results showed that there was a significant negative correlation existing between decoding factor of subordinates’ perceived communicative competence level of their supervisor and competing style of conflict management. This suggests that the supervisor may not listen to his or her subordinate when the supervisor employs a competing style of conflict management. A competing style of conflict management employs high concern for self, but low concern for other (Friedman et al., 2002). The competing style of conflict management attempts to force the other party to accept favorable terms to the dominating party, which is the supervisor (Rahim, 1992). The negative correlation implied that subordinates’ perceived communicative competence levels of the supervisor decreases as a supervisor imposes a more competing style of
conflict management; or the subordinates’ perceived communicative competence levels of the supervisor increases as a supervisor imposes a lesser competing style of conflict management. This negative relationship is logical. Typically, a subordinate is less likely to communicate with a supervisor when a supervisor uses a more competing or dominating style of conflict management (Richmond, Wagner, & McCroskey, 1983). As a result, as subordinate may not comply with his or her supervisor (Rahim & Buntzman, 1990). According to Pruitt et al. (1983), a person who is dominating when facing conflict with subordinates is not likely to arrive at a solution to the dispute. The other party would show low levels of satisfaction when an individual responds using the competing style (Zhang, Harwood, & Hummer, 2005).

Limitations

There are several limitations in this study. First, the results of the 12 item Communicator Competence Questionnaire had a questionable internal consistency and reliability among the 128 respondents. This might have an impact on the statistical results of the ANOVA and the Pearson’s correlation test that was conducted to address the research questions. Thus, re-examination of this instrument is warranted. Second, the research only had 128 valid participants. A small respondent pool could reflect biases in the statistical results wherein the results were only valid in the region where the participants were geographically located. Future research might benefit by employing an open-ended interview to obtain unlimited perspectives from the study participants. Lastly, the study is limited by the correlational research which can effectively highlight the relationships between conflict management styles and the subordinates’ perceived communicative competence level of their supervisor included in the study. However,
correlation does not prove causation (Callen et al., 2010). Future research studies could be conducted in a more controlled or experimental setting to assess and potentially prove causation between the study variables considered in this study.

**Future Research**

The findings of this study suggested that the conflict management styles exhibited by a leader in particular situations should be in line with the subordinates’ perceptions of their superiors’ levels of communication competence considered in this study. Although a supervisor can practice a single type of conflict management style or different styles of conflict management at the same time, different types of the conflict management styles could be incorporated by a leader in order to come up with a balanced conflict management styles appropriate for a multicultural environment where the goal is to have a high levels of subordinates’ perceived communicative competence level. This should be considered in future research. The development of conflict management styles amongst the supervisors in an institution should also be a prime consideration in decision making of stakeholders and human resource development team within the institution setting. They should engage in programs which will help develop the conflict management styles of the leaders in the organization. This is because the method of dealing with conflict can have the performance of an organization.

For future studies, it is recommended that the sample size be increased to ensure that a good representation of the population is explored. This recommendation is based on the desire to obtain a sample target of at least 250 participants from several organizations in the Mid-West. At the same time, an increase of sample size would potentially address the issue of the reliability of the responses of the 12 item
Communicator Competence Questionnaire in the study. This recommendation may contribute in increasing the current questionable reliability of the results of the communicator competence questionnaire since the responses of the 128 participants had poor internal consistency. Gaining more responses until the point of saturation of results could lead to a more consistent result. Although the samples are sufficient to produce statistically valid results, it is important to increase the sample size to ensure that findings are more valid based on the issue of weak reliability of an instrument used in the study.

Aside from subordinates perceived communicative competence levels on their supervisor, future studies could also involve the examination of the impact of conflict management styles to how an organization successfully transitions through change, the effectiveness and productivity of subordinate teams, the successful implementation of new technologies, and overall organizational performance. Also, future studies can also examine leadership styles, aside from conflict management styles, and other management styles that impact the motivation of subordinates which may have an impact on the their level of communicative competence as perceived by the subordinates. It would be appropriate to explore these fields in future studies.

In addition, future research can study worker type, work type, and environment type where employees engage and where superiors could potentially benefit from using the accommodating style. For instance, when the worker is more independent and is in control of their work, the accommodating style may be appropriate. In this case, it might be suboptimal to have a successful and productive worker told to work another way simply because the supervisor operates in that fashion. Professions that operate in a more independent fashion, such as results-based sales, do not require an overbearing superior.
Since the sample for this study was concentrated in one geographic region where there may have been a larger degree of homogeneity across professional autonomy than elsewhere in the country. As a result, future research could further explore whether the accommodating style is best across a more diverse sample. Future research could also examine different types of workers and divide the participants by job category. Then, the research could determine which approach is best for each of those job categories.

**Conclusion**

The general problem examined in this study was the need for a supervisor to employ an appropriate conflict management style to be an effective leader in today’s institution. Conflict management styles affect the supervisor communicative competence from the point of view of the subordinates. Subordinates sometimes prefer a specific style of conflict management that elevated the level of communication effectiveness and appropriateness by a supervisor. This study examined the perception-based relationship between superiors and subordinates with respect to communicative behaviors. The uniqueness of this study was examining the impact of conflict management styles on subordinates’ perceptions of their superiors’ levels of communication competence which was the communicative behaviors that leaders of an organization display and their potential to influence the manner in which they are perceived by those they lead.

The specific problem is that superiors often lack leadership skills and styles compatible with cultural intelligence, resulting to a less effective performance within culturally diverse education settings. Cultural intelligence in this context refers to a communicator’s ability to handle interactions with other cultures in a professional setting (Earley, 2003). This study was able to determine that there is a significant relationship
between superiors’ styles of conflict management of competing and accommodating and their respective subordinates’ perceptions of their ability to effectively communicate. It also showed that supervisors using the accommodating style were seen as more competitive communicators than those who avoided or competed in managing conflicts. The conclusion of the analysis and results indicated that certain conflict management styles impact the subordinates’ perceived communicative competence of their supervisor. Therefore, a leader should be aware of the implication of the conflict management style he or she is imposing to the subordinate since it may impact their ability to effectively communicate to their subordinates. Conflict management styles that positively influenced the subordinates’ perceived communicative competence level of their supervisor should be developed and practiced more often by the supervisor in order to ensure that a supervisor could fulfill their duties in a diversified supervisor-subordinate environment and the desires of a subordinate through effective and appropriate communication deliveries. The investigation into conflict management styles was important because the method of dealing with conflict can have an impact on a variety of organizational imperatives, particularly in the perception of a subordinate who directly reports to a supervisor.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

MEASURES

Directions: Think of disagreements you have encountered in a particular task situation with your immediate supervisor. Then indicate below how frequently your supervisor engages in each of the described behaviors. For each item select the number that represents the behavior your immediate supervisor is most likely to exhibit. There are no right or wrong answers. Please respond to all items on the scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALWAYS</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>SELDOM</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My immediate supervisor...... cms

_____ 1. usually holds on to the solution to a problem.

_____ 2. uses his/her influence to get his or her ideas accepted.

_____ 3. uses his/her authority to make a decision in his or her favor.

_____ 4. argues his/her case to show the merits of his or her position.

_____ 5. uses his/her expertise to make a decision in his or her favor.

_____ 6. is generally firm in pursuing his/her side of the issue.

_____ 7. sometimes uses his/her power to win a competitive situation.

_____ 8. attempts to avoid being “put on the spot” and tries to keep my conflict with others to his/her self.

_____ 9. usually avoids open discussion of his/her differences with others.

_____ 10. tries to stay away from disagreements with others.

_____ 11. avoids an encounter with others.
My immediate supervisor...... cms

___12. tries to keep his/her disagreement with others to his/her self in order to avoid hard feelings.

___13. tries to avoid unpleasant exchanges with others.

___14. generally avoids an argument with others.

___15. gives some to get some.

___16. tries to find a middle course to resolve an impasse.

___17. wins some and loses some.

___18. tries to play down differences to reach a compromise.

___19. usually proposes a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.

___20. negotiates with others so that a compromise can be reached.

___21. uses “give and take” so that a compromise can be made.

___22. generally tries to satisfy the needs of others.

___23. usually accommodates the wishes of others.

___24. gives in to the wishes of my others.

___25. sometimes helps others to make a decision in their favor.

___26. usually allows concessions to others.

___27. often goes along with the suggestions of others.

___28. tries to satisfy the expectations of others.

___29. tries to investigate into an issue with others to find a solution acceptable to us.
My immediate supervisor......

____30. tries to integrate my ideas with those of others to come up with a decision jointly.

____31. tries to work with others to find solutions to a problem which satisfy our expectations.

____32. exchanges accurate information with others to solve a problem together.

____33. tries to bring all our concerns out in the open so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way.

____34. collaborates with others to come up with decisions acceptable to us.

____35. tries to work with others for a proper understanding of a problem.

Directions: In this series of questions I would like you to describe how your supervisor communicates. Think about his/her behavior in general, rather than about specific situations. In responding to the statements, please use the following scale:

STRONGLY AGREE        AGREE        NEUTRAL        DISAGREE        STRONGLY DISAGREE

____36. has a good command of the language.

____37. is sensitive to others’ needs of the moment.

____38. typically gets right to the point.

____39. pays attention to what other people say to him or her.
My immediate supervisor…… cc

____40. can deal with others effectively.

____41. is a good listener.

____42. ‘s writing is difficult to understand.

____43. expresses his or her ideas clearly.

____44. is difficult to understand when he or she speaks.

____45. generally says the right thing at the right time.

____46. is easy to talk to.

____47. usually responds to messages (memos, phone calls, report, etc.) quickly.

Please provide the following information. Please circle your response.

48. What is your gender?
   □ Male
   □ Female

49. What is your age?
   □ 18 to 24 years
   □ 25 to 34 years
   □ 35 to 44 years
   □ 45 to 54 years
   □ 55 to 64 years
   □ Age 65 or older
50. Are you a part-time or full-time employee?
   - Part-time
   - Full-time

51. How many years have you worked for this company?
   - Less than 1 year
   - 1-5 years
   - 6-10 years
   - 11-15 years
   - 16-20 years
   - More than 20 years

52. What is the gender of your immediate supervisor?
   - Male
   - Female

53. What is the approximate age of your immediate supervisor?
   - 18 to 24 years
   - 25 to 34 years
   - 35 to 44 years
   - 45 to 54 years
   - 55 to 64 years
   - Age 65 or older

54. What is your highest level of education?
   - Less than High School
   - High School/GED
   - Some college
   - Associate’s degree
   - Bachelor’s degree
   - Master’s degree
   - Doctoral degree
   - Professional degree (MD, JD)

Thank you for your time and participation.
## APPENDIX B

### TABLE 1

**Demographic Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 24 years</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 34 years</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44 years</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 54 years</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 64 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 65 or older</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part-time or Full-time employee</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years working for company</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender of Immediate Supervisor</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age of Immediate Supervisor</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 24 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 34 years</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44 years</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 54 years</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 64 years</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 65 or older</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Highest Level of Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than High School</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School/GED</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate's degree</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

TABLE 2

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics of the Responses to the Conflict Management Styles and Communicative Competence Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competing</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25.8281</td>
<td>5.7918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26.7500</td>
<td>5.0197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26.1562</td>
<td>4.6150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodating</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27.2812</td>
<td>4.9085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27.0313</td>
<td>4.2090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence (Encoding)</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25.6641</td>
<td>3.8399</td>
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<td>Communicative</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence (Decoding)</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20.5547</td>
<td>2.4745</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

TABLE 3

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics of the Subordinate’s Perceived Communicative Competence Level of their Supervisors per Categorical Group of Conflict Management Styles of the Supervisors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
<td>Upper Bound</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competing</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44.32</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>42.44</td>
<td>46.20</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>44.05</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>41.43</td>
<td>46.67</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>46.29</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>44.11</td>
<td>48.47</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodating</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>49.04</td>
<td>6.66</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>46.35</td>
<td>51.73</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>46.35</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>43.96</td>
<td>48.75</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Preferred CMS</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>46.84</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>44.56</td>
<td>49.13</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>46.16</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>45.19</td>
<td>47.12</td>
<td>34</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX E

TABLE 4

Table 4.

ANOVA Test of Difference between the Conflict Management Style and Subordinate’s Perceived Communicative Competence Level of their Supervisors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>408.89</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>81.78</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>3,377.96</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>27.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,786.85</td>
<td>126</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: * Significant relationship at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
Table 5.

*Tukey’s Post test of Difference of Subordinate’s Perceived Communicative Competence Level of their Supervisors per Conflict Management Styles of Supervisor; Dependent

Variable: Communicative Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I) Conflict Management Styles</th>
<th>(J) Conflict Management Styles</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competing</td>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-4.21</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td>-1.97</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>0.83</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>0.017*</td>
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<td>-2.03</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>-6.74</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Preferred CMS</td>
<td>-2.52</td>
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<td>0.60</td>
<td>-7.07</td>
<td>2.03</td>
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<td>Competing</td>
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<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-4.75</td>
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<td>Compromising</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>No Preferred CMS</td>
<td>-2.79</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>-7.69</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Competing</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>-2.73</td>
<td>6.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>-2.8</td>
<td>7.29</td>
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<td>0.56</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
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<td>Competing</td>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td>Accommodating</td>
<td>Collaborating</td>
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<td>0.06</td>
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<td>1.74</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>1.65</td>
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</table>

59
### Correlation between Conflict Management Styles and Communicative Competence Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Communicative Competence (Encoding)</th>
<th>Communicative Competence (Decoding)</th>
<th>Communicative Competence</th>
<th>[N]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Competing</strong></td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>-0.079</td>
<td>-.230*</td>
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<td>0.375</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.074</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Avoiding</strong></td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>.215*</td>
<td>.190*</td>
<td>.236*</td>
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<td>Correlation</td>
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<td>0.032</td>
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<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Pearson</td>
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<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accommodating</strong></td>
<td>Pearson</td>
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<td>.277*</td>
<td>.332*</td>
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<td>Correlation</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborating</strong></td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>.315*</td>
<td>.259*</td>
<td>.337*</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** * Correlation is Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
APPENDIX H

IRB APPROVAL

Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Akron, OH 44325-3407
330-972-7069 Office

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

September 17, 2012

Shelburne G. Corn
PO Box 2685
Garden City, Michigan 48136

From: Sharon McWhorter, IRB Administrator

Re: IRB Number 20120014 “Succession Conflict Management Behaviors and Its Relationship to Their Level of Communication Competence”

Thank you for submitting your IRB Application for review. Your application was approved on September 17, 2012. Your protocol meets all minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemption:

☐ Exemption 1 - Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices.

☐ Exemption 2 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.

☐ Exemption 3 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior not exempt under category 2, but subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.

☐ Exemption 4 - Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens.

☐ Exemption 5 - Research and demonstration projects conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine public programs or benefits.

☐ Exemption 6 - Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make changes to the study's design or procedures that increase the risk to subjects or involve activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, please contact me to discuss whether or not a new application must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Please retain this letter for your files. This office will hold your exemption application for a period of three years from the approval date. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond this period, you will need to submit another Exemption Request. If the research is being conducted for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

Dr. Heather Skiper - Advisor
Dr. Valerie Castrens - IRB Chair

The University of Akron - Great Education and Employment Initiative

Approved consent forms enclosed.