

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN PREFERENCES AND PERCEPTIONS
OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES:
THE STUDY OF THAIS AND AMERICANS
IN A MULTINATIONAL ORGANIZATION IN THAILAND

SUBMITTED TO
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine cultural differences in the preferences for conflict management styles as well as the perceptions of competence of Rahim's (1983) five styles of conflict management in multicultural organizations in response to the growing need for an understanding organizational conflict in a diverse cultural context based on Ting-Toomey's (1988) face-negotiation theory framework. There were 35 Thais and 35 Americans participated in this study. Participants were asked to complete 7 pages of closed-ended questions on a survey. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics by using frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations. One-way ANOVAs was conducted to determine whether significant differences exist in the preferences and perceptions of effectiveness and appropriateness towards the styles of handling conflict among all participants relative to their cultures.

This study yielded a number of conclusions about cultural differences on the preferences and attitudes toward conflict management styles. With regard to culture and conflict handling preferences, Thais reported using avoiding more than Americans, whereas Americans reported endorsing dominating more than did Thais. When comparing culture and perceptions of competence, the results also largely confirmed the assumption that avoiding and obliging were perceived by Thais as more effective and appropriate styles in handling conflict than did Americans. Similarly, Americans perceived integrating and dominating as more effective and appropriate styles of handling conflict than did Thais.

The Thai and the American respondents did not differ significantly in their mean scores for compromising. However, Thais perceived compromising as a more effective conflict management style than Americans did, but both Thais and Americans did not differ significantly in their perception of appropriateness of this style. Recommendations for further investigation in the field of intercultural conflict research to get clearer picture of intercultural conflict management were also provided.

Abstract

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