

**ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL VALUES ON PERCEPTION OF  
CONFLICT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO IT INDIAN  
MIDDLE LEVEL MANAGERS**

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***Abstract:***

This study aims to ascertain the relationship between Individual values and organizational behavior with special reference to Perception of conflict in organizational setup. Based on literature review it has been hypothesized that there are chances among Indian managers, due to sub cultural diversity in terms of individual values, to have different kinds of perception of conflict in working place with regard to task and relationship. Same has been tested through inferential analysis by taking Indian managers who are working in IT field as team leaders and project managers. Result shows that there are significant differences exist among Indian managers especially in terms of individual values such as Universalism, conformity and tradition and in perception of conflict with reference to task conflict

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***Introduction:***

Cultural Values are said to be one among the deciding factor for different behavioral aspects of an Individual. One such factor is conflict and its management styles. Considerable research works has already been established in explaining relationship of the afore said cultural values and organizational behavior. Having assumption that cultural background has the role of influencing an individual to have preferable belief on all aspects of life like social structure , organizational life so and so forth , this paper has exclusive attention towards the understanding of Cultural values especially the values of individualism and Collectivism in perceiving the conflict in organizational setup. Individualism and Collectivism is said to have correlation with values of Universalism, conformity and tradition respectively as per Schwartz research work. This study has been conducted among IT middle level Managers since value orientation is the concept which is being insisted by the practitioners

***Literature perspective and hypothesis development:***

According to Hofstede a personality is the combination of Human nature (inheritance) and culture(Learned). This explanation gives researcher a scope to identify Cultural effect on organizational behaviors or phenomenon. In the current human capital market scenario, globalization and increased competition pushes employers to expect from employees to have behaviors which can be easily molded to handle all sorts of situation. This is considered equally important for an employee along with technical knowhow. The focus on value orientation among organizational practitioners has increased due to inevitable multicultural environment where identity is defined in terms of Cultural , personal and Social Identity (Guerraoui and Troadec 2000). These aspects determines the cultural competent of managers who are involved in global human resource management as they are in position to encounter different personalities. In Global human resource management, managers are in position to answer few queries like, the intensity of the diversity in front them, how to identify those differences and how to bring those differences under common platform . Though on one aspect Multicultural environment foster the organizational competence , one should not forget the fact of complexity involved in managing the diversity as this diversity is said to have close association with misunderstanding in organizational context by itself(Bivens and Lowell 1966 , Shenkar and Zeira 1992) . This Multicultural diversity is said to have reasonable correlation with team Cohesiveness and level of

conflict (Pelled, 1996, Jehn, Northcraft and Neale, 1999). Having this as a leading interdisciplinary research, researchers started stressing upon the importance of subjects like sociology, psychology and anthropology in understanding the multicultural environment (d'Iribarne (2004) and of Chanlat 1995, 2005). At the same time applying cultural aspect in organizational behavior research is not a new or recent concept. This has started long back. For an example studying the effect of culture on several organizational aspects like marketing, finance, human resources, general management became common among both practitioners and organizational behavioral experts. Studying the effect of Culture on organizational aspects using Hofstede dimension on different organizational aspects became a routine consideration. Most of those studies are of national comparison. Recent studies have started contributing the same aspect at the individual level also by taking the help of Schwartz research on Individual values. Reason behind this shift is that a person who is individualistic or collectivistic for an example, need not have the same tendency rather the other way round.

Concept of Individualism and Collectivism has started to play an vital factor longback. These concepts have been related with individual in analyzing the level of her or his attachment with a group in attaining the private or collective gains. Individualism, and collectivism thus referred to the premises where individuals giving their importance to the goals. The same has been applied in distinguish the society as primitive culture and modern one (Parsons and Shills 1951; Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck(1961) Early and Gibson, 1998). Hofstede has analyzed this concept among IBM employees of several nation and able to differentiate the individuals behaviorally in one of his dimension, Individualism vs collectivism. Where he explains the individualism is where individuals are have loose connection with respect to the group and opposite is what he meant as collectivism. Taking this aspect to the organizational context, giving priority to the task rather relationship is called as Individualistic tendency as the individual having this tendency to have their social behaviors which is driven by own belief and values unlike the individuals who have collectivistic tendency. Those who are coming under the latter category are said to have maintain their relationship even at the cost of task what they are suppose to attain ( Markus and Kityaman, 1991; Triandis 1995 Chen and Meanidl 1998, Cai and fink 2002). As we are exploring this tendency in organizational context, conflict and its management styles can be considered of having reasonable correlation with these individualistic and collectivistic values. Where Conflict referred to clash happens in between parties on

concerned issues which involves feelings and also cognition between and within the parties involved (Pondy 1967; Schmidt and Kogan 1972). Thomas (1992 ) viewed the same aspect at individual level along with, in between individuals and in between group.

### ***Purpose of the Study:***

Past review of literature has given some insight about the general qualities that is existing among Indian managers. Most of this literature has tried to link Indian cultural values and its influence on organizational behavior and said that the findings are inconsistent due to the behavior of context sensitivity and balancing that is prevailing among Indians (Sinha and Kanungo ,1990,1997)). This has been justified by having the fact of over influence of western management thought (Gupta 1994) and (Bhargave 1993). Strange dualism is an apt word used to describe the behavioral status of Indians. Purpose of this study insists on the differences that are existing among Indian managers in terms of cultural dimensions as now India is facing the influence of foreign entry in different markets. India is also having sub cultural diversity in different aspects. Hence at this stage its seems to be necessary for academicians and practitioners to identify the differences existing among Indian managers in behavioral aspect. Since it has been identified the co existence of traditions along with modernization, bringing transformation to have a dynamic organizations became a major challenge among Indian Managers. This paved the wave for huge differences between the traditional organizations and modern organizations. Due to this existence of dual organizations, divergence in the sense of work culture seems to be present. This divergence may occur due to the possibility of caring different values by the managers when they are migrating from one organization to another, which has given importance to value orientation. This in turn may affect all aspects of the organizational behavior. Now days it is evident that managers are in position to spend their working hours in solving the conflict in all directions. Since the word of traditional values are closely related with collectivism when compare to individualism, managers who have collectivistic tendency may perceive conflict tied up with emotions. Since India is almost at the end of transition period, it is important to analyze the ability of perceiving the conflict and handling the same in organizational set up. This gives scope for this research to ponder the role of the afore said individualistic and collectivistic tendency in perceiving the conflict in real organizational context especially among Indian managers. Perception, psychological process , which influences and defines this conflict through process of

selection, organization and interpretation of the information one is receiving. Relationship plays a vital role in interpreting the conflict which is said to have detrimental for a performance. Conflict from an organizational perspective should be away from emotions and mostly related to the actual facts which is related to the task, termed as task conflict (Jehn,1994. 1995, Amson 1994). Having theoretical and empirical correlation of individualism and collectivism with perception of conflict in different cultural context, it has been hypothesized that Indian managers since pondering among modern and traditional organizational life, their level of facing relationship conflict and task conflict may have significant relationship with respect to their individualistic and collectivistic tendency. Meanwhile the other main objective, there may exist significant difference among the Indian managers with respect to Individualistic and collectivistic tendency in terms of subcultural diversity can be tested

### ***Research Methodology***

This study has been conducted among employees who are working in IT field. A total of 450 questionnaire has been given to employees who are working in middle level cadre, mostly team leads. Middle level managers have been chosen based on the assumption that they have more chances to face conflicting situations from their higher ups and subordinates and at certain times from clients. From 450, 351 completed questionnaires have been chosen for the study

### ***Measures:***

Demographic variable such as Age, gender along with their birth place and number of years away from their birth place have been captured. Number of years away from their birth place have been chosen to identify, is there any effect on their values due to their cultural shift in terms of cultural shift

To measure the Relationship conflict, Cox scale (1998) has been used as it focuses on the level of hostility present in the relationship. Questions such as “Much plotting takes place behind the scene” have been asked. Like the same way to assess the relationship conflict, Jehn (1995) has been used. The scales ask for respondents experience on the level of work related conflict in the place where they work. For both five point Likert scale has been used with preferences of 1 for never and 5 for great deal.

To identify the individual values of collectivism and Individualism, two items among 40 item Schwartz PVQ questionnaire have been used . In order to test the individualistic tendency , Question coming under Universalism have been asked like wise to identify the collecistic tendency , questions coming under the category of tradition and Conformity like “religious belief is important to him and he tries hard to do what his religious requires “ have been asked. The respondents have been asked to relate himself or herself with the statement and asked to rate 1 for “very much like me and 5 for “not like me at all”

**Analysis and Interpretations:**

**Descriptive analysis:**

Logic behind taking years of experience, Place of Birth and the years of staying in abroad is that these are the parameters are said to have influence on ones values which in turn affects their behavior. A per the descriptive analysis out of our sample size , managers who have more than ten years of experience 196 and rest of them have lesser than ten years of experience . Then this research has middle level managers in two group based on place of birth. Those who have born in south India ( Andhra , Tamil Nadu , Karnatakaand Kerala) are considered to be south Indians , others are considered to be other than south Indian as there is huge variation exist among north India in terms geographical classification. Out of the sample it has been indentified that 148 employees have stayed in abroad. Others have not exposed to abroad experience.

**Years of experience**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid more than 10	196	55.8	55.8	55.8
less than 10	155	44.2	44.2	100.0
Total	351	100.0	100.0	

**Table 1.1**

**Place of Birth**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

Valid	South India	201	57.3	57.3	57.3
	Other than South India	150	42.7	42.7	100.0
	Total	351	100.0	100.0	

*Table 1.2*

**Place of Birth \* If Yes, no. of years stayed in abroad Crosstabulation**

Count

	If Yes, no. of years stayed in abroad			Total
	More than ten years	less than ten years	No Abexp	
South India	10	60	131	201
Place of Birth Other than South India	30	43	77	150
Total	40	103	208	351

*Table 1.3*

**Inferential analysis:**

Types of conflict	Place of Birth				t Value	P Value
	South Indian		Other than South Indian			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Task Conflict	8.45	2.14	7.83	2.46	2.53	.01*
Relationship Conflict	11.02	2.85	10.79	3.70	0.67	.50

*Table 2.1*

Individual values	Place of Birth				t Value	P Value
	South Indian		Other than South Indian			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Universalism	3.84	1.02	4.15	.958	2.840	.005**
Conformity	3.93	1.03	4.25	.87	3.06	.002**

Table 2.2

Individual values	Years of experience				t Value	P Value
	More than Ten Years		Less than ten years			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Universalism	4.12	.912	3.79	1.09	3.08	.002**
Conformity	4.28	.880	3.79	1.04	4.6	.001**

Table 2.3

Inferential Analysis shows that there is significant differences existing among south Indian middle level managers when compare to North Indian managers in perceiving the conflict. Most of them seem to be facing task conflict rather than Relationship conflict. This may be because of variations in individual values in terms of Conformity and Universalism where there considerable differences seems to be existing among north and south Indian managers. At the same time if years of experience are taken into account, those who have more than ten years of experience are seems to be Universalistic in nature and keen on conformity.

**Discussion:**

Taking the analysis into consideration, there seems to be differences existing among Indian managers in terms of Universalism and Conformity. North Indian managers are seems to be more Universalistic in nature along with the nature of Conformity. Since Universalistic tendency is at the positive end, there level of conformity is also high when compare to south Indians. Same way the level of exposure also has the tendency to influence once value system, for which the sample population who have spent more than ten years seems to have the nature of universalistic tendency than who have not spend that much of years . When we take Trompennars finding it



shows that Anglo clusters seems to be more of Universalistic in nature when compare to Asian clusters. If we take the samples who stayed abroad more than ten years are most of them are from North Indians when compare to south Indians though the sample size is larger when compare to North Indian managers. When we take task and Relationship conflict Sample shows that South Indians are seems to concentrate more on task rather than relationship conflict. This seems to have some contradiction. Nevertheless the values of Universalism and Collectivism seems to have influence because of the level of exposure that employees' are having during the stay outside. This shows because of cultural change there are chances for drastic change in the value of an individual when they are shifting and staying outside from India. This also substantiate the fact that, Indian employees especially before their exposure to foreign nations who are all taken as sample are having chances to be particularistic because of their ascriptive nature. This will have more meaning when we analyze the characteristics of Indian managers with the help of dimension established by Trompenars. Same way if we analyse the dimensions of Trompenars findings with Asian Cluster, there is clear picture existing in establishing the logical relationship among the dimensions. Viz Collectivist may be of emotional, ascriptive and particularistic. Since collectivist are seems to be particularistic, they can also be emotional when compare to the individualistic people. Having this as a lead, Logically this has to match with perception of conflict for which the result shows with P value at .01 for task conflict for south Indian managers. Since there is significant difference exist among Indian manager with the p-value of .005 and .002 for individual value of Universalism and conformity, as per the earlier research works normally if an individual having the value of collectivism there are chances for him or her to involve in relationship conflict the South Indian managers as per the data should perceive more of relationship conflict but the result is the other way round.. This may be reason because of sample size between north Indian and south Indian managers. If we have indepth cultural analysis this may come to clear picture.

**Conclusion** In support of the paper's objective, there are some differences seems to exist in the perception of conflict among Indian managers especially with respect to task conflict. But since there is little contradiction is seems to exist when the relationship is made between the individual values and perception of conflict. Special attention needs to be taken care during the time of variable definition, which by itself became the Limitation and scope of further research. The results are seems to have some level of contradiction when comparing the task conflict with the

values of Universalism and Conformity. May be this is because of sample size is less for North Indian managers when compare to south Indian managers. Nevertheless , this paper has identified there is significant differences exist among Indian managers with respect to Individual values and also it says there is significant difference among Indians those who are staying many years in abroad and those who are not. This also supports the earlier research works on Indians which accepts the fact that still we are upholding the collectivist nature because of our own traditional values.

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