DIFFERENCES OF INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES PRACTICED BY ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS AT ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION, MALAYSIA

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Abstract

The study aims to analyze the differences of interpersonal conflict management styles practiced by the academic administrators at Islamic higher education institution. The study involved 152 academic administrators of International Islamic University Malaysia from seven kulliyyah or faculties. They comprised of Professors, Associate Professors and Assistant Professors. The study used instrument Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (2001, 2008) to measure five interpersonal conflict management styles consisting 28 items and the data were analyzed using the SPSS program version 17. The result of the study reveals that academic administrators had varying levels of practice of each style. In integrating style the mean score was 4.22 which fall into a very highly practiced style by the academic administrators. This is followed by compromising style with mean 3.85, obliging style mean 3.38, and, avoiding style mean 3.32. The study provide key results and interpretations of the research questions which were analyzed with descriptive, independent sample T-test and one way ANOVA tests in terms of gender, age, job position, work experience and academic status. The research findings are essential to the development of interpersonal conflict management competencies in achieving the National Key Result Area (NKRA), Vision 2020, and, the Malaysian Higher Education Development Plan 2015-2025.

Keywords: Interpersonal Conflict, Conflict Management Styles, Academic Administration, Islamic Higher Education, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

In present days interpersonal conflict has become one of the main concerns of researchers and writers especially those who are studying organizational behavior. It was observed that interpersonal conflict is an important topic for both managers and for scientists interested in understanding the nature of organizational behavior and organizational processes. It is also contended that conflict is an important theme to study in both business organizations and non-business organizations, including the higher education institutions.

Definitions of Interpersonal Conflict

There is no ideal definition of conflict that could be accepted in the studies dealing with conflict. Different researchers defined "conflict" based on their type of the research they are conducting. Owens and Valesky (2007) stated that in the vast body of literature, there is no mutual agreement on the specific definition of "conflict". However, to some extent Wright (1990) tried to reveal the emersion of the word conflict. He said that the word conflict is derived from the Latin word "configere" meaning to strike together. Omiko & Rout (2007) state, originally, it had a physical rather that moral connotation, though the English word has both. In the physical sense of two or more different things moving to occupy the same space at the same time, the logical inconsistency and the process of solution are identical.

Mohamad Johdi Salleh and Apitree Adulpakdee (2012) observed that an interpersonal conflict may be simply described as a clash between two individuals who are unwillingly or unable to fulfill expectations of each other. The management of interpersonal conflict involves changes in the attitudes, behavior, and organization structure, so that the organizational members can work with each other effectively for attaining their individual or joint goals.

Interpersonal conflict refers to the manifestation of incompatibility, disagreement, or difference between two or more interacting individuals (Rahim, 2001). It happens between two people who have different goals and it is very difficult for them to come to mutual agreement. Rahim (2002) stressed that every individual has faced with interpersonal conflict and it is very commonly experienced by managers. Nelson & Quick (2009) state, the individuals who is a part of society and he has daily interaction with other people definitely encounters with interpersonal conflicts. Therefore, because of its almost daily occurrence, most of the people, ignore it and keep themselves far from it.

De Dreu (1997) and, Gordon (2003) go further saying that because it involves confrontation with one or more persons, it is also something we sometimes try to avoid. Rahim (2001) anticipated that too little conflict may encourage stagnancy, mediocrity and groupthink, while too much conflict may lead to organizational disintegration. Hossein & Nasser (2010) state

that learning how to engage in interpersonal conflict without it becoming destructive, and being able to help others to the same, is an important managerial skill. Chalkidou (2011); Mohamad Johdi and Apitree (2012) claimed that conflict is an inevitable natural phenomenon in human interactions and it has to be managed properly**.**

Theory of Interpersonal Conflict

Over the past decades, numerous contributions had been made by researchers in order to develop a theory of interpersonal conflict handling styles (Follet, 1964; Rahim and Bonoma, 1979; Rue & Byars, 2007). Rahim (1990, 2001, 2002) cited that these researchers, starting from Follet (1964) proposed three ways of dealing with conflict: domination, compromise and integration. They developed a managerial grid which identifies five leadership styles which is focused on manager's degree of concern for people and concern for product.

This helped to provide the conceptual scheme of conflict handling styles into the five types: forcing, withdrawing, smoothing, compromising, and problem solving in which they focused on concern for production and concern for people. Furthermore, it was similarly finalized by Thomas (1976) and later on by Rahim and Bonoma (1979), Mary (1993) and Rahim (1990, 2002).

Mary (1993), Sarif and Abdullah (2004) and Vokić. & Sontor (2009) admit, in order to manage conflict effectively managers and administrators must have the conflict management skills that could help them to face conflict in organizational environment. Instead of struggling to eliminate conflict, revealing the most appropriate conflict management style can enhance the success of employees and organizations (Enver et al., 2009).

Interpersonal Conflict Management Styles

The initial idea of dealing with interpersonal conflict goes back to Follett (1940) where she proposed three styles of handling conflict namely: domination, compromise, and integration. It was later on developed by Blake & Mouton (1964) where they made new contributions to the field of conflict management styles (Rahim, 2001). Chung-Yan & Moeller (2010) anticipated that they were the first researchers to create a grid of differentiating five interpersonal conflict management styles, into two dimensions: concern for production (horizontal) the boss is concerned with production of things, a salesperson is concerned with achieving sales volume and concern for people (vertical) people can mean subordinates, customers, colleagues; whomever we relate with going about our daily activities. The interest and importance of conflict handling style had become the focus of researches on managing conflict (Chalkidou 2011).

Conflict cannot just simply be managed, but rather requires specific strategies and personal skills that can keep it moderate in organizations (Balay 2006). If the conflict does exist, however, then it is necessary to select a method of dealing with it as productively as possible from among the many options available (Brewer, et. al 2002, Owens & Valesky, 2007; Abbas, et. al. 2012).

Rahim and Bonoma (1979) and Rahim (1985, 2001, 2002) had proposed the differentiation of five interpersonal conflict management styles into two dimensions: concern for self and concern for others. The dimension of concern for self explains the intention of how the person tries to satisfy his own concerns which explains the degree of high or low concern for self-outcomes and on the other hand the dimension of concern for others obviously the person wants to satisfy others concerns also consists of high and low the degree to which a person concerns for the other's outcomes.

Gordon (2003) stated that conflict management is the ability to manage conflict effectively. Conflict management refers to the modes used by either or both parties to cope with a conflict. Rahim (1990, 2001) admitted that conflict management styles, refers to the different styles of conflict, examining the ways in which individuals manage their conflicts. These strategies are as follows:

Integrating Style

It involves high concern for self and high concern for others. This involves openness, exchange of information and examination of differences to reach an effective solution acceptable to both parties (Rahim, 1985 and Rahim 1990).

Obliging Style

It involves slow concern for self and high concern for others. This style is associated with attempting to play down the differences and emphasizing commonalities to satisfy the concern of other party (Rahim, 1985 and Rahim 1990).

Dominating Style

It involves high concern for self and low concern for others. This style has been identified with win-lose orientation or with forcing behavior to win ones position (Rahim, 1985 and Rahim 1990).

Avoiding Style

It involves low concern for self and low concern for others. It has been associated with withdrawal, buck passing, or sidestepping situations (Rahim, 1985 and Rahim 1990).

Compromising Style

It involves intermediate in concern for self and others. It involves give-and-take whereby both parties give up something to make a mutually acceptable decision (Rahim, 1985 and Rahim 1990).

According to Rahim (1985, 2001) conflict can be examined in terms of personal and group orientation such as: interpersonal, intrapersonal, intergroup and intra-group conflict. Gross & Guerrero (2000) and Brewer et al. (2002) sated that while numerous researchers proposed revisions of this, framework, Rahim and Bonoma's (1979) conceptualization has been one of the most popular.

In this regard, the focus of this study is on interpersonal conflict handling styles of academic administrators with their peers.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to analyze interpersonal conflict management styles practiced by academic administrators at International Islamic University Malaysia. The five interpersonal conflict management styles: integrating, avoiding, compromising, obliging and avoiding developed by Rahim and Bononma (1979) and Rahim (1985, 1990, 2001, 2008) were selected for the purpose of defining conflict management styles of academic administrators at IIUM. It seeks to answer the research questions as follows:

Research Questions

RQ 1 - What are interpersonal conflict management styles practiced by academic administrators at International Islamic University Malaysia?

RQ 2 - Is there any difference in practicing five interpersonal conflict management styles between male and female academic administrators?

RQ 3 - Is there any difference in practicing five interpersonal conflict management styles among academic administrators in terms of age?

RQ 4 - Is there any difference in practicing five interpersonal conflict management styles among academic administrators in terms of job position?

RQ 5 - Is there any difference in practicing five interpersonal conflict management styles among academic administrators in terms of academic status?

RQ 6 - Is there any difference in practicing five interpersonal conflict management styles among academic administrators in terms of work experience?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The participants for this study were academic advisors, coordinators, directors, deputy directors, heads, deputy heads, deans, deputy deans, associate directors, special coordinators and financial advisors. The list of officers was obtained from the Management Services Division, IIUM. The total respondents were 152 academic administrators of International Islamic University Malaysia from seven Faculties or Kulliyyahs comprised Professors 11.2%, Associate Professors 21.1% and Assistant Professors 63.2% (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The study used instrument Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (1985, 2001) and Gross & Guerrero (2000) to measure five interpersonal conflict management styles consisting 28 items of survey questionnaire (Creswell, 2008). The data were analyzed using the SPSS program version 17 (McMillan & Schumacher (2006). The study provided the results and interpretations of the six research questions stated above. These research questions were analyzed with descriptive, independent sample T-test and one way ANOVA tests.

ANALYSIS AND EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Analysis of Demography

The descriptive analysis for gender revealed that the majority of participants of the study were male academic administrators n=82 (53.9 %) while a relatively smaller number of them were female academic administrators at n=70 (46.1%). Regarding the age distribution of academic administrators, the majority of them were 35-40 years old 44 (28.9%) to 41-44 years old 41 (27.0 %). Of the respondents, the majority reported that they were holding the position of coordinator 42 (27.6%) and academic advisor 40 (26.3%). The majority of participants claimed that they had working experience of between 10-14 years at 35 (23.0 %). Regarding their nationality most of the administrators were Malaysians 117 (77.0%). The participants were from seven kulliyahs at IIUM from seven faculties namely Engineering, Architecture, Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, Information Technology, Economics, Education, and, Laws. They comprised of Professors 11.2%, Associate Professors Dr 21.1% and Assistant Professors Dr 63.2%.

Analysis of Data

The descriptive analysis was performed in order to see academic administrators self-report on using each interpersonal conflict management style at five levels. The five levels are defined in the questionnaire and answering each item for this study was based on the Likert-scale as (1) – "Strongly Disagree", (2) – "Disagree", (3) – "Neutral", (4) – "Agree", and (5) – "Strongly Agree".

In order to analyze the academic administrator's view in practicing each conflict management style, the mean scores of each item for each style were determined.

Cebeci (2006) and Brusko (2010) in their studies proposed a method in which the highest possible mean score for each conflict management style should be 5.00 and the lowest should be as 1.00. He categorized that the mean score of each conflict handling style between 1 to 1.79 is for level one (strongly disagree), 1.80 to 2.59 is for level two (disagree), 2.60 to 3.39 is for level three (undecided, for this study used "neutral"), 3.40 to 4.19 is for level four (agree) and 4.20 to 5.00 is for level five (strongly agree). These classifications can be of help to interpret the means, frequencies and percentages of each conflict management styles practiced by academic administrators Cornille, et al. 1999; McMillan & Schumacher 2006; Creswell 2008).

Results

RQ 1: What are interpersonal conflict management styles practiced by academic administrators at International Islamic University Malaysia?

The results of each interpersonal conflict management style's mean scores were defined in order to identify the levels of practicing each five style by academic administrators. The mean scores were categorized as from 1-1.79 – None, from 1.80-2.59 – Very rarely practiced, from 2.60-3.39 – Seldom practiced, from 3.40- 4.19. Highly practiced and from 4.20 - 5.00 - Very Highly practiced. These categorizations can help to identify which style is lowly or highly practiced by the academic administrators.

Table 1: Results of Academic Administrator's Interpersonal Conflict Management Style

Styles	N=152	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levels of practice
Integrating	152	4.22	.50	Very high
Compromising	152	3.85	.52	High
Obliging	152	3.38	.71	Low
Avoiding	152	3.32	.68	Low
Dominating	152	2.61	.46	Very Low

It can be clearly observed from Table 1 that academic administrators had varying levels of practice of each style. In integrating style the mean score was found as (M=4.22) which falls into a very highly practiced style by the academic administrators. This is followed by compromising style where the mean score was found to be (M=3.85) which can be interpreted as a highly practiced style by academic administrators. For obliging style the mean score was found as (M=3.38) which falls into low practiced style by academic administrators. Similar results were

found for avoiding style where the mean score of (M=3.32) can be considered to be a low practiced style by academic administrators.

Lastly, the mean score for dominating style resulted in (M=2.61) which can be inferred to as a very lowly practiced style by academic administrators in managing their interpersonal conflicts at International Islamic University Malaysia.

RQ 2:.Is there any difference in practicing five interpersonal conflict management styles between male and female academic administrators?

The results of male and female academic administrators in practicing integrating conflict management style as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Interpersonal Conflict Management Styles between Male and Female Academic Administrators: Gender T-Test Results

Scale	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev	t-Value	Sig.
Integrating	Male	82	4.15	.53	-1.900	.059
	Female	70	4.30	.45		
Obliging	Male	82	3.44	.46	1.615	.108
	Female	70	3.30	.58		
Dominating	Male	82	2.57	.72	-.746	.457
	Female	70	2.66	.70		
Avoiding	Male	82	3.31	.65	-.201	.841
	Female	70	3.33	.71		
Compromising	Male	82	3.77	.49	-2.294	.023
	Female	70	3.94	.41		

Table 2 above shows, the results of t-test on integrating style for males was recorded as (Mean=4.15, s.d.=.53), and for females it was (Mean=4.30, s.d.=45); (t= -1.900, p=.059).

T-test conducted on obliging style for males resulted in (Mean= 3.44. s.d.=.46) and for females resulted in (Mean=3.30, s.d.=.58); (t=1.615, p=.108). The results revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female academic administrators in practicing obliging conflict management style.

T-test conducted on dominating style for males resulted in (Mean=2.57, s.d.= .72) and for females resulted in (Mean=2.66, s.d.=.70); (t= -746, p=.457). This may indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female academic administrators in practicing dominating conflict management style.

The results of t-test on avoiding style for males produced (Mean=3.31, s.d.=.65) and for females (Mean=3.33, s.d.=.71); (t= -.201, p= .814). The results show that there is no statistically

significant difference between male and female academic administrators in practicing avoiding conflict management style.

T-test conducted on compromising style for males resulted in (Mean=3.77, s.d.= .49) and for females resulted in (Mean=3.94, s.d.= .41); (t= -2.294, p= .023). This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female academic administrators in practicing compromising conflict management style.

The results of t-test indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in scores between male and female academic administrators in practicing the five interpersonal conflict management styles.

It is concluded that both male and female academic administrators were practicing the same styles while managing their interpersonal conflicts.

RQ 3: Is there any difference in practicing five interpersonal conflict management styles among academic administrators in terms of age?

A one way analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of age on five interpersonal conflict management styles practiced by academic administrators at IIUM. The result is shown in table 3 below.

Table 3: Results of one-Way ANOVA of Academics Age Group (n=152)

		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Integrating	Between groups	.162	5	.032	.124	.987
	Within groups	38.103	146	.261		
	Total	38.265	151			
Obliging	Between groups	1.323	5	.2.65	.952	.450
	Within groups	40.592	146	.278		
	Total	41.916	151			
Dominating	Between groups	1.902	5	.380	.739	.595
	Within groups	75.112	146	.514		
	Total	77.014	151			
Avoiding	Between groups	3.017	5	.603	1.313	.262
	Within groups	67.100	146	.460		
	Total	70.117	151			
Compromising	Between groups	.321	5	.064	.290	.918
	Within groups	32.328	146	.221		
	Total	32.649	151			

The results for each five conflict style were found for age groups as follows: integrating style resulted in (F=.124, p=.987), obliging style resulted in (F= .952, p= .450), dominating style

resulted in (F= .739, p= .595), Avoiding style resulted in (F= 1.313, p=.262), and Compromising style resulted in (F=.290, p= .918).

This indicates that as far as the academics' age levels are concerned, there is no difference in practicing the five interpersonal conflict management styles.

RQ 4: Is there any difference in practicing five interpersonal conflict management styles among academic administrators in terms of job position?

The descriptive statistical data analysis for ANOVA results indicated that for this study, academic administrators were holding the following positions and were divided into the following groups.

The first group was deans, group two - deputy deans, group three - directors, group four - deputy directors, group five - heads, group six - coordinators, group seven, and, group eight - academic advisors. The frequencies, means and standard deviations of each group are provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Results of one-Way ANOVA of academic administrators job position (n=152)

		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	f	Sig.
Integrating	Between groups	2.312	7	.330	1.323	.244
	Within groups	35.953	144	.250		
	Total	38.265	151			
Obliging	Between groups	1.829	7	.261	.939	.479
	Within groups	40.087	144	.278		
	Total	41.916	151			
Dominating	Between groups	3.360	7	.480	.938	.479
	Within groups	73.654	144	.511		
	Total	77.014	151			
Avoiding	Between groups	4.418	7	.631	1.383	217
	Within groups	65.699	144	.456		
	Total	70.117	151			
Compromising	Between groups	3.686	7	.527	2.618	.014
	Within groups	28.963	144	.201		
	Total	32.649	151			

The results for the five interpersonal conflict management styles were presented as: Integrating style resulted in (F= 1.323, p= .244) Obliging style resulted in (F= .939, p= .479) Dominating style resulted in (F= .938, p= .479), Avoiding style resulted in (F= 1.383, p= .217), and Compromising style resulted in (F= 2.618, p= .014). These results are provided in table 4.

It can be observed from table 4 that there is no statistically significant difference in the five conflict management styles practiced by academic administrators who are holding different academic positions.

The results show that all academic administrators who are holding different academic posts are managing their interpersonal conflicts using the same styles, thus indicating that there is no difference in practicing the five interpersonal conflict management styles.

RQ 5: Is there any difference in practicing five interpersonal conflict management styles among academic administrators in terms of academic status?

The descriptive analysis for one way ANOVA revealed that the academic administrators' academic statuses were divided into four groups. Group one constituted Dr.; group two Assoc. Prof. Dr.; group three Prof. Dr. and group four was designated as others. The result of the analysis is provided in Table 5.

Table 5: Results of one-Way ANOVA of Academic's Status (n=152)

		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	f	Sig.
Integrating	Between groups	.517	3	.172	.675	.568
	Within groups	37.749	148	.255		
	Total	38.265	151			
Obliging	Between groups	1.277	3	.426	1.551	.204
	Within groups	40.638	148	.275		
	Total	41.916	151			
Dominating	Between groups	1.571	3	.524	1.027	.382
	Within groups	75.443	148	.510		
	Total	77.014	151			
Avoiding	Between groups	3.055	3	1.018	2.247	.085
	Within groups	67.062	148	.453		
	Total	70.117	151			
Compromising	Between groups	2.366	3	.789	3.855	.011
	Within groups	30.283	148	.205		
	Total	32.649	151			

The results for academic status for each subscale were presented as the following: Integrating style resulted in (F= .675, p= .568), Obliging style resulted in (F=1.551, p= .204), Dominating style resulted in (F=1.027, p= .382), Avoiding style resulted in (F=2.247, p= .085), and Compromising style resulted in (F= 3.855, p=.011).

It is clearly observed that there is no statistically meaningful difference in practicing the five interpersonal conflict management styles among academic administrators with different academic status.

RQ 6: Is there any difference in practicing five interpersonal conflict management styles among academic administrators in terms of work experience?

The descriptive statistics for academic administrator's work experience shows that five groups were categorized. Group one is designated as having 4 years' experience, group two 5-9, group three 10-14, group four 15-19 and lastly group five 20 years and above.

A one way ANOVA analysis was performed to analyze the differences of academic administrator's practices of five interpersonal conflict management styles based on their work experience. Results revealed that there is no statistically significant difference in the use of five interpersonal conflict management styles among academic administrators in terms of their work experience. The result is presented in table 6 below.

Table 6: Results of one-Way ANOVA of Academic' Work Experience (n=152)

		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Integrating	Between groups	1.462	4	.366	1.460	.217
	Within groups	36.803	147	.250		
	Total	38.265	151			
Obliging	Between groups	.634	4	.159	.565	.689
	Within groups	41.281	147	.281		
	Total	41.916	151			
Dominating	Between groups	5.262	4	1.316	2.695	.033
	Within groups	71.752	147	.488		
	Total	77.014	151			
Avoiding	Between groups	4.296	4	1.074	2.399	.053
	Within groups	65.821	147	.448		
	Total	70.117	151			
Compromising	Between groups	.476	4	.119	.543	.704
	Within groups	32.174	147	.219		
	Total	32.649	151			

Results for each five interpersonal conflict styles were found out as the following; Integrating style resulted in (F= 1.460, p=.217), Obliging style resulted in (F= .565, p= .689), Dominating style resulted in (F= 2.695, p= .033), Avoiding style resulted in (F= 2.399, p= 0.53) and Compromising style resulted in (F= .543, p= .704).

The results for academic's work experience revealed that there is no significant difference in practicing the five interpersonal conflict management styles by those who have more or less work experience in the field of administration.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

It is evident that the results of T-test for gender differences in practicing the five interpersonal conflict management styles revealed no statistically significant difference between male and female academic administrators in practicing the five interpersonal conflict management styles while managing their conflicts at IIUM.

According to Brewer et al. (2002) women and men who are equal in terms of status, should behave similarly. Results also showed that male and female academic administrators almost practice same strategies in managing their conflicts. The same results were also found in other researchers which were conducted on conflict handling styles.

Korabiket al.(1993) came to the same conclusion a few years earlier when they stated in their study that women managers do not differ from their male counterparts in preferred conflict-handling style (as cited in Havenga, 2009). In some other researchers also no significant difference were found between male and female in the use of five conflict movement styles. Researchers who have examined sex differences in conflict style among individuals of similar organizational status reported no differences between men and women (Brewer et al., 2002).

According to Brusko (2010) sex is a socially-prescribed concept in which men are classified as masculine and women as feminine. In reality, both men and women can possess feminine or masculine characteristics. Thus, considering the inaccuracy in classifying each individual as possessing male or female personality characteristics solely based upon their sex, the lack of relationship between sex and conflict management is expected.

In most of the situations female roles perceived not to be competitive compared to male roles especially in organizations. It is stereotyped that females are less qualified in managerial work and it is the male's responsibility to be fulfilled. Some are skeptical about women's ability to adjust to managerial roles and responsibilities while the managerial role is associated with masculine rather than feminine characteristics (İslamoğlu et al., 2008).

However, the results showed that female academic administrators are capable of managing their conflicts no less than their male co-workers. Somehow it helps others to clear their perceptions about female roles in an organization and that they are capable of fulfilling their responsibilities in managerial level the same as male academic administrators. The results without no doubt can encourage the University to recruit more female employees and give them jobs in higher positions.

In this regard, it indicates that IIIUM has created a working environment for both male and female academic staff, where both male and females have equal opportunity to work and pursue their career.

The result of age differences showed that academic administrators who are young did not distinguish themselves from those who are older. Brusko (2010 in his study found the same results and he concluded that the age of the respondent is not a significant factor in one's preferred conflict management strategy.

The results of ANOVA analysis revealed that academic administrators who hold positions of head, dean, and director did not distinguish themselves in practicing the five interpersonal conflict management styles from those who hold the positions of deputy head, deputy dean and deputy director as well as those holding the positions of academic advisor, coordinator, and advisor and vice versa.

Similarly, academic administrators who have academic status of Dr. did not distinguish themselves in using the five interpersonal conflict management styles from those who have academic status of Assoc. Prof. Dr. nor did they distinguish themselves from those who have Prof. Dr. academic status and vice versa. In this regard, academic administrator's work experience also didn't reveal any differences. Those who had less than four years of work experience didn't distinguish themselves from those who had 5-9 and 10-14. Moreover, those academic administrators who had about 15-19 and 20 years above didn't distinguish themselves from those who had less working experience.

Many research have been conducted on conflict management styles using demographic variables to study differences and relations of five conflict management styles with demographic variables (Sheryl et al., 2005; Brusko, 2010: Brewer et al., 2002; Havenga, 2009; Cetin & Hacifazlioglu, 2004; Enver et al., 2009).

These researches reached both negative and positive results. Some of them found differences in one demographic variable and some of them didn't find any differences. To some extend these researches tried to add new demographic variable to see their impact on conflict management styles such as marital status, organizational status, work experience or age and so on. In this regard, this study analyzed a new variable of academic status to determine whether there are significant differences in practicing five interpersonal conflict management style or not. By analyzing this demographic variable the results indicated that there is no statistical difference in using conflict management styles by academic administrators in terms of having different academic ranks as well.

However, whether positive or negative results are reached in this research, in either case, new knowledge and conclusion can be gathered. Even though no statistically significant difference were obtained this may indicate that more research is needed to be done on this realm. Moreover, this was one of the few researches conducted on conflict management styles among academic administrators at IIUM which may serve as a foundation to further researches

on conflict management styles at IIUM. This research by its results is significant in which at least a contribution is made to introduce the importance of conflict management and the way it should be managed by it styles to academic administrators in seven kulliyahs at IIUM. This may help administrators to be aware about conflict and its management and opens a new way to its study at IIUM.

Hence, administrators are vital personnel in any organization especially at IIUM where they have great responsibilities in decision making. Therefore, they should be aware of conflict management and its styles that can enhance their managerial skills. They should understand that conflict is inevitable and should be managed. The way the conflict could be managed appropriately is to have a skill of practicing the five conflict management styles appropriately and effectively.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that academic administrators managed their interpersonal conflicts mostly by practicing integrating conflict management style. They also revealed that they do practice other styles like integrating followed by compromising style, obliging, avoiding and dominating style. The research findings revealed no significant difference in practicing five interpersonal conflict management styles by academic administrators in terms of gender, age, job position, academic status and work experience. These and above discussed findings and recommendations supportively claim that conflict is inevitable and it exists whenever there is an interaction of two or more people. Therefore, conflict neither should be eliminated nor it should be left uncontrolled, but rather, it should be managed. In this regard, in order to manage organizational conflicts, academic administrators should have conflict management skills in order to manage conflicts appropriately and effectively. This study is limited to one Islamic higher education institution in Malaysia namely International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). It is strongly recommended that further study should be conducted to a bigger number of higher education institutions for more significant results. These are essential to the development of interpersonal conflict management competencies in achieving the National Key Result Area (NKRA), Vision 2020, and, the Malaysian Higher Education Development Plan 2015-2025.

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