

Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Management Styles

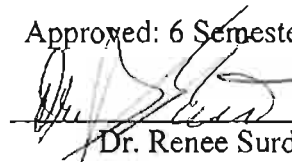
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**Abstract**

The research was carried out to study emotional intelligence and conflict management styles using employees in the Human Resources Division at XYZ University in Malaysia. Specifically, it aims to examine the correlation of supervisors' emotional intelligence assessed by themselves and by their subordinates. Second, this study explored if there is a relationship between emotional intelligence possessed by the supervisors and styles of handling conflict as reported by their subordinates. Three sets of surveys were used to measure the results: Emotional Quotient Index (EQI) (Self-rating), Emotional Quotient Index (EQI) (Observer) and Rahim Organisational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) Form A surveys. Results from these surveys showed that supervisors had the highest ratings on empathy but the lowest on self-regulation. Subordinates used more integrating and compromising styles when handling conflicts with their supervisors, while dominating styles were the least used. Results from multiple regression analysis showed that there were significant relationships between emotional

intelligence and conflict management styles: integrating and compromising for the employees in the HR division. Interestingly, there were mixed findings between emotional intelligence ratings by the supervisors themselves and their subordinates; only one out of six supervisors gave themselves the same emotional intelligence ratings as subordinates provided.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

### Statements of the Problem

In the past decades, traditional qualities associated with leadership, such as intelligence, toughness, determination, and vision, appeared to be sufficient to be considered successful. In 1983, Howard Gardner had challenged the idea and proposed the *multiple intelligence theory* that consists of seven categories in order to accurately define the concepts of intelligence and to succeed in the field. Two of them are *intrapersonal intelligence*, the ability to understand oneself and act on the basis of self-knowledge, and *interpersonal intelligence*, the ability to work cooperatively and communicate with other people effectively (Helfrich, 2009). Today, they are now often referred to in association with *emotional intelligence*, which is the ability to comprehend, perceive and manage the feelings, emotions and motivation of one's self and of others (Goleman, 1998).

Conflict is a situation where there are at least two differing perspectives, which can lead to nonproductive results or can be beneficially resolved and lead to quality final products. Therefore, learning to resolve conflict is integral to high performance teams and profit achievements. According to past research, there are significant relationships between emotional intelligence and subordinates' styles of handling conflict with supervisors (e.g., Yu, Sardesai, Lu & Zhao, 2006). Subordinates who have supervisors with high emotional intelligence will use the integrating style (both parties find a creative solution to satisfy both parties' concerns) and the compromising style (both parties win some and lose some, in an attempt to reach a consensus) of conflict management.

This leads to the following problem statements

- Emotional intelligence
  - Do supervisors have the same assessment results about their own emotional intelligence level as reported by their subordinates?
- Emotional intelligence and conflict management styles
  - Do subordinates who have supervisors with high emotional intelligence use the integrating and compromising styles of conflict management when handling conflicts with their supervisors?
  - Do subordinates who have supervisors with low emotional intelligence use the avoiding, obliging and dominating styles of conflict management when handling conflicts with their supervisors?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to provide XYZ University with insight about the relationship between emotional intelligence and managing conflicts between supervisors and their subordinates. These findings give XYZ University the necessary information to motivate their employees in increasing their work performance; if it is shown that a lack of emotional intelligence hinders the communication between them. Failing to take the results into consideration, potentially increases the risk of a downward shift towards inflexibility and malfunction of collaborative relationships and effective job performance.

The US Department of Labor, Employment, and Training Administration 1989, 1996 carried out a national survey on the criteria that employers are looking for in entry level employees (Goleman, 1996). Some of the criteria include personal management and confidence, interpersonal and group effectiveness, listening and oral communication, and adaptability and

creative responses to feedback. These results show the potential of having the necessary emotional intelligence skills in order to be accepted while working in an organization, and eventually be able to work independently and successfully within a team.

By conducting this study, it is the researcher's intent that more recognition would occur in examining the value of having emotional intelligence explored between the cultures instead of technical skills alone. The study also seeks to identify the key value changes in the current economy, which is shifting towards intangible assets (for example innovativeness, cognitive intelligence), and also a shift from individual work to teamwork.

Also of equal importance is the increased amount of literature provided by this research on emotional intelligence in the local community. The outcome of this research and its components can be utilized by researchers, who intend to study the extent of the relationship between emotional intelligence and the styles of managing conflicts. It would also be beneficial to the local community if they apply further research offered by these insights.

### **Assumptions of the Study**

Past studies have reported a potential relationship between emotional intelligence and subordinates' styles of handling conflict with supervisors. Subordinates who have supervisors with high emotional intelligence will use the integrating and compromising styles of conflict management in handling conflict among themselves (Yu, Sardesai, Lu & Zhao, 2006). It is expected in the study that subordinates who have supervisors with low emotional intelligence will use the avoiding, obliging and dominating styles of conflict management in handling conflicts in organizations. It is also can be assumed that the results of the present study will be similar as the same surveys were utilized in both pieces of research.

## **Organization Introduction**

**Human Resources Division at XYZ University.** The Human Resources Division is a division under the Registry that covers three sub-divisions: Administrative Division, Human Resource Management Division and Human Resource Development Division. The employees at the Human Resources Division are responsible for generating and providing a pool of qualified human capital, which is consistent with the university's human resource policies. For this research, the researcher will employ XYZ instead of the real of the name university in order to protect the university's privacy and keep the information identified confidential.

## **Definition of Terms**

**Emotional Intelligence.** Emotional intelligence can be referred to as knowing and using one's feeling in appropriate manner, motivating oneself and others effectively, and managing the relationships by exhibiting empathy and interacting smoothly to one another (Goleman, 1998). Emotional intelligence plays a vital role in the organizations because 1) emotions that are handled effectively may contribute to how one handles the needs of individuals, 2) how one motivates employees and 3) how comfortable the employees feel at work. According to Goleman (1998), the five components of emotional intelligence are self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, motivation and empathy.

- Self-awareness (SA) is associated with the ability to know one's internal state, preferences, resources, and intuitions, e.g., a supervisor is aware of which emotions he is experiencing.
- Self-regulation (SR) refers to the ability to manage one's internal states, impulses, and resources, e.g., a supervisor remains calm despite having to deal with violent situations.

- Motivation (MO) represents the emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching goals, e.g., a supervisor sets his motivation high and attains challenging goals.
- Empathy (EM) refers to the ability of being aware of other's feelings, needs and concerns, e.g., a supervisor understands the feelings transmitted via verbal and non-verbal language.
- Social skills (SS) are associated with one's ability to induce desirable response in others, e.g., a supervisor does not let his negative feelings restrain collaboration.

**Conflict Management Styles.** Conflict management styles refer to how we approach the other party in a conflict situation. For effective conflict management in organizations, employees should learn to apply different conflict management styles in different situations. According to Rahim (1986), the five styles for resolving conflicts in preparation for negotiation are integrating, obliging, compromising, avoiding and dominating.

- Integrating (IN) involves openness, exchange of information, and examination of differences to reach an effective solution acceptable to both parties, e.g., both supervisor and subordinates encourage mutual commitment to a project through incorporating each others' ideas into the final agreement.
- Obliging (OB) is associated with attempting to play down the differences and emphasizing commonalities to satisfy the concerns of the other party, e.g., a supervisor's thoughts are more important than the subordinates in reaching a consensus.

- Dominating (DO) is identified with a win-lose orientation or with forcing behaviours to win one's position, e.g., a supervisor takes advantage of his position in making a business decision.
- Avoiding (AV) is identified with withdrawal, buck-passing, or sidestepping solutions, e.g., a subordinate refuse to co-operate with his supervisor in a project physically and mentally.
- Compromising (CO) involves give-and-take whereby both parties give up something to make a mutually acceptable decision, e.g., both supervisor and subordinates needs a fast but temporary solution for a complex issue.

**Supervisors.** In the present study, supervisors can be defined as people who supervise, are in charge of a particular department or unit, and are responsible for continuous operations in their unit. According to the Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, "a supervisor is an administrative officer who is in charge of a business, government or school unit or operation" ("Supervisor", 2010).

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are two apparent limitations of this study including

- The small number of employees in the Human Resources Division that may affect the reliability of the findings.
- Subordinates may not be honest in filling out the personal information and feedback on their supervisors' sections.

## **Methodology**

This research study consists of a quantitative approach. Three sets of surveys were used in this study. Emotional Quotient Index (EQI) (observer) to measure the emotional intelligence among the supervisors, Emotional Quotient Index (EQI) (self-rating) to measure oneself, and Rahim Organisational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) to assess the five styles of handling conflict with supervisors. Emotional Quotient Index (EQI) (observer) and Emotional Quotient Index (EQI) (self-rating) that will be used in this research are developed by Rahim et al. (2002a), while Rahim Organisational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) is developed by Rahim (1983b). The results of the surveys were analyzed using Excel to weigh and score participants' responses. The clean data were then thoroughly analyzed utilizing SPSS Regression to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management styles among employees of Human Resources Division at XYZ University.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

### Emotional Intelligence

#### Emotional intelligence history.

Emotional intelligence was first proposed in the management literature by Salovey and Mayer (1990). They refer emotional intelligence to emotional construction and regulation, and to some emotional processing aspects (Mayer & Salovey, 1995). Researchers have begun to construct what components improve the moods of people, such as individuals' coping styles and their mood regulation. They also described emotional intelligence as a set of abilities that refer in part to how one effectively deals with emotions within oneself and others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Several alternative models of this construct exist, but only three have been generated in terms of research and application. They are the findings of Bar-On (1997), Goleman (1996), and Salovey and Mayer (1990). Unlike Salovey and Mayer's (1990) definition of emotional intelligence, other models define it in terms of behaviors, self-management, and social skills (Herbst & Maree, 2008).

In Kerr, Garvin, Heaton and Boyle's (2006), they described Mayer and Salovey's (1997) popular model of emotional intelligence. The four hierarchical branches of their model include 1) accurately perceive emotions in oneself and others, 2) use emotions to facilitate thinking, 3) understand emotional meanings and 4) manage emotions. This model of emotional intelligence by Mayer and Salovey (1997) and the five elements of emotional intelligence by Goleman (1996) that will be discussed later, have led to a breadth of research emphasizing the role of emotional intelligence in interpersonal relationships, leadership, customer service, and work place communications. The present study particularly examines Goleman's five domains of



emotional intelligence and conflict management styles within customer-oriented workplace settings.

### **Five domains of emotional intelligence.**

Daniel Goleman adapted the Salovey and Mayer's model to explore how it relates to working life. His definition is as follows

Emotional intelligence refers to the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships (Goleman, 1998, p. 317).

Emotional competence on the other hand is "a learned capability based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work" (Goleman, 1998, p. 24). Thus, our emotional competence demonstrates how much of the potential we have translated into on-the-job capabilities. For example, being a good listener to a depressed friend is an example of emotional competence based on empathy. Below is the framework by Goleman (1998) based on the emotional competence skills.

The Emotional Competence Framework	
<p><b>Personal Competence:</b></p> <p>These competencies determine how we manage ourselves</p> <p>Self-awareness: Knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources, and intuitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional awareness: recognizing one's emotions and their effects</li> <li>• Accurate self-assessment: knowing one's strengths and limits</li> <li>• Self-confidence: a strong sense of one's self-worth and capabilities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Social Competence:</b></p> <p>These competencies determine how we handle relationships</p> <p>Empathy: Awareness of others' feelings, needs, and concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding others: sensing others' feelings and perspectives, and taking an active interest in their concerns</li> <li>• Developing others: sensing others' development needs and bolstering their abilities</li> <li>• Service orientation: anticipating, recognizing, and meeting customers'</li> </ul>

<p>Self-regulation: Managing one's internal states, impulses, and resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-control: keeping disruptive emotions and impulses in check</li> <li>• Trustworthiness: maintaining standards of honesty and integrity</li> <li>• Conscientiousness: taking responsibility for personal performance</li> <li>• Adaptability: Flexibility in handling change</li> <li>• Innovation: Being comfortable with novel ideas, approaches and new information</li> </ul> <p>Motivation: Emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievement drive: striving to improve or meet a standard of excellence</li> <li>• Commitment: aligning with the goals of the group or organization</li> <li>• Initiative: Readiness to act on opportunity</li> <li>• Optimism: Persistence in pursuing goals despite obstacles and setbacks</li> </ul>	<p>needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leveraging diversity: cultivating opportunities through different kinds of people</li> <li>• Political awareness: reading a group's emotional currents and power relationships</li> </ul> <p>Social skills: adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence: wielding effective tactics for persuasion</li> <li>• Communication: listening openly and sending convincing messages</li> <li>• Conflict management: negotiating and resolving disagreements</li> <li>• Leadership: inspiring and guiding individuals and groups</li> <li>• Change catalyst: initiating or managing change</li> <li>• Building bonds: nurturing instrumental relationships</li> <li>• Collaboration and cooperation: working with others toward shared goals</li> <li>• Team capabilities: creating group synergy in pursuing collective goals</li> </ul>
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Figure 1: The framework of emotional intelligence components by D. Goleman (2006), *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, pp. 26-28.

People have questioned whether high emotional intelligence is an inherited or a learned trait. Research and practice demonstrated that emotional intelligence can be learned, and that it increases with age (Goleman, 2004). Emotional intelligence training programs will only be effective if they focus on the right part of the brain. Goleman (2004) claimed that emotional intelligence is born in the neurotransmitters of the brain's limbic system and can be learned best through experiences. Therefore, these kinds of training programs must include the limbic system

in their focus, or else they will not be effective. Such training programs include the ones involving motivation, extended practice and feedback.

In a comparison between emotional intelligence and emotional skills, emotional intelligence is broader than the emotional skills approach because it involves the ways that emotions inform mental processing (Riggio & Reichrad, 2008). Emotional skills emphasize the social skills of emotional intelligence on transaction of emotions between people in social interaction.

### **The connection between Emotional Intelligence Quotient (EQ) and Intelligent Quotient (IQ).**

Intelligence quotient (IQ) is defined as a psychological test that can predict jobs people can hold (Goleman, 2006). It is a score derived from a standardized test and covers an individual's intelligence, emotion, personality, attitude and ability. Goleman (2006) also states that technical skill can determine if an employee is able to attain and perform in a given job, but these two factors alone are not sufficient in evaluating employee's performance and leadership capability in a workplace.

Goleman (2004) conducted a study in determining what the personal capabilities are that drive outstanding performance within 188 large global companies, including Lucent Technologies, British Airways and Credit Suisse. He started by grouping the personal capabilities into three categories: technical skills, cognitive abilities, and emotional intelligence. Results showed that emotional intelligence may be as important as technical skills and cognitive abilities for outstanding performance. Therefore, emotional intelligence can be considered a main ingredient for excellent performance. These results applied for jobs at all levels.

According to Riggio and Reichard (2008), emotional intelligence (EI) is a multidimensional construct, composed of different and somewhat distinct abilities from intelligence quotient (IQ). When Salovey and Mayer (1990) carried out a comprehensive test to establish emotional intelligence as one of the intelligences, they found that intellect and emotional intelligence were different because they use different parts of the brain. They found this by using a test that measured emotional intelligence in a similar way to IQ. Later on, they succeeded in producing a norm tested EQ scale, called Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale (MEIS) (Langley, 2000).

Moreover, Palmer, Walls, Burgess and Stough (2000) found that intellectual stimulation is not correlated with either of the EI-subcales. Intellectual stimulation can be demonstrated when transformational leaders, leaders that are inspirational, creative thinkers and encourage subordinates to follow (Bass, 1998), stimulate their subordinates by presenting them with challenging new ideas and different ways to tackle problems. This finding showed that intellectuality does not necessarily have an impact towards people with higher emotional intelligence.

However, it would be unwise to assume that IQ and technical ability are not important ingredients in effective leadership. Emotional intelligence is just the other ingredient that most leaders need to have in order to achieve higher performance in organizations. All three facets need to be attended to during the training of supervisors so they will be equipped with sufficient leadership skills (Herbst & Maree, 2008).

### **The assessment of emotional intelligence and leadership in the workplace.**

Goleman (2004) discovered that emotional intelligence capabilities are the main reason for the effectiveness of a star performer as reported in a study of competency models from 188

companies. He stated that self-regulation, which is one of the components of emotional intelligence, is crucial for leaders because it enables them to create an environment of trust and fairness. Not only that, but they would be able to master their emotions in competitive situations, and enhance integrity for both personal virtue and organizational strength. In addition, he also found that an extreme display of negative emotion is never a driver of good leadership. Empathy on the other hand, plays a role in effective leadership for three reasons “the increasing use of teams, the rapid pace of globalization, and the growing need to retain talent” (Goleman, 2004, p. 89). The last component of emotional intelligence, social skills, is considered a key leadership capability because it is a culmination of other components of emotional intelligence and it moves people in a desired direction.

Most organizational context indicates that transformational leadership is significantly correlated to leadership effectiveness in organizations. The studies that investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership style found mixed results. Using a multifactor leadership questionnaire, Palmer et al. (2001) studied a relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) in transformational leadership, and EI in leadership, leaders that concentrate on simple rewards and punishment, and rely on managing-by-exception (Bass, 1998). Results showed that several components of transformational leadership are correlated with EI, indicating EI may be an important factor in becoming an effective leader in an organization. However, in Weinberger’s (2002) study there was no significant correlation between a group of transformational leaders and emotional intelligence.

In the model of emotional intelligence, individuals’ accurate emotion perception could guide behavioral responses (Byron, 2008). Managers that can accurately determine the meaning of others’ non-verbal emotional expressions will know how to provide appropriate responses to

their subordinates (Zaccaro et al., 1991). This is consistent with leadership and managerial theories which state that the most effective leaders and managers are those capable of perceiving and responding accurately to others (Hall et al., 1998; Tsui and Ashford, 1994; Zaccaro et al., 1991).

Additionally, multiple studies on emotional intelligence also state that leaders with higher emotional intelligence are capable in nurturing the quality and effectiveness of social interaction roles with other individuals (House & Aditya, 1996) and monitoring work group members' feeling and taking appropriate action (Mayer et al., 2000). The higher emotional intelligence leaders also motivate and inspire others, nurture positive behavior at work, and create a sense of contribution and importance with and among employees (Hogan et al., 1994).

#### **The value of emotional intelligence at work.**

Since we are in the new millennium, new ideas about measuring management potential in emotional intelligence skills are emerging (Langley, 2000). These new ideas do not solely rely on IQ and technical abilities alone. People can become more effective participants through social interaction. The workplace is one of the environments in which people learn about behavior and emotions which take on a greater significance in organizational life. In a study of emotional intelligence and interpersonal relations, Schutte's et al. (2001) conducted seven studies to test Gardner's *theory of multiple intelligences*, Averill and Nunley's *emotional creativity theory* and Saarni's *theory of emotional competence*. Results from Schutte's et al. (2001) research showed that people with higher emotional intelligence have

- Higher empathetic perspective taking and self-monitoring in social situations
- Higher social skills
- Higher cooperation toward partners

- Higher levels of affection in relationships
- Higher marital satisfaction, and
- Higher satisfaction in relationships

The finding may be considered as important as it suggests that emotional intelligence could be perceived as a desirable quality and leads to interpersonal attraction. This is supported by Mayer, Salovey & Caruso (2000c) who found that people with high emotional intelligence could be more socially effective than their counterparts and thus, could be more skilful in motivating people to achieve goals, aims and missions in organizations.

Employees who have high levels of emotional intelligence have smoother interactions with members of their work teams (Mayer et al, 2000a) and are able to accurately perceive, understand and appraise others' emotions and build supportive networks (Salovey, 1999). They are also considered more interpersonally sensitive and understanding (Davis and Kraus, 1997; Rosenthal and Benowitz, 1985), warm, protective of others, less critical and deceitful, and more likely to turn to the better perceivers for advice and reassurance (Funder and Harris, 1986). Psychologists, counselors, and physicians were also rated as more sensitive than other professions (DiMatteo et al., 1979; Rosenthal et al., 1979).

In the area of selection alone, Dattner (2003) gathered two interesting findings from two surveys on emotional intelligence and success. According to the National US Department of Labor survey, corporations are increasingly listing emotional competencies for new hires and more companies are seeking MBA's with emotional intelligence from the Graduate Management Admission Council survey (Dattner, 2003). The findings that linked how emotional intelligence relates to the workplace can lead to significant advances in leadership training and development programs, thus effectively selecting potential true leaders (Palmer, Walls, Burgess & Stough,

2001). This also can be applied in human resources practitioners and leadership search firms in the area of selection, leadership development, organizational wellness and performance.

### **Emotional intelligence, demographic factors and cross-cultural findings.**

Emotional intelligence guides intra and interpersonal behavior in all cultures, and gives rise to how and what emotions are appropriate to express in the work environment. In Mann's (2007) study, it was shown that British expected people who are working in service sectors (shop assistants, restaurant servers, and supermarket managers) to show more positive displays than people that they work with. Americans on the other hand, expected more positive displays from the people they work with than the people in service sectors. Between gender, females were reported to display behaviors associated with warm feelings while males, were exhibited more genuine use of feelings verses women.

In a study of the relationship between both male and female managers and their subordinates in non-verbal expression, subordinates were more satisfied with the female managers who were emotionally perceptive (Byron, 2008). However, female managers were not as significantly persuasive as male managers. Female managers who had a combination of feminine and masculine stereotypes experienced higher ratings than having either characteristic alone. Employees that are able to accurately utilize their emotion perception for behavioral responses are consistent with the model of emotional intelligence which states that non-verbal emotion perception provides cues to regulate behavior (Salovey and Mayer, 1990).



## **Conflict Management Styles**

### **History of conflict.**

Conflict can be defined as a struggle between one, two or more parties with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values and goals. Conflict can lead to productive and non-productive results, thus wherever a conflict may fall on this continuum, it will always affect organizational life. According to Rahim (1986), conflict is defined as an “interactive state manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or difference within or between social entities” (p. 13).

Individuals respond to conflict based on the cognitive patterns and affective variables that are associated with a conflict situation (Pruitt & Olczak, 1995; Sorenson, Morse & Savage, 1999). These two factors are heavily dependent on the individuals’ personal interests, values and intellectual properties (Rubin, Pruitt & Kim, 1994; Sorenson et al., 1999). Rahim and Bonoma (1979) depicted two primary originating points of organizational conflict which are within a person and between two or more individuals. These two points serve as the foundation for three levels of organizational conflict: intrapersonal, intragroup and intergroup (Rahim, 1986). Below are the four types of conflict in accordance with Rahim’s (1986) definition. This paper deals with intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict.

Studying the causes of conflict can provide insights into the behavioral patterns of individuals that can lead to more effective organizational training. Renwick (1975) noted that the verified causes of intraorganizational conflict are “differences in knowledge, beliefs, or basic values, competition for a position, power or recognition, a need to release tension, drive for autonomy, personal dislike, and differing perceptions or attitudes generated by the structure of the organizations” (as cited in Weider-Hatfield, 1995, p. 688). According to Rahim & Bonoma (1979), the sources of conflict can be classified as personal-cultural and structural. Personal-

cultural conflict occurs as a result of perceived differences between two or more social entities because of the personalities and cultural background of the organizational members.

Organization structure on the other hand, is a “relatively stable arrangement of human and other resources, such as the differentiated systems, rules and procedures, hierarchy of authority, mechanism for integration so that effective attainment of objectives for a social system are facilitated” (p. 1328). The structure of an organization determines the modes in which it operates and performs.

Rahim (1986) summarized all the causes, including tasks, values and goals into six types as shown in Figure 2.

Causes of conflict	Description
Affective Conflict	Incompatibility of feelings and emotions between two social entities (Guetzkow & Gyr, 1954)
Conflict of Interest	Competition for scarce resources between two social entities
Conflict of Values	Disagreement in values or ideologies on certain issues between two social entities
Cognitive Conflict	Incongruent processes or perceptions drawn from the same information between two social entities
Goal Conflict	Inconsistent preferred outcome or an end-state of two social entities on certain issues
Substantive Conflict	Discrepancy on task or content issues between

	members of a group
--	--------------------

Figure 2: Summary causes of conflict

### **Five domains of conflict management styles.**

Conflict management skills are important if individuals are to function effectively at any level within an organization. In the earliest research, Follet (1940) identified five main ways of dealing with conflict: domination, compromise, integration, avoidance and suppression. Later on, Blake and Mouton (1964) presented a grid for classifying the modes of handling interpersonal conflicts that are associated with the attitudes of managers into five types: forcing, withdrawal, smoothing, compromise and confrontation.

Rahim and Bonoma (1979) differentiated the styles of handling interpersonal conflict along two basic dimensions. The first dimension pertains to the degree to which an individual attempts to satisfy his or her own concern, while the second dimension pertains to the attempt to satisfy the concern of others. Combining these two dimensions results in five styles of handling interpersonal conflicts: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising, as shown in Appendix B.

Information of the styles of handling interpersonal conflict is described as

- *Integrating*: High concern for self and other. Involves openness, exchange of information, and examination of differences to reach an effective solution acceptable to both parties.
- *Obliging*: Low concern for self and high concern for others. Associated with attempting to play down the differences and emphasizing commonalities to satisfy the concerns of the other party.

- *Compromising*: Intermediate in concern for self and others. Involves give-and-take whereby both parties give up something to make a mutually acceptable decision.
- *Avoiding*: Low concern for self and others. Is identified with withdrawal, buck-passing, or side-stepping solutions.
- *Dominating*: High concern for self and low concern for others. Is identified with win-lose orientation or with forcing behaviours to win one's position.

Conflict management can lead to desired organizational outcomes such as fairness, satisfaction, effectiveness, and efficiency (Jameson, 1999). Gross and Guerro (2000) rated the integrating style as the most effective while the avoiding style was least effective. Graham (1998) supported that integration will always be greater than compromise in managing disputes. The dominating style provokes conflicts in organization, while integrating, accommodating, and obliging lessen conflicts and prove to be effective (Janssen, & van de Vliet, 1996). Integrating coupled with the compromising or dominating style was rated as the most effective while avoiding was rated as the least effective (Munduate et al., 1999).

An organization that encourages participation (integrating) and problem solving (compromising) behavior attains a higher level of performance (Likert & Likert, 1976). Other studies reported positive results of the integrating style of handling conflict, such as high benefits for the parties, better and greater satisfaction of the partner (Korbanik, Baril, & Watson, 1993; Tutzauer & Roloff, 1998; Wall & Galanes, 1986) and higher performance for teams that adopt this style in comparison to teams that use less integrative styles (Vigil-King, 2000). Dominating and avoiding are two styles that can lead to disastrous financial results and personal loss if they are driven by less ethical motives (Rahim, Buntzman & White, 1999).

### **Effects of conflicts.**

Psychologists have studied the consequences of conflict in organizations extensively. The consequences of conflict that will be discussed revolve around three levels of conflicts for this research alone: intrapersonal, interpersonal and intragroup conflicts.

Role conflict occurs in an intrapersonal level when an individual cannot fulfill simultaneously two or more roles consistently and different from the expectations (Getzels & Guba, 1952). According to Rahim (1986), there are four types of role conflict: intrasender conflict, intersender conflict, interrole conflict and intrarole (person-role) conflict. Role conflict can lead to another form of conflict called *role overload* that is common in organizations, and makes individuals prioritize roles that they consider more crucial than the others.

Individuals that are using confrontation (integrating style) in comparison to forcing (dominating style) and withdrawing (avoiding) in dealing with interpersonal conflict are using effective conflict resolution (Burke, 1970). Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) supported the notion by indicating that successful organizations use integrating styles when dealing with interpersonal conflicts.

Several studies between intragroup conflict and individual and organizational outcomes reported that groups composed of members with different conflict and opinions produced superior solutions (Hoffman & Maier, 1961), are more productive (Pelz & Andrew, 1976), and nurture both quality and quantity of team performances (Julian & Perry, 1967). However, in some studies, there were negative relationships between intragroup conflict and organizational effectiveness (Rahim, 1983a), between intragroup conflict and organizational climate (Likert, 1976) and between intragroup conflict and job satisfaction (Dewar & Werbel, 1979). Because of

the mixed findings, it is showed that such conflict resolution is still required to imply reduction or elimination of conflict.

**The assessment of conflict management styles and leadership in the workplace.**

An awareness of the amount of conflict at various levels of an organization is crucial in comprehending organizational conflict management (Rahim, 1986). Examining this conflict management can lead to the maximization of organizational effectiveness. Weider-Hatfield and Hatfield (1995) studied a relationship between conflict management styles, levels of conflict, two general reactions to work (job satisfaction and perception of equity), and four types of individual outcomes (system outcomes, job outcomes, performance outcomes, and interpersonal outcomes) among supervisors and subordinates in the United States. Two analyses were conducted in this study and it was shown that there was a strong relationship between integrating styles and the six organizational outcomes. In addition, high-integrating subordinates experienced less intrapersonal, intragroup and intergroup conflicts than low-dominating subordinates.

Motivation is one of the factors that lead to leadership effectiveness. Barbuto and Xu (2006) investigated the relationship between sources of motivation and conflict management styles of leaders. Data was collected from leaders that worked in a variety of organizations in the United States. Results showed that the obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising conflict management styles were related to one or more of the motivation sources. Only the integrating style showed no significant relationship with the conflict management styles of leaders.

Besides motivation, power also plays a role in determining the effectiveness of leadership and conflict management styles. Understanding power has significant implications for understanding conflict such as training in conflict resolution and how supervisors should reflect

and be aware of their conceptions of power and their structural sources of privilege and disadvantages. Investigating supervisors' power bases can affect their subordinates' styles in handling conflict. This investigation can provide information so supervisors can adapt their power base for optimum results.

Rahim, Antonioni and Psenicka (2001) tested the structural equations model of French and Raven's five bases of supervisory power, conflict management styles (problem solving and bargaining), and job performance. In this study, problem solving was associated with more integrating and less avoiding styles, whereas the bargaining style was more associated with dominating and less with obliging styles. Referent power, which is based on subordinates' personal admiration and liking of the supervisor, was shown to have a positive relationship to the subordinates' problem solving style. However, there was a negative relationship between referent power and the bargaining style.

The infusion of morality and conflict management into the workplace and leadership capabilities of organizational venues are certainly important, and not a new phenomenon. A study exploring the relationship between the stages of moral development (pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional) and conflict management styles in a workplace has been conducted by Rahim, Buntzman and White (1999). Pre-conventional is a stage where morality of an action is judged by its direct consequences, e.g., right/wrong and good/bad. Conventional is a stage where individuals attempt in meeting society's norms and conformity, while post-conventional is a stage where individuals has their own abstracts about right or wrong.

General results showed that the highest stage of moral development is associated with the use of the integrating style, followed by the compromising style for the medium stage, and dominating and avoiding for the lowest stage. The employees who are post-conventional used

more integrating with less dominating and avoiding styles than the employees who are conventional. Conventional employees functioning at the medium stage of thinking used more integrating with less dominating and avoiding than pre-conventional employees. Interestingly, the conventional employees also reported using more compromising styles than post-conventional employees, who are the people that are functioning at the highest stage. However, post-conventional employees used more compromising styles than pre-conventional employees. Across these three stages of development, there were no significant differences in the obliging style.

#### **Conflict management styles and demographic factors.**

In a study examining the relationship between conflict management styles, gender role, and organizational status, Brewer, Mitchell and Weber (2002) found that androgynous employees were highest on adopting integrating styles in handling conflict. Masculine employees were highest on dominating styles while feminine employees were highest on the avoiding styles. For organizational status, employees were highest on the integrating style while lower status individuals were highest on the avoiding and obliging styles. This study is conducted in three organizations using Rahim Conflict Inventory –II and the Bem Sex Role Inventory.

#### **Conflict management styles and cross-cultural findings.**

The problem of cultural differences is even more endemic when organizations from the West have to collaborate with Eastern organizations in joint ventures. According to Morris et al. (1998), Chinese supervisors rely more on the avoiding style in handling conflicts while United States' (US) supervisors rely more on the competing style (dominating). The study was conducted on highly ranked Master of Business Administration students (MBA) in US and China



to measure the cultural differences affecting conflict management styles between US and China. This study was also done in Philippines and India so that behaviors of supervisors in Asian cultures can be thoroughly observed. The Chinese supervisors foster the avoiding style of conflict management because of their relatively high value of conformity. The US culture of placing high value of individual achievement makes them use competing versus any other style of handling conflict.

Most of the organizations opt for group collaboration due to the increasing challenges of a global market. Group decision support system (GDSS) is a combination of communication, computer and decision support technology to support meetings and group works across the globe. Samarah, Paul, Mykytyn and Seetharaman (2002) in their study on the collaborative conflict management style and cultural diversity in DGSS environment, found that the collaborative conflict management style applies a positive impact on the degree of agreement among group members as well as on the members' perceived decision quality. They also found that integration of a heterogeneous team results in the improvement of group agreement.

Elsayed -Ekhoully and Buda (1996) using Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II), which was the same instrument used in the present research, conducted a study to identify the impact of culture on styles of conflict management styles. The sample was executives from two populations in Arab Middle Eastern countries, and United States (US). Results indicate that Arab Middle Eastern executives used more of the avoiding and integrating styles in comparison with the US executives. The dominating, obliging, and compromising styles were being practiced by US executives in handling conflict with their supervisors. They explained this difference by the distinct culture both regions have. Arab Middle Easterners exhibit a high value on privacy and incline to avoid conflict while US executives nurture on individualism dimension.

### **Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Management Styles**

In Rahim's et al. (2002b) study on a model of emotional intelligence and conflict management styles; they used an emotional intelligence definition by Goleman (1999) that has five components at work: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. These components are significantly correlated with each other. From the study, they found that supervisors' self-awareness is positively associated with their self-regulation, empathy, and social skills. Self-regulation is positively associated with empathy and social skills, and empathy and social skills are positively associated with motivation. For conflict management strategy, motivation is positively associated with problem solving strategy and negatively associated with bargaining strategy. Fascinatingly, the same results of subordinates' conflict management strategies occurred in the US and seven other countries: US, Greece, China, Hong Kong, Macau, Bangladesh, South Africa, and Portugal.

In the Yu, Sardesai, Lu and Zhao's (2006) study on the relationship between emotional intelligence itself and conflict management style, they applied the definition of conflict management styles by Rahim (1986). The styles are avoiding, dominating, integrating, obliging, and compromising. This is similar with the Rahim et al. (2002b) definition that the problem solving strategy dimension they mentioned in their article was integrating style *minus* avoiding, while bargaining dimension is dominating style *minus* obliging. The findings of the Yu, Sardesai, Lu and Zhao's (2006) study showed that intelligence on supervisors was positively associated with subordinates' use of integrating, compromising, and dominating styles of handling conflict with the supervisors, while integrating styles can be most predicted by emotional intelligence.

In other articles or studies, research is done to determine why compromising or collaborating is the most favorable style of conflict management used to date (Kabanoff, 1989, Srinivasan & George, 2005). Compromising is generally perceived positively as both moderately cooperative and highly assertive (Kabanoff, 1989) although from Kabanoff's (1989) reviews, it is shown that compromising is perceived as highly cooperative, and moderately assertive. From his own findings, competitive people see compromising as a weakness and they are less likely to compromise in both hypothetical and actual conflict situations. It can be inferred that compromising is not an immediate style of handling conflict for competitive people. These revelations seem to be the major differences between this group and the people who are the "cooperators".

Research findings from Srinivasan and George (2005) showed that management students who have work experience exhibit higher emotional intelligence than their counterparts. Between males and females, males of the management schools seem to possess more emotional

intelligence than females. This is an interesting fact because there was a mix-result on gender differences in emotional intelligence. Although most research findings showed no gender differences, recent research showed otherwise. Collaborating is usually said as being the ideal style, but Srinivasan and George's (2005) finding showed that people who were emotionally intelligent seemed to influence all types of conflict management except "avoidance". Two of the conflict management styles that were most favored by the management students were "competition" and "collaboration".

### **Chapter III: Methodology**

This study's purpose was to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management styles in Division of Human Resources at XYZ University. From this study, the researcher hoped to identify both the relationship of the two variables, and how this study would be able to provide recommendations from the findings to improve the performance of the organization. This section will outline multiple aspects of the research conducted, including: research objectives, planning, instrumentation utilized, participant/subjects, data collection and analysis procedures, and limitations of the study. The following research objectives and expectations were established by the researcher and agreed upon by all parties involved.

#### **Research Objectives**

- The researcher will abide by the approved project timeline to the best of her ability.
- The researcher will provide any information necessary for the replication of the project to XYZ University.
- The researcher will provide a clear and accurate report, containing no bias, to XYZ University; this report will be unique from the research paper.
- The researcher will not be conducting tasks other than those necessary for the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management styles.
- The researcher will develop a research paper fitting of University of Wisconsin-Stout graduate school/committee requirements.

## **Planning**

The researcher started the study by discussing the objectives of the study and developing a step-by-step plan with a thesis supervisor and the director of the Human Resources Division at XYZ University. The plan consisted of laying out a detailed timeline, along with the necessary tasks to successfully complete the study. This included a week in Malaysia where the researcher was scheduled to collect the data from the university. Before starting any research activities, a negotiation was held between the current researcher and the researcher who established the instruments that would be used. Instruments that were used in this study were chosen due to its extensive usage in research.

## **Subject Selection and Description**

The target subjects were XYZ University employees of different genders, ages, ethnicities and socioeconomic statuses in Malaysia. Subjects did work for the university within Human Resources positions. The research processes complied with the University's policies and institutional assurance with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regarding the use of human subjects.

## **Instrumentation**

The questions in the survey were translated into Malay and translated back into English to achieve equivalence. Fifty copies of surveys had been delivered to the Human Resources Division, but only forty-two responses could be used. The data were collected through the following three sets of surveys

- Emotional Quotient Index (EQI) (Self-rating) Survey, Rahim et al. (2002a)

This is a self-assessment survey for both the subordinates and supervisors to evaluate their own level of emotional intelligence. The survey used Goleman's five domains of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. There are 30 items in the survey with a 7-point Likert scale (7 = Strongly Agree, 1 = Strongly Disagree). Questions included on the survey

- I keep my distressing emotions in check.
- I understand the link between employees' emotions and what they do.
- Emotional Quotient Index (EQI) (Observer) Survey, Rahim et al. (2002a)

This survey was developed to measure supervisors' emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) at work, specifically their EQ ability as opposed to their personality. This survey used Goleman's five domains of emotional intelligence, containing 30 items using a 7-point Likert scale (7 = Strongly Agree, 1 = Strongly Disagree). The questions on the EQI (Observer) are the same as the questions on the EQI (Self-rating) but with some replacement from "I" to "my supervisor," for example:

- My supervisor keeps his/her distressing emotions in check.
- My supervisor understands the link between employees' emotions and what they do.
- Rahim Organisational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) Form A Survey, Rahim (1983b)

For conflict management styles, the 28-item ROCI-II survey was used to assess the five styles of handling conflicts with supervisors: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising. This survey used a 5-point Likert scale for ranking each item with a higher score, indicating greater EQ of a supervisor or greater use of that style in managing conflicts with one's supervisor (5 = Strongly Agree, 1 = Strongly Disagree).

Below are examples of the questions

- I exchange accurate information with my supervisor to solve a problem together.
- I try to investigate an issue with my supervisor to find a solution acceptable to us.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

All three surveys were printed into a booklet for easy use for the participants. Along with the surveys, the participants received a consent form as the confirmation that they willingly joined the study (refer to Appendix C for Consent Form). There was also a brief speech given by the researcher to highlight the importance of reading the consent form and instruction on how to take the survey, along with the survey itself.

Before the end of the study, a debriefing form was given to each participant in order to provide any necessary information that could complete their understanding of the nature of the study, which is shown in Appendix D. The researcher provided two days for the employees to fill out the surveys before collecting the data.



## Data Analysis

Raw data from those participants were entered into an Excel spreadsheet for referencing purposes. Then, the data were analyzed with descriptive statistics: distribution, central tendency and dispersion to obtain quantitative descriptions in a manageable form. With the clean data, multiple regression analysis was used to find whether there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management styles among the Human Resources Division's employees at XYZ University.

The regression analysis was used to test the following hypotheses

H<sub>1</sub> = The supervisor's emotional intelligence ratings when assessing themselves will be similar to the ratings given by their subordinates.

H<sub>2</sub> = Emotional intelligence of supervisors will be positively associated with subordinates' use of the integrating style of handling conflict with the supervisors.

H<sub>3</sub> = Emotional intelligence of supervisors will be negatively associated with subordinates' use of the obliging style of handling conflict with the supervisors.

H<sub>4</sub> = Emotional intelligence of supervisors will be negatively associated with subordinates' use of the dominating style of handling conflict with the supervisors.

H<sub>5</sub> = Emotional intelligence of supervisors will be negatively associated with subordinates' use of the avoiding style of handling conflict with the supervisors.

H<sub>6</sub> = Emotional intelligence of supervisors will be positively associated with subordinates' use of the compromising style of handling conflict with the supervisors.

**Summary**

This study utilized survey to identify the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management styles at XYZ University. Forty-two copies of surveys have been returned to the researcher and they were used to answer the hypotheses above. Participants' personal information and the procedures for data collection and data analysis insured both confidentiality and accuracy. The data were recorded in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and were later analyzed using SPSS. Two statistical techniques were used in this study: correlation and multiple regressions. Descriptive statistics were also used in order to get the idea of the sample and to ensure that they meet the assumption of the inferential statistics.

## Chapter IV: Results

In this chapter, results from the Emotional Quotient Index (EQI), Self-rating and Observer, and Rahim Organisational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) Form A surveys were analyzed to answer the questions stated above. The following section is broken up into two sections: descriptive statistic summary and survey analysis. Each hypothesis will be explicitly discussed after the analysis of the results using multiple regressions.

### Description of the sample

Altogether, there were 15 males and 27 females who agreed to fill out the surveys. The participants' ages were between 19 and 46 years old where 16.7% of them were 23 years of age, while 14.3% were between 24 and 27 years of age ( $M = 27.29$ ,  $SD = 6.205$ ).

Fourty-five point two percent of the total 42 participants had the highest qualification of diploma, while the rest of the participants obtained an undergraduate degree and 21.4% graduated with a high school degree. The majority of the diploma holders were males, while there was an equivalence of degree among the female subjects (please refer to Appendix A).

A total of 38.1% of people had been working with the current supervisor for about 12 months, and 21.4% of people had been working for about 24 months with the current supervisors ( $M = 25.94$ ,  $SD = 27.43$ ).

## Survey Analysis

Table 1

### *Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between Variables*

Var	Means	s.d.	SA	SR	MO	EM	SS	IN	OB	DO	AV	CO
SA	5.86	0.85										
SR	5.72	0.99	.867**									
MO	5.93	0.86	.831**	.753**								
EM	6.05	0.74	.866**	.728**	.842**							
SS	5.92	0.87	.937**	.835**	.816**	.773**						
IN	4.33	0.48	.452**	.434**	.445**	.517**	.407**					
OB	3.67	0.65	0.144	0.148	0.008	0.127	0.072	.335*				
DO	2.58	0.84	-0.165	-0.43	-0.234	-.323*	-0.226	0.062	.470**			
AV	3.41	0.67	0.097	0.012	-0.099	0.073	0.04	0.196	.680**	.316*		
CO	3.78	0.64	.384*	.319*	0.182	.320*	0.254	.566**	.381*	0.224	.343*	

Notes:  $N = 42$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ , SA = self-awareness, SR = self-regulation, MO = motivation, EM = empathy, SS = social Skills, IN = integrating, OB = obliging, DO = dominating, AV = avoiding, CO = compromising.

From this table, supervisors in the Human Resources Division at XYZ University scored the highest on empathy ( $M = 6.05$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ) and motivation ( $M = 5.93$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ) domains, while they scored the lowest on self-regulation domain ( $M = 5.72$ ,  $SD = 5.72$ ). In the study, subordinates used more integrating ( $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 0.48$ ) and compromising ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ) styles when dealing with conflicts with their supervisors. On the other hand, the dominating ( $M = 2.58$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ) style of handling conflict was used the least by the subordinates when handling conflicts with supervisors.

Additional findings from correlation analysis showed that there were strong positive correlations between the integrating conflict management style ( $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 0.48$ ) and all five domains of emotional intelligence: self-awareness,  $r = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; self-regulation,  $r = 0.43$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; motivation,  $r = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; empathy,  $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; and social skills of supervisors,  $r = 0.41$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . There was a negative correlation between dominating styles of

handling conflict and empathy ( $M = 2.58, SD = 0.84$ ),  $r = -.32, p < 0.05$ . Self-awareness, self-regulation and empathy domains of supervisors were positively correlated with the compromising style of handling conflict, ( $M = 3.78, SD = 0.64$ ),  $r = 0.38, p < 0.05$ ;  $r = 0.32, p < 0.05$ ;  $r = 0.32, p < 0.05$ . There were other significant correlations between the domains of conflict management styles and between the domains of supervisors' emotional intelligence, as shown in Table 1. However, they were not the findings that the researcher intended to study, thus they will not be discussed.

$H_1$  = The supervisor's emotional intelligence ratings when assessing themselves will be similar to the ratings given by their subordinates.

Table 2

*Means of Supervisors' Emotional Intelligence Ratings of Themselves and by their Subordinates*

Supervisors	SA	SR	MO	EM	SS	SUM
A	6	6.5	6.5	7	7	33
Subordinates of A	6.17	6.27	6.2	6.17	6.33	31.14
B	5	5.17	5.67	5.67	5.33	26.84
Subordinates of B	5.5	6.33	5.33	5.83	4.67	27.66
C	5.83	4.83	5.5	6.17	6	28.33
Subordinates of C	6.67	6	6.5	6.67	6.67	32.51
D	6.17	4.83	6.17	5.67	6	28.84
Subordinates of D	6.92	7	7	6.92	7	34.84
E	6	4.17	5.5	6	5.83	27.5
Subordinates of E	5.98	5.82	6.17	5.46	6.08	29.51
F	6.5	5	6.17	5.67	6.17	29.51
Subordinates of F	5.05	4.75	5.21	5.38	5.34	25.73

Notes: SA = self-awareness, SR = self-regulation, MO = motivation, EM = empathy, SS = social skills, IN = integrating, OB = obliging, DO = dominating, AV = avoiding, CO = compromising

From the feedback received, only data from six out of fifteen supervisors in the Human Resources Division was used for this analysis. The ratings of the subordinates under these supervisors were averaged. The means then were compared with the emotional intelligence ratings' of supervisors given by the supervisors themselves. For the formula,  $M_{SV}$  refers to the mean of supervisors, while  $M_{SB}$  refers to the mean of subordinates.

Table 2 shows the means of those six supervisors' emotional intelligence ratings of themselves and the means of the supervisors' emotional intelligence rated by their subordinates. Results from the table showed that supervisor C has assessed his highest and lowest emotional intelligence domain similar to the ratings given by his subordinates, with empathy being the highest ( $M_{SV} = 6.17, M_{SB} = 6.67$ ) and self-regulation as the lowest ( $M_{SV} = 4.83, M_{SB} = 6.00$ ). This is in contrast to findings from supervisor D where he assessed his self-awareness as the highest, yet his subordinates assessed this domain as the lowest he possessed ( $M_{SV} = 6.17, M_{SB} = 6.92$ ). Vice versa, supervisor D assessed his self-regulation as the lowest but this was assessed by his subordinates as the highest ( $M_{SV} = 4.83, M_{SB} = 7.00$ ). Interestingly the two parties found consensus in rating supervisor D's motivation as the highest ( $M_{SV} = 6.17, M_{SB} = 7.00$ ).

Supervisor A rated his self-awareness as the lowest domain in emotional intelligence, which was agreed upon by his subordinates ( $M_{SV} = 6.00, M_{SB} = 6.17$ ). However, supervisor A claimed he had the highest empathy, but this was rated as the lowest domain by his subordinates ( $M_{SV} = 7.00, M_{SB} = 6.17$ ). Supervisor B rated his motivation ( $M_{SV} = 5.67, M_{SB} = 5.33$ ) and empathy ( $M_{SV} = 5.67, M_{SB} = 5.83$ ) as the highest domains of emotional intelligence, but his subordinates rated his self-regulation ( $M_{SV} = 5.17, M_{SB} = 6.33$ ) as the highest one.

Similar with subordinates of supervisor E, where they rated their supervisor has the lowest of empathy, but supervisor E rated his empathy as the highest ( $M_{SV} = 6.00, M_{SB} = 5.46$ ).

Supervisor E also thought himself possessing the highest of self-awareness ( $M_{SV} = 6.00$ ,  $M_{SB} = 5.98$ ), but his subordinates thought he had the highest of motivation ( $M_{SV} = 5.50$ ,  $M_{SB} = 6.17$ ). Both supervisor F and his subordinates thought he had the lowest of self-regulation ( $M_{SV} = 5.00$ ,  $M_{SB} = 4.75$ ), yet supervisor F rated his self-awareness as the highest ( $M_{SV} = 6.05$ ,  $M_{SB} = 5.05$ ). However, his subordinates rated his empathy as the highest ( $M_{SV} = 5.67$ ,  $M_{SB} = 5.38$ ).

Table 3

*Correlations of Supervisors' Emotional Intelligence Ratings of Themselves and by their Subordinates*

Variable	SA_ Observer	SR_ Observer	MO_ Observer	EM_ Observer	SS_ Observer	Sum of EI Self Rating	Sum of EI Observer
SA Self Rating	0.05	-0.41	0.23	-0.04	0.49	0.46	0.09
SR Self Rating	-0.04	0.15	-0.09	0.15	-0.03	.84*	0.03
MO Self Rating	-0.04	0.06	0.04	0.12	0.16	.85*	0.08
EM Self Rating	0.25	0.12	0.24	0.14	0.34	0.8	0.25
SS Self Rating	0.17	-0.07	0.25	0.14	0.46	.98**	0.22
Sum of EI_ Self Rating	0.01	-0.02	0.15	0.14	0.33		0.16
Sum of EI_ Observer	.1**	0.8	.98**	.91*	.89*	0.16	

Notes: N = 42; \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ , EI = emotional intelligence, SA = self-awareness, SR = self-regulation, MO = motivation, EM = empathy, SS = social Skills, IN = integrating, OB = obliging, DO = dominating, AV = avoiding, CO = compromising.

From the correlation analysis, there was no significant correlation between supervisors' emotional intelligence ratings of themselves ( $M = 29.00$ ,  $SD = 2.17$ ) and the ratings given by

their subordinates ( $M = 30.23, SD = 3.31$ );  $r = 0.16, p > 0.05$ . Thus,  $H_1$  is rejected. There were several significant correlations between supervisors' domains of emotional intelligence ratings of themselves and the ratings given by subordinates, as shown in Table 3, but they were merely additional findings.

$H_2$  = Emotional intelligence of supervisors will be positively associated with subordinates' use of the integrating style of handling conflict with the supervisors.

$H_3$  = Emotional intelligence of supervisors will be negatively associated with subordinates' use of the obliging style of handling conflict with the supervisors.

$H_4$  = Emotional intelligence of supervisors will be negatively associated with subordinates' use of the dominating style of handling conflict with the supervisors.

$H_5$  = Emotional intelligence of supervisors will be negatively associated with subordinates' use of the avoiding style of handling conflict with the supervisors.

$H_6$  = Emotional intelligence of supervisors will be positively associated with subordinates' use of the integrating style of handling conflict with the supervisors.

Table 4

*Multiple Regression Analysis of Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Management Styles*

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables				
	Integrating	Obliging	Dominating	Avoiding	Compromising
Self-awareness	-0.20	0.52	1.09	0.71	1.37*
Self-regulation	0.22	0.18	0.36	-0.18	0.03
Motivation	-0.01	-0.40	0.11	-0.64	-0.36
Empathy	0.53	0.17	-0.89*	0.23	0.01



Social Skills	0.01	-0.36	-0.94*	-0.14	-0.76
R2	0.28	0.09	0.28	0.14	2.78
Emotional Intelligence	12.23**	0.47	1.76	0.02	4.34*

Notes: Standardised regression coefficients are shown  $N = 42$ ;  $df = 5$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to see if emotional intelligence and the domains of supervisors could predict subordinates' styles of handling conflicts with their supervisors. Results showed that emotional intelligence of supervisors significantly predicted subordinates integrating styles of handling conflicts with the supervisors;  $F(1, 40) = 12.23, p < 0.01$ . Empathy was one of the emotional intelligence domains that was able to predict negatively the dominating style;  $t(36) = -2.62, p < 0.05$ . Another domain that could predict subordinates' dominating style of negatively handling conflict with their supervisors is social skills;  $t(36) = -2.12, p < 0.05$ . There was also a borderline positive relationship between supervisors' self-awareness and dominating style;  $t(36) = 1.85, p > 0.05$ .

The results also revealed a negative borderline relationship between motivation and subordinates' avoiding style of handling conflicts with their supervisors;  $t(36) = -1.93, p > 0.05$ . Emotional intelligence was also able to predict a compromising style of handling conflicts with a positive significant relationship;  $F(1, 40) = 2.77, p < 0.05$ . The compromising style also could be predicted by supervisors' self-awareness;  $t(36) = 2.33, p < 0.05$ . Thus, from these findings,  $H_2$  and  $H_6$  are accepted while  $H_3, H_4$  and  $H_5$  are not supported.

Table 5

*Multiple Regression Analysis of Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Management Styles between the Genders*

	Male					Female				
	IN	OB	DO	AV	CO	IN	OB	DO	AV	CO
Emotional Intelligence	8.07**	0.09	0.1	2.9	1.25	7.13**	1.39	2.37	0.21	4.22

Notes: N = 42; \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ , EI = emotional intelligence, SA = self-awareness, SR = self-regulation, MO = motivation, EM = empathy, SS = social Skills, IN = integrating, OB = obliging, DO = dominating, AV = avoiding, CO = compromising.

From previous analyses, integrating and compromising styles of conflict management could be predicted by emotional intelligence of supervisors. Separate multiple regression analysis was conducted and it was found that emotional intelligence of supervisors could predict male subordinates' integrating styles of handling conflicts with  $F(1, 13) = 8.07, p < 0.01$ . Emotional intelligence of supervisors could also predict integrating styles of handling conflicts on female subordinates,  $F(1, 25) = 7.13, p < 0.01$ . However, there was no significant relationship between emotional intelligence of supervisors and the sex of subordinates for compromising styles.

## Chapter V: Discussion

This study aimed to examine the relationships between the five domains of emotional intelligence and the five styles used by subordinates when handling conflicts with their supervisors.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

From descriptive statistics, it is shown that the subordinates in the Human Resources Division at XYZ University used more integrating and compromising styles when handling conflicts with supervisors. The dominating style was the least used by the subordinates. For emotional intelligence, all fifteen supervisors had the highest empathy and motivation on average, as rated by their subordinates. In contrast, self-regulation was the lowest domain that they possessed. This was indicated by calculating the means of the five domains of emotional intelligence and conflict management styles.

These results were supported with the correlation test that the researcher conducted to look at the relationship between variables. Integrating, and compromising styles of handling conflict had significant relationships with emotional intelligence of supervisors. Further analysis was conducted with multiple regressions to investigate if emotional intelligence and its domains played a significant role in predicting the conflict management styles of their subordinates when handling conflicts.

### **Inferential Statistics**

#### **Hypothesis 1.**

For hypothesis 1, the researcher investigated if the emotional intelligence ratings of the supervisors as assessed by themselves were similar to the ones assessed by their subordinates. Using descriptive statistics to get the means, only one out of six supervisors had given

themselves an emotional intelligence rating that was agreed upon by their subordinates. Supervisor C's highest and lowest emotional intelligence domains ratings, as assessed by himself were similar to the ratings given by his subordinates. Both parties assessed supervisor C's empathy as the highest and self-regulation as the lowest. On the other hand, both supervisor D and his subordinates disagreed on supervisor D's emotional intelligence ratings, where supervisor D acknowledged his self-awareness as the highest and self-regulation as the lowest. In contrast, his subordinates assessed his self-awareness as the lowest and self-regulation as the highest. Similar with subordinates of supervisor E, they assessed their supervisor's empathy as the lowest domain, meanwhile supervisor E claimed empathy as the highest domain he possessed.

These differences could be explained by the effectiveness of self-reported emotional intelligence. According to Conte (2005), self-reported emotional intelligence was only able to assess personality characteristics rather than assessing intelligence. Therefore, supervisors' emotional intelligence ratings may have had some misleading information about their emotional intelligence, thus leading to different results than what the researcher intended to find.

A correlation test was also conducted to find if there was a significant relationship between the supervisors' emotional intelligence ratings assessed by themselves and the ones that were assessed by their subordinates. Findings showed that there was no significant relationship between the two variables, and therefore,  $H_1$  is rejected.

### **Hypothesis 2 – hypothesis 6.**

As expected from the initial tests, emotional intelligence of supervisors in XYZ University was correlated with the subordinates' integrating, dominating and compromising styles of handling conflicts with their supervisors. This was supported with findings from Yu,

Sardesai , Lu and Zhao (2006) that also showed significant relationships between emotional intelligence and subordinates' use of integrating and compromising styles. Thus, H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>6</sub> are accepted.

For the integrating style, there was a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and the subordinates' integrating style. This explained that the higher emotional intelligence their supervisors had, the more the integrating styles were used by the subordinates. This result was supported by Weider-Hatfield and Hatfield (1995) findings that subordinates that used more integrating styles experienced less intrapersonal, intragroup and intergroup conflicts than low integrating subordinates. Barbuto and Yu (2006) also discovered that integrating was positively related to intrinsic process motivation, and motivation was one of the five domains of emotional intelligence. Motivation of supervisors was also positively associated with a problem solving strategy, which is more of integrating and less avoiding style, used by subordinates (Rahim et al., 2002b). These findings were taken from seven countries that were included in their study: US, Greece, China, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Macau, South Africa and Portugal.

There were two out of five emotional intelligence domains that were able to predict subordinates' dominating style of handling conflicts with their supervisors. The first domain was empathy, which showed a significant negative relationship; the higher empathy the supervisors had, the lesser use of dominating styles by their subordinates. The other significant domain was social skills. Similar to empathy, the relationship between social skills and dominating style was also negative, indicating that the higher the supervisors' social skills, the lesser use of the dominating style of handling conflicts by their subordinates. To support this result, Schutte et al. (2001) discovered that people who had higher emotional intelligence had higher social skills. With the ability of interacting and communicating with other people effectively, subordinates

would feel accepted and comfortable in reaching a consensus with their supervisors, thus there would be no need for subordinates to be dominating. This possibly could create a huge conflict over their supervisors.

From this multiple regression analysis, there were two borderline relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variables. Supervisors' self-awareness was positively related with subordinates' dominating style of handling conflicts with supervisors. This implied that subordinates used more dominating styles when handling conflicts with their supervisors if their supervisors had higher self-awareness. This was another interesting result that could only be explained with an observation or interview study.

Another borderline relationship was between motivation and avoiding the conflict management style. In contrast between the relationship of self-awareness and dominating styles, this relationship was negative, explaining that higher motivated supervisors had subordinates that used less avoiding styles. This borderline result was also supported by Rahim et al.'s study (2002b) that motivation was positively associated with problem solving strategy (more integrating and less avoiding styles). The avoiding style is normally used by people with relatively high value and culture, for example, employees in China (Morris et al., 1998) and in Saudi Arabia (Elsayed & Buda, 1996). Nowadays, employees in Malaysia are encouraged to speak out their opinions and thoughts in order to produce fruitful and productive decisions, although a large portion still refrain from doing so. Thus, the hypothesis of a negative relationship between emotional intelligence and avoiding styles ( $H_5$ ) is then rejected because no significant result was shown.

Emotional intelligence was also able to predict subordinates' compromising style of handling conflicts in a positive correlation. When supervisors had higher emotional intelligence,

their subordinates used more compromising styles when handling conflicts with them. In Kabanoff's (1989) theoretical review of compromising, he found that compromising conflict management was favorably viewed, especially for less competitive people because they portrayed it as a sign of strength. Rahim et al. (1999) also found from their study that employees in a moderate stage opt more for the compromising style when handling conflicts than the employees in the highest and lowest stages of moral development. From these two literature reviews, it could be assumed that subordinates in the Human Resources Division are coming from a moderate/conventional background and less competitive in reaching a consensus. There was also a positive significant relationship between self-awareness and compromising styles, indicating that the higher self-awareness the supervisors had, the more the compromising style would be used by the subordinates.  $H_6$  is then accepted because of the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and the compromising conflict management style.

Similar with  $H_5$ ,  $H_3$  and  $H_4$  is also rejected because there was no significant relationship between subordinates' dominating and obliging styles of handling conflicts and emotional intelligence of supervisors. Both obliging and dominating styles have their pros and cons in the workplace; it is appropriate when the other party has more power (McShane & vonGlinow, 2005) and it is not when both parties have equal powers. Therefore, the subordinates may adopt these styles when they feel they have to speak up or obey their supervisors, but in the mean time, they realize they have to agree or object over a particular issue if they want to achieve an effective solution.

## Conclusion of Findings

To summarize the results, the researcher highlighted a list of important conclusions based from the statistical analysis throughout the project

- Supervisors in Human Resources Division at XYZ University had an emotional intelligence that was highest in empathy and motivation, but lowest in self-regulation.
- The integrating and compromising conflict management styles were the two most used by the subordinates in handling conflict with their supervisors. The dominating style was the least used by the subordinates.
- One out of six supervisors had the same highest (empathy) and lowest (self-regulation) emotional intelligence as rated by their subordinates. There was no significant correlation between supervisor's emotional intelligence ratings when assessing themselves and being assessed by their subordinates.  $H_1$  is rejected.
- Emotional intelligence of supervisors was positively associated with subordinates' use of the integrating style of handling conflict with the supervisors.  $H_2$  is accepted.
- There was no significant relationship between subordinates' use of the obliging style of handling conflict with the supervisors.  $H_3$  is not supported.
- There was no significant relationship between subordinates' use of the dominating style of handling conflict with the supervisors.  $H_4$  is rejected.
- There was no significant relationship between subordinates' use of the avoiding style of handling conflict with the supervisors.  $H_5$  is not supported.
- Emotional intelligence of supervisors was positively associated with subordinates' use of the integrating style when handling conflict with the supervisors.  $H_6$  is accepted.



**Limitation**

There was one limitation that was observed in this study. Each survey contained a section for subjects to fill out their personal information. They were encouraged to include their names and supervisors' names. Because of the missing information on the five surveys, only six supervisors were identified and could be used. It was believed that the reason subjects failed to fill out this section was because they were concerned that their personal information would be disclose. However, it was stated in the consent form that all information on the survey was only meant for researcher's eyes and thesis' records.

**Recommendations**

Based on the results of the statistics and also the researcher's observations, several suggestions are needed for continuous improvement

- Increase emotional intelligence through team-building, training, activities and social hours between the supervisors and their subordinates.
- Provide effective orientation and on the job training (OJT) for new subordinates or current subordinates in introducing new job routines so there will be no conflict arisen from job tasks.
- Emphasize the importance of emotional intelligence rather than IQ and technical skills alone to be successful leaders and to promote better work performance to both supervisors and subordinates.

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### Appendix A: Demographic Features of Participants

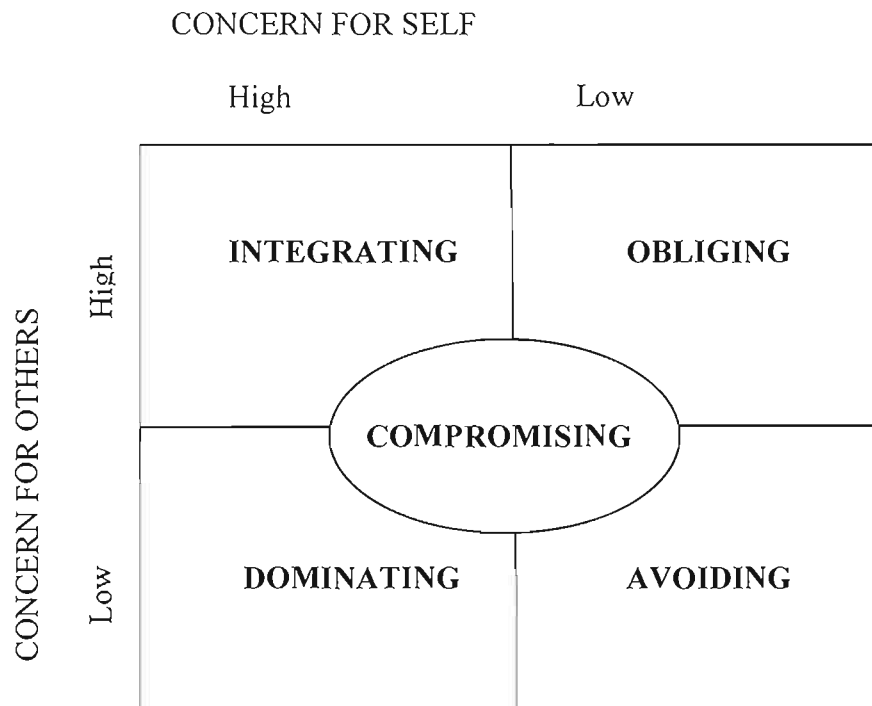
Sex	Age	Working Experience in Years	Working Experience with Current Supervisors in Months	Highest Qualification Attained
Male	28	28	10	High School
Female	25	1	12	Diploma
Female	24	2	24	Diploma
Female	23	2	24	Diploma
Female	32	7	24	Undergrad
Male	27	7	84	High School
Female	46	11	60	High School
Male	30	10	12	High School
Male	19	0.5	6	High School
Female	25	2	24	Undergrad
Female	21	1	12	High School
Female	23	1	12	Undergrad
Female	24	2	24	High School
Female	24	3	24	Diploma
Female	26	0.75	9	Undergrad
Male	25	2	1	Undergrad
Female	23	2	9	Diploma
Female	27	5	24	High School
Female	26	5	9	Diploma
Female	40	12	24	Diploma
Female	27	3	12	Diploma
Female	36	9	96	Diploma
Male	35	15	56	High School
Male	24	4	12	Diploma
Female	23	-	-	Diploma
Male	24	0.15	3	Undergrad
Male	29	6	60	High School
Female	42	7	72	Undergrad
Female	26	2	12	Undergrad
Male	27	6	12	Diploma
Female	27	5	60	Diploma
Female	21	1	12	High School
Female	23	1	12	Diploma

Male	22	2	24	High School
Female	23	1	12	Diploma
Female	21	1	12	Diploma
Male	29	3	12	Diploma
Male	24	1	12	High School
Female	23	1	12	Diploma
Male	42	12	120	High School
Female	27	4	12	Undergrad
Male	33	6	0.5	Diploma

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**Appendix B: A Two-Dimensional Model of Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict by A.**

Rahim, 1986, *Managing Conflict in Organizations*, p. 18.



## Appendix C: Consent Letter to Participate in UW-Stout Approved Research

### **Project Title:**

The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Management Styles

### **Description:**

This research study will examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and the styles of handling conflict with the supervisors. 50 employees in Human Resource Division of Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) will be asked to fill out the research surveys. Three sets of surveys are used in this research: one to measure the emotional intelligence among the supervisors, one is to measure the emotional intelligence among own selves, and the other to assess the five styles of handling conflict with managers. Those surveys that will be used in this research are developed by Rahim (1983 & 2002). The final report will document if there is any significant relationship between the managers' emotional intelligence, and the styles of handling conflicts among themselves and the subordinates.

### **Risks and Benefits:**

Participation in this research poses minimal risk to participants. From the survey questions, participants in this research may not only become aware of the emotional intelligence that they have, but also on the level of emotional intelligence that their supervisors have. By participating in this research, the participants will gain insight into their job performance, and the relationship they have with their managers. This will allow participants to make adjustments if necessary in order to create closer bond with the managers.

### **Time Commitment:**

Both of the surveys will last 12-15 minutes each. Participants will fill out three sets of surveys: Emotional Quotient Index (EQI) (Self-rating) Survey, Emotional Quotient Index (EQI) (Observer) Survey and Rahim Organisational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) Survey. Those surveys will be delivered to each individual participant and they will be asked to send the survey back to the researcher containing their responses in two days.

### **Confidentiality:**

The names of the participants will not be included on any documents; no names will be used in all reports. Such demographic information is used only for researcher better understanding. Any informed consent forms and completed surveys will not be kept with any documents and reports completed with this project. Information will be destroyed upon completion of the research project.

### **Right to Withdraw:**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and is in no way required, by choosing to fill out the *EQ Index (Self rating and Observer)* and *ROCI-II* surveys, you are providing your consent to participate. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. Should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, you may discontinue your participation at that time without incurring adverse consequences.

**IRB Approval:**

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Researcher or Research Advisor.

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**Statement of Consent:**

By completing the following study, you agree to participate in the project entitled: The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Management Styles

*Please keep this form for your records.*

## Appendix D: Debriefing Form

**“This research has been approved by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal regulations Title 45 Part 46.”**

Thank you for participating in this study entitled “Emotional intelligence and conflict management styles”. The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management styles. If you have any clarification questions, please feel free to ask the researcher for assistance. Results of the study will be reported in written report for my own personal thesis. I would just like to remind and reassure you that names will not be used in the report. If you find yourself having any questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact the researcher for further information. The results of this study will be available in May of 2010, and may be attained by emailing Nurul at [abasn@my.uwstout.edu](mailto:abasn@my.uwstout.edu).

Thank you again for participating in this study.

### **Researcher:**

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## **Appendix E: Rahim Organisational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) and Emotional Quotient Index (EQI) (Observer and Self-rating) Impact Survey**

### **Opening Remarks:**

Thank you for taking the time to complete the surveys. There are three sets of surveys for this research:

- a) Rahim Organisational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II)
- b) Emotional Quotient Index (EQI) Observer
- c) Emotional Quotient Index (EQI) Self-rating

The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management styles. These surveys will take approximately 12-15 minutes. You will be required to provide your name and contact information. However, please be assured that your name and contact information will not be used in any documents or reports. The demographic information is used only for researcher better understanding. Kindly read the each question below carefully, and answer them to the best of your knowledge. If you have any clarification questions, please feel free to ask the researcher for assistance.

### **Closing Remarks:**

Thank you again for participating in this study. Results of the study will be reported in written report for my own personal thesis. I would just like to remind and reassure you that names will not be used in the report. If you find yourself having any questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact researcher for further information.

### **Researcher:**

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