

# Analysis of the relationship between the application of negotiation style and conflict management strategies physical education's experts in Iran

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**Abstract.** The conflict is a major behavioral complication of groups. The manager who knows the basic principles of conflict and negotiation will be ready to deal successfully with these inevitable situations. However, this study aimed to explain the role of negotiation in conflict management among physical education experts in Education and Training System of Iran. This study applied analytical- correlation study. The sample consisted of 217 physical education experts. The Robbins' Conflict Management Questionnaire and PEER's Negotiation Styles Questionnaire (1989) were used for collecting the data. The findings showed that there is a significant relationship between negotiation styles and conflict management. However, there was no relationship between negotiation styles and avoidance strategy. The factual style and solution-oriented strategy were selected by participants. It was concluded that the negotiation styles and conflict management strategies should be used considering the situation. It was recommended that the training courses would be hold to increase the skills of physical education managers and empower them.

**Keywords.** Conflict management, negotiation styles, physical education experts.

## Introduction

In recent decades, the sports managers face with some problems in managing their organizations efficiently. The increased community awareness, increased expectations level, increased exercise costs, lack of funds, and cumbersome government regulations have prompted managers to adapt themselves with new situations and improve their managerial skills and abilities for better and more efficient performance (Holowetzi, 2007). The management science professionals have offered various skills for managers including technical, human, conceptual, professional, educational, administrative, design, problem-solving, and diagnostic skills; they also have proposed required abilities

including education, personality, decision-making, attraction of popular support, and effective communication with individuals and institutions (Naderian, 2002; Irannejad, 1991; Kary, 2008). Considering the nature, mission, features, and programs of organizations, the researchers have provided various indicators and criteria for management skills in various organizations; the research continues in this area. The relative importance of these skills is different in organizational hierarchy (Naderian & Husseini, 2011). The negotiation skill is one of the management skills in Mintzberg theory. The negotiation is a process in which two or more people, despite having different decisions, try to reach an agreement (Morhed, 2005). On the other hand, Luik (2003) states that negotiation is a daily public activities Most people to influence others and achieve personal goals of its use.

According to authors of management and organizational behavior, the negotiating styles are one of the effective and efficient ways to control conflict. When the involved parties insist on getting their share, the negotiation is the most effective response to conflict (Rahimi, 2012). The negotiation is one of the communication events. We live in communication world and lack of communication skills may be a barrier to success and progress in various fields (Stoner, 2004).

Therefore, the negotiation and systematic exchange of thoughts and feelings are proper ways to achieve understanding and agreement (Moghimi, 2001). Special skills and expertise are required to solve the problems in organization. If the manager will be weak in negotiation, there will be irregularities in organization. Since organizations are increasingly collaborative, it is necessary that the managers will be familiar with negotiation concepts

(Fisher, 1991). Since the collaborative management of organizations increases, the use of negotiation techniques is the most important tool for communication and managing ever-increasing and complex conflicts (Rezaeian, 2008). There are four major negotiation styles: intuitive, normative, analytic, and factual (Rahnavard, 2006).

**Factual style:** People who follow this style show reality in neutral form.

**Intuitive style:** People who follow this style express warm and exciting phrases and focus on problem or situation.

**Normative style:** People who follow this style deal with judgment and recognize, evaluate, reject, and confirm the facts according to their individual values.

**Analytic style:** People who follow this style look for reasons, propose the results, and use them in negotiation (Moghimi, 2001).

The scarcity of needed resources and materials of organizations, competition for getting a greater share of limited resources, competition of personnel to earn more money and archive to key and sensitive positions, different views of various groups about ways of achieving the goals of organization, competition to gain power, disagreement about management methods, employees protest for decisions of managers about their matters, and other factors make the conflict as an inevitable phenomena in organizational life. The reduced and increased conflict will mean reduced productivity of human resources (Badriposhte, 2005). The conflict and disagreement among employees are natural parts of career life in social organizations. The conflict management is one of the most difficult and yet the most important duty of managers which may increase the efficiency and productivity of organizations (Amiri, 2006). The conflict is a factor which challenges the status quo and allows innovation and transformation. The studies on high-level managers show that they spend an average 20% of their time for conflict management. The conflict management is more important than decision-making, leadership, and communication skills (Robbins, 2003).

Mir Masoudi et al. (2014) and Moradi et al. (2013) showed that the preferred negotiation styles of managers in order of importance from most to least was: factual, analytic, normative, and intuitive. Turani et al. (2010) concluded that managers used more the factual, analytic and normative styles considering the conditions. The intuitive negotiation style was used among all nurses in hospitals in Bushehr Province. Using the Friedman test, Rahimi (2012), Panahi (2007), and Hatami (2006) prioritized managers' negotiation styles. The highest rank was assigned to factual style; the factual-oriented people have properties which make them more successful in negotiations. Moghadam (2010) showed that the avoidance, solution-orientation, and control are conflict management strategies which are used in

hospitals in Kerman. Torabi (2006) concluded that the participants used more the avoidance (49.7%), control (44.7%), and solution-oriented (5.7%) strategies. Farahani (2007) indicated that the high and middle level managers of hospitals used avoidance (4.2%), solution-oriented (50%), and control (45.8%) strategies. Dehghani & Hamidi (2010) showed that the solution-oriented strategy (44%) was the most used strategy to deal with conflict. The results also showed that there is a significant relationship between compatibility, solution-oriented and control strategies, conscience and solution-oriented and avoidance strategies, and welcoming experience and control strategy. There was no significant relationship between other components of personality and conflict management strategies. In cross-cultural comparison of negotiation styles, Yu-te (2014) showed that the Brazilian, Russian, Hindi, and Chinese negotiators often prefer to use intuitive, analytic, factual, and normative styles, respectively. Mehri & Moharramzadeh (2012) showed that there is significant difference in compromise and accommodation styles of managers and employees and the mean of compromise and accommodation styles among employees is higher than managers. However, there is no significant difference in competition, cooperation, avoidance styles of managers and employees. The Pearson correlation coefficient test results also showed that there is a significant and positive correlation between perceived conflict, cooperation, avoidance and compromise styles in both groups. However, the relationship between perceived conflict and competition and accommodation styles was not significant. These findings suggest that there is a conflict in Youth and Sports Organization. The role of moderator variables such as cooperation, teamwork, good relationship of leader - follower, responsibility, and etc. should be considered to reduce this conflict. Saatchian (2012) showed that the solution-oriented strategy is most used by coaches to manage the conflicts in sports teams. Shojai (2011) showed that the competition strategy impacts significantly on conflict management and quality of communication between manager and employee. Qaziani (2013) showed that the cooperation and avoidance strategies are the first and second priorities of physical education managers in managing the conflicts in sports organizations. Oredein (2014) showed that there is a significant and positive correlation between negotiation leadership and conflict resolution in universities. Zhang (2007) showed that the avoidance style is the dominant method of conflict management which is used by Chinese managers; however, during the negotiations, the competition style led to more satisfaction.

The lack of familiarity with principles may lead to failures in micro (organizational) and macro (national) levels. For maintaining the interests and improving the effective conflict management and negotiation culture, therefore, there should be proper and quick actions to develop and strengthen these factors. However, this study aims to

determine the relationship between negotiation styles and conflict management strategies among physical education experts in Iran's Education and Training System. If ineligible individuals will be employed in this organization, many problems will be imposed. Therefore, the employment of efficient and effective experts is inevitable for all organizations, including physical education in Education and Training System. According to literature review, it can be said that there is little research on negotiation techniques and styles and its relationship with conflict management strategies of sports managers. It is hoped that the results of this research will be used in future decisions using appropriate negotiation skills and successful conflict management. Given the importance of negotiation skills and conflict management strategies, these research questions are proposed: Whether all managers use the same negotiation styles? Is there relationship between negotiation skill and conflict management styles of managers? What negotiating styles are specifically used by physical education managers? How managers deal with conflicts among employees? Whether the negotiation skills of managers help them in conflict management? Whether the negotiation style variable predicts the variance in conflict management?

## Methods

This was an applied analytic-correlation field study. The negotiation styles (analytic, intuitive, normative, and factual) were independent variables (predictor) and conflict management strategies are dependent variables. The population consisted of all male physical education experts in Iran's Education and Training System (N= 700). The sample size is an estimation of the population in which 248 people were selected by using Kerejeki & Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size for research activities, educational and psychological measurement. The cluster sampling was used to divide the entire country into four zones, including north, south, east and west. Next, the determined share was assumed for the cities of each Province and then samples were calculated by randomly sampling method. Finally, 217 questionnaires were granted for the statistical analysis. Using SPSS 21, the descriptive (Examination of demographic variables) and inferential statistics (Smirnov test= normality of data; Pearson correlation test= relationship between study variables; regression= predicting criterion variable by predictor variable; Friedman test= ranking variables) were used for analyzing the data.

Robbins' Conflict Management Strategies questionnaire was used in this study as research tool. This questionnaire measures five conflict management styles within three (avoidance, control, and solution-oriented) strategies with 30 questions. This is a standard questionnaire. In the study of Heidarinezhad (2011), the validity and reliability of this

questionnaire was confirmed by experts and professors. This study also evaluated and standardization the face validity, content validity, and reliability of this questionnaire.

The organizational negotiation styles questionnaire consists of 24 questions and examines the organizational negotiations in four dimensions: analysis style, normative style, intuitive style, and factual style.

**Table 1**

Reliability of research variables.

	Variable	Reliability (Cronbach)
1	Conflict	0.078
2	Negotiation	0.075

## Results

According Table 2, the highest frequency among respondents is for people 31-40 years old and the lowest frequency is for people above 50 years old. In terms of marital status, 96.3 % were married and 3.7% were single. The most frequency was for people with a BA degree (53.5%) and the lowest frequency was for people with PhD and diploma degree (1.8%). Also in terms of history, 74.7% had under ten years of experience and the lowest percentage was for people with a history of 21- 30 years.

**Table 2**

Demographic data.

Variables	Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	217	100
	Female		
Age	20-30	24	11.1
	31-40	103	47.5
	41-50	78	35.9
	51 over	12	5.5
Marital Status	Single	8	3.7
	Married	209	96.3
History	To 10 Years	162	74.7
	11-20	35	16.1
	21-30	20	9.2
Education Degree	Associate	1.8	4
	Bachelor	53.5	116
	Master	42.5	93
	PhD	1.8	4

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine the normality of data. Using correlation matrix, the correlation between variables were examined.

According to Table 3, there is a significant relationship between negotiation and conflict and control and solution-oriented strategies; this relationship was not seen in avoidance strategy.

According to Table 4, there is no significant relationship between analytic negotiation style and avoidance strategy; however, there is significant relationship between analytic negotiation style and other conflict management strategies.

Table 5 shows the mean of conflict management strategies ranks. According to table, the two degrees of freedom and zero significance of P-Value indicate that the  $H_0$  is rejected.

Therefore, these three strategies have not equal ranks. According to above results, it can be said that the ranks of conflict management strategies are different among different experts. Accordingly, the solution-oriented strategy and avoidance strategy have the highest and lowest scores, respectively.

The table 6 shows the mean of negotiation styles ranks. According to table, the three degrees of freedom and zero significance of P-Value indicate that the  $H_0$  is rejected. Therefore, these four strategies have not equal ranks. According to above results, it can be said that the ranks of negotiation styles are different among different experts. Accordingly, the factual style and analytic style have the highest and lowest scores, respectively.

**Table 3**  
Correlation matrix of study variables.

Variables	Conflict Management	Avoidance	Control	Solution-Oriented
Negotiation	r = 0.321 0.000	r = -0.420 0.542	r = 0.374 0.000	r = 0.391 0.000

**Table 4**  
Correlation matrix of conflict management strategies and negotiation.

Variables	Avoidance	p	Control	P	Solution-Oriented	p
Analytic	0.426	0.726	0.600	0.000	0.366	0.000
Normative	0.365	0.001	0.596	0.000	0.303	0.002
Intuitive	-0.144	0.000	0.477	0.006	0.488	0.000
Factual	0.320	0.007	0.341	0.000	0.366	0.000

**Table 5**  
Rankings mean and frequency distribution of conflict management (n = 217).

No.	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Chi-Square	p
Avoidance	2.73	0.581	1.42	4.08	12.333	0.00
Control	3.40	0.571	1.86	5.00		
Solution-Oriented	3.46	0.419	2.45	4.45		

**Table 6**  
Mean rankings mean frequency distribution of negotiation styles (n = 217).

No.	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Mean Ranking	Chi-Square	P
Analytic	3.57	0.477	2.33	4.67	1.65	9.720	0.00
Normative	3.89	0.516	2.33	4.83	2.58		
Intuitive	3.95	0.521	2.50	5	1.67		
Factual	4.11	0.546	2.50	5	3.10		

**Table 7**  
Results of regression analysis and regression variance analysis of conflict management by negotiation styles.

	Variable	B	SE	$\beta$	t	P
Conflict Management	Constant Value	2.19	0.196	-	11.154	0.000
	Negotiation Style	0.250	0.50	0.321	4.96	0.000

$P \leq 0.000$ ;  $F(1,215) = 24.614$ ;  $R = 0.321$

According to 7, there is a significant relationship between F ratio of linear combination of predictor variable (Negotiation styles) and criterion variable (Conflict management) ( $P \leq 0.000$ ;  $F(1,215) = 24.614$ ). In other words, the predictor variable entered into regression equation has a fundamental role in explaining the variance in conflict management as a criterion variable ( $R = 0.321$ ). In addition, the regression weights ( $\beta$  B) also represent the obtained results. These findings answer the question of predicting conflict management variance by negotiation style.

## Discussion

This study aimed to explain the role of negotiation styles in conflict management among physical education experts in Iran's Education and Training System. The findings showed that there is a positive and significant correlation between negotiation styles and conflict management in target population. Also, there was a positive and significant correlation between negotiation and control and solution-oriented strategies. This suggested that by increase of negotiation skills of negotiators, the conflict management will improve effectively in organization. The findings also showed that there is no significant relationship between negotiation and avoidance in management strategy. This indicated that the negotiators try to resolve problems within the organization and do not neglect internal conflicts. This is consistent with findings of Ordin (2013) who showed a significant relationship between negotiation and conflict management. This finding showed the importance of effective negotiation style in proper management of conflicts in organization. Also, the results showed that there is positive and significant correlation between negotiation styles and control and solution-oriented strategies. However, there was no relationship between avoidance strategy and negotiation styles. This is consistent with findings of Dargahi (2008) and Dehghani et al. (2010) who showed that the solution-oriented strategy is the most important priority to resolve conflict and communicate within organization; however, it was inconsistent with findings of Zhang (2007) and Moghadam (2010). Nasiri (1996) considered the negotiation style of both parties as the first factor in conflict resolution.

The findings of this study indicated that in ranking conflict management strategies, the solution-oriented,

control, and avoidance strategies have the first, second, and third priorities, respectively. This is consistent with findings of Saatchian (2012), Mehri & Moharramzadeh (2012), and Dehghani (2010). Also, it is inconsistent with findings of Aljavazne (2015), and Torabi (2006). The findings also showed that the preferred negotiation styles of managers in order of importance from most to least were: factual, intuitive, normative, and analytic. MirMasoudi (2014), Moradi et al. (2013), Rahimi & Aghababaei (2012), Hatami (2006), and Panahi (2007) showed that the factual style is the most used management style of managers and in Friedman test, the highest rank was allocated to factual style; this is consistent with finding of present study. Results showed that there is a linear relationship between negotiation styles and conflict management of experts. The negotiation style may predict conflict management strategies of physical education experts.

The findings showed that although people use each of the negotiation styles and conflict management strategies in a certain ratio. There is always a dominant style for each person that is more characteristic of his/her behavior in this area. According to findings, most studied physical education experts adopted solution-oriented conflict management and factual negotiation style in resolving the challenges of their daily work. This negotiation style and conflict management strategy are very useful, but this does not mean that one should not use other strategies and styles. Although the conflict management strategies are different, the superiority of one strategy over another cannot never be proved. This is also true about negotiation strategies. It is the situation which determines the necessary strategy. Of course, many factors could be involved in this area and researcher has tried to find some of them. Since physical education experts face with multiple stakeholders, they need to communicate and negotiate with target group. Therefore, it is necessary that there will adopt suitable negotiation style and conflict management strategy. The establishment of training courses to increase the negotiation skills and knowledge, empowering the physical education managers, developing scientific approach to negotiations, employing the experts who are familiar with principles and techniques of negotiation, conflict management communication using the research and experiences of different countries in negotiations within and outside the organization are recommended to increase productivity in physical education activities in schools. Finally, it is recommended that other

factors affecting the adoption of conflict management strategies and negotiation styles by sport managers will be examined.

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