

# A Cross-sectional Study of the Impact of Transformational Leadership on Integrative Conflict Management

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Received: October 5, 2015 Accepted: March 9, 2016 Online Published: April 19, 2016

doi:10.5539/ass.v12n5p47

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v12n5p47>

## Abstract

This research is designed to study the impact of the components of transformational leadership style (individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and idealized influence) on a particular style of conflict management, i.e. integrative. Jordanian public ministries comprised the population of the research. A random sample consisting of 75 frontline managers from 15 ministries was used to collect research data via a valid and reliable questionnaire. The research leads to acceptance of the hypothesis that individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence are positively associated with the integrative style of conflict management. Intellectual stimulation is the dimension that has the greatest influence on the integrative style of conflict management, followed by idealized influence. Individualized consideration has the lowest influence on the integrative conflict management style. Thus, frontline managers should be informed about, trained and encouraged to adopt transformational leadership practices and to use their integrative qualities to enhance the management of organizational conflicts.

**Keywords:** leadership styles, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, conflict management styles, integrative conflict style

## 1. Introduction

Just as there are many types of leader, so there are many types of leadership style. Leadership has been identified with the capability to exploit seven variables: strategy, structure, system, style, staff, skills and shared goals (Taylor et al., 2006). The study of leadership has progressed from trait theory, through behavioural theory and several contingency theories, finally arriving at transactional and transformational theories. Kirkbride (2006) identified this path as a shift from non-leadership (laissez-faire leadership) to transformational styles. A non-leader is a manager who washes his or her hands of decisions, responsibilities, concern and leadership stance. In the absence of leadership, conflict is dominant.

One can derive from the literature many causes of conflict. Darling and Walker (2001) identified unsympathetic and inharmonious goals, opinions and actions as determinant motives of conflict. Schraub et al. (2014) further noted that conflict can be traced back to disagreements among individuals. They subdivided these disagreements into two types: disagreements about tasks (task conflict) and disagreements concerning relationships. Similarly, Fu et al. (2008) grouped conflicts into two classes: interpersonal conflicts and task conflicts. Although conflict can be attributed to both external and internal causes, it is phenogenetic, i.e. it has a known or visible cause. In the presence of conflict, it is necessary to employ an effective method to identify such conflict simultaneously with an efficient means of resolution. Saeed et al. (2014) regarded these two conditions as pillars of conflict management. Rahim (2000) adopted a two-sided conflict perspective: on the one hand, conflict can be portrayed as a dysfunction, which must be minimized or terminated; on the other hand, conflict may be a healthy condition with various constructive consequences. According to Rahim (2000), conflict management takes the form of effective strategies dedicated to lessening dysfunction and enhancing positive processes and outcomes. Swierczek and Onishi (2003) considered management style to be one of the sources of conflict, particularly in diversified workplaces.

There are five styles of conflict management; accommodation, compromise, competition, collaboration and avoidance (Barker et al., 2006; Reich et al., 2007). According to Rahim (2002), compromise holds the intermediate position between the other conflict styles, depending on a mutual exchange of interests. This style

can be used when other styles, such as dominance and integration, cannot be used. Competition is related to the use of authority to force decisions, while collaboration or integration is concerned with information exchange, seeking alternatives and problem-solving behaviours. Avoidance refers to withdrawal or suppression behaviours. To accommodate a conflict is to sacrifice one's own interests for the sake of others.

Antonioni (1998) argued that conflict management styles can be classified in relation to two factors: cooperation (concern for others) and assertiveness (concern for self). In accommodation (obliging), concern for others (cooperation) is the dominant dimension as one renounces concern for oneself in favour of concern for others (lose-win relationship). The opposite of accommodation is competition, a style in which one pays more attention to one's own concerns (assertiveness) at the expense of concern for others (win-lose relationship). Avoidance is a style in which the concerns of neither side are addressed (lose-lose relationship). In contrast, in integration (a collaborative style) both sides' concerns are addressed concurrently (win-win relationship), resulting in a solution that is agreeable to both parties. Gross and Guerrero (2000) highlighted that of these styles, the most effective is integration. In the case of compromise, which holds the middle ground between the other styles, both sides accommodate each other's concerns, both parties ceding some of their needs to find an acceptable solution to the conflict (no-win-no-lose relationship).

As a leader is a person who influences others' behaviours, the relationship between leadership style and conflict has been examined by numerous prior works. The effect of leadership style is well-documented in the literature (Chapman et al., 2014). Hendel et al. (2005) indicated that the conflict management style selected is affected by the transformational leadership style. Alzawahreh and Khasawneh (2011) studied the conflict management strategies adopted by Jordanian managers and found that the conflict management style most likely to be used by managers is integrative. Nevertheless, few studies have been conducted to investigate the impact of transformational leadership on the integrative style of conflict management in Jordan. For this reason, the aim of this research is to explore the relationship between these two constructs from the managers' perspective.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: the next section presents the literature review and hypothesis development. Section three demonstrates the methodology of the research. Section four presents the results and section five discusses these results. Conclusions are presented prior to the final section, which addresses the limitations of the study and future research directions.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

The universality of the transformational leadership style (Avolio & Bass, 2004) is the main reason for studying this style. Transformational leadership is defined as a process by which leaders and subordinates elevate each other's morale and motivation levels (Rao, 2014). It comprises four dimensions; individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and idealized influence (Kirkbride, 2006). Individualized consideration refers to listening to and supporting followers. Intellectual stimulation is a process by which followers can solve problems in novel ways. Inspirational motivation is the ability to increase followers' motivation levels. Idealized influence is the power that the leader has in being accepted as a role model (Mittal & Dhar, 2015).

On the relationship between leadership styles and conflict management styles, Fu et al. (2008) interviewed 52 individuals working for 16 high-tech firms in China to explore the predominant types of conflict that top managers dealt with in those firms and to identify the conflict management approaches used by managers to handle these types of issue. Their results pointed to task conflict as the most common type of problem found and collaboration as the strategy most commonly used by managers to handle organizational conflicts. Examining the leadership styles adopted by managers in different banks to address organizational conflicts, Khan et al. (2015) found a positive association between leadership style and conflict management strategies. Their results also indicated that the styles most used by managers were accommodation and collaboration. Yao et al. (2014) explored the relationship between leadership, work stress and employee behaviours. A secondary aim of their research was to investigate the moderating effects of transformational leadership in the relationship between work stress and employees' negative behaviour. The findings supported the hypothesis that transformational leadership has a significant diminishing effect on both work stress and employees' negative behaviour.

Saeed et al. (2014) examined the relationship between the transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles and conflict management styles. Using a sample of 150 middle managers from private industrial organizations, their results confirmed the hypothesis that the transformational leadership style is positively related to two styles of conflict management: integration and obligation. In contrast, the transactional leadership style is related to compromise. Finally, managers who adopt a laissez-faire leadership style use the avoidance style of conflict management.

Ayoko and Konrad (2012) studied the relationships between transformational leadership, conflict and emotion management in public service organizations in Australia. Their results showed the importance of the transformational leadership style in lessening the adverse influence of conflict on performance. Doucet et al. (2009) evaluated the impacts of transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership on two types of workplace conflict, cognitive and relational, in Canada. Concerning the elements of transformational leadership, the results showed a positive impact of intellectual stimulation on cognitive conflicts and a negative impact of inspirational motivation on both cognitive and relational conflicts. Individualized consideration was found to have a negative impact on relational conflicts. In their survey of nurses working in public, private and teaching hospitals in Jordan, Al-Hamdan et al. (2014) found that the integrative style of conflict management was the most preferred style. The results also revealed that nurses working in public hospitals were less likely to adopt this style compared to nurses working for private and teaching hospitals. More recently, Turan et al. (2015) studied the relationship between conflict management strategies and leadership styles and found that managers who adopt a transformational leadership style are more likely to use the integrative strategy of conflict management. Based on prior studies, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1. Idealized influence is related to the integrative style of conflict management.

H2. Inspirational motivation is related to the integrative style of conflict management.

H3. Intellectual stimulation is related to the integrative style of conflict management.

H4. Individualized consideration is related to the integrative style of conflict management.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Sample and Data Collection

The sample for this study comprised frontline managers working in public ministries in Jordan. A total of 15 ministries were chosen based on time, effort and cost limitations. In all, 75 individuals were randomly selected for participation in data collection. The sample size was determined based on Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), who stated that the minimum number of subjects in research employing a regression analysis should be calculated on the basis of the following equation:  $N=50+8(k)$ , where  $k$  is the number of independent variables. Accordingly,  $N=50+8(4)=75$ . Questionnaires were administered to respondents by hand to ensure a high response rate. Of the questionnaires distributed, 73 were returned, all of which were valid for statistical analysis.

#### 3.2 Measures

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ, 5X-Short) developed by Avolio et al. (1999) was used to measure transformational leadership. The MLQ contains 16 items equally distributed across the dimensions of transformational leadership (IC, IS, IM and II). Responses are given on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The integrative conflict management style was measured using 12 items from the Organizational Conflict Management Scale developed by Anis-ul-Haque (2004). The scale consists of 37 items covering 5 dimensions of conflict management styles, i.e. avoidance (7 items), compromise (4 items), dominance (7 items), integration (12 items) and obligation (7 items). According to Chaudhry et al. (2008), the alpha value denoting the overall reliability of the scale is 0.90 and for the integrative style is 0.91.

#### 3.3 Research Model

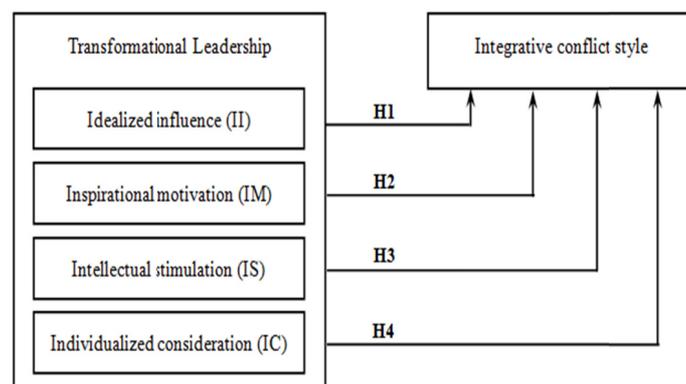


Figure I. Research model

Figure 1 depicts the four hypothesized relationships between the transformational leadership style and the integrative style of conflict management. Hypotheses 1–4 assume the existence of positive relationships between idealized influence (II), inspirational motivation (IM), intellectual stimulation (IS) and individualized consideration (IC) and the integrative style of conflict management (INTG).

#### 4. Data Analysis and Results

Tests of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity were conducted prior to regression analysis and hypothesis testing. The purpose of these tests was to ensure a linear relationship between research variables, a normal distribution of epsilons and a model free from dependence between the independent variables and to investigate whether the error variance of the model is a function of more than one variable. The evaluation of relationships was assured using the Pearson product-moment correlation. Finally, regression analysis was undertaken to test the hypotheses. The following sections present the results of the data analysis.

##### 4.1 Normality Testing

Using Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests for normality, as shown in Table I, all research constructs (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and the integrative style of conflict management) are normally distributed.

Table 1. Results of normality testing

	Kolmogorov–Smirnov test		Shapiro–Wilk test	
	Statistic	Sig.	Statistic	Sig.
II	0.164	0.251	0.924	0.620
IM	0.132	0.274	0.816	0.758
IS	0.117	0.118	0.971	0.077
IC	0.146	0.137	0.990	0.213
INTG	0.142	0.097	0.921	0.121

##### 4.2 Linearity Testing

Table II indicates that there are linear relationships between the research variables as shown by the F-values and p-values (significance is greater than 0.05).

Table 2. Results of linearity testing

Variable	F-value	Sig.
II * INTG	0.896	0.421
IM * INTG	0.771	0.661
IS * INTG	0.854	0.557
IC * INTG	0.799	0.801

##### 4.3 Multicollinearity Testing

The variance inflation factors (VIFs) and tolerance values shown in Table III indicate that none of the independent variables constitute a function of other independent variables.

Table 3. Results of multicollinearity testing

Model		VIF	Tolerance
1	II	1.333	0.974
	IM	1.515	0.911
	IS	1.097	0.941
	IC	1.741	0.927

##### 4.4 Homoscedasticity Testing

The results of the homoscedasticity tests displayed in Table IV indicate that the error variance encountered in the

integrative style of conflict management is constant despite increases or decreases in the values of transformational leadership dimensions. The values for Levene's test and significance indicate the presence of homoscedasticity in the integrative style of conflict management.

Table 4. Results of homoscedasticity testing

	Levene's test	Sig.
II	1.399	0.358
IM	1.412	0.511
IS	1.348	0.289
IC	1.557	0.471

#### 4.5 Pearson Product-Moment Correlation

The results of the correlation analysis, shown in Table V, for the four dimensions of transformational leadership indicate a significant association between each dimension of transformational style and the integrative style of conflict management: II ( $r = 0.66$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), IM ( $r = 0.58$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), IS ( $r = 0.74$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and IC ( $r = 0.47$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 5. Correlation matrix for transformational leadership dimensions and the integrative style of conflict management

	II	IM	IS	IC
II	-			
IM	0.41	-		
IS	0.53	0.48	-	
IC	0.61	0.33	0.51	-
INTG	0.66	0.58	0.74	0.47

#### 4.6 Regression Analysis

The research hypotheses presumed that idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual capital and individualized consideration are positively correlated with the integrative style of conflict management. A regression analysis was performed to test the hypotheses. Table VI indicates that intellectual stimulation has the highest influence on the integrative style of conflict management ( $\beta = 0.437$ ,  $t = 9.320$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), followed by idealized influence ( $\beta = 0.398$ ,  $t = 7.177$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), then inspirational motivation ( $\beta = 0.374$ ,  $t = 6.011$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Finally, individualized consideration is the variable with the lowest influence on the integrative management variable ( $\beta = 0.367$ ,  $t = 5.451$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 6. Regression analysis results

Model summary		ANOVA	
r	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P
0.779	0.606	23.61	0.000
Coefficients			
	B	t	P
constant	-	-	-
II	0.398	7.177	0.000
IM	0.374	6.011	0.000
IS	0.437	9.320	0.000
IC	0.367	5.451	0.000

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aims to investigate the impact of the transformational leadership style on one conflict management strategy, namely integrative. The independent variables examined in this study were idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. The integrative style of conflict management was the dependent variable. The hypothesized relationships between individualized consideration (IC), intellectual stimulation (IS), inspirational motivation (IM), idealized influence (II) and the integrative style of conflict management (INTG) are supported in this research. That is, all the dimensions of transformational leadership style have a significant influence on the integrative style of conflict management. Some prior studies have examined the same variables as included in this research. However, this research intended to identify the impact of each dimension of transformational leadership on a single style of conflict management. Turan et al. (2015) found that the first choice of conflict style used by managers who adopt a transformational leadership style is integration. Saeed et al. (2014) revealed a positive correlation between transformational leaders and the selection of integration as a conflict management style, along with obligation. Furthermore, Fu et al. (2008) concluded that the integrative (collaborative) style of conflict management is the dominant style among transformational leaders. Organizations could benefit from these results by informing and training managers in implementing a transformational leadership style to put intellectual stimulation at top of their priorities due to the role that this factor plays in enhancing individuals' abilities to solve problems.

## 6. Limitations and Future Research

There were few constraints in this study, except that the data collection process was intensive in terms of consuming researcher time and effort. Future research might add new leadership variables in addition to those considered here in order to identify the contribution of each style to conflict management. Also, using a mix of quantitative and qualitative data might provide greater understanding of the influence of leadership styles on selected conflict management styles. Moreover, future research is required to explore the same predictors with more than one conflict management style.

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