

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents (1) Summary of the study, (2) Summary/discussion of the findings, (3) Conclusions, and (4) Recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research study was to determine the effect of gender, years of work experience, and organizational cultures: Japanese and American on conflict management styles of Thai staff who work in a Japanese company and an American company.

The research sample size was 100 respondents (51 women and 49 men) consisting of 50 respondents from a Japanese company and 50 respondents from an American company. They were requested to answer the questionnaire and return it within 2 weeks.

The research instrument in the study was questionnaire using collective administration. The questions in the questionnaire were composed of two parts: (1) general information of gender, age, years of work experience and organizational culture and (2) Measurement of conflict management styles.

110 hard copies of the questionnaires were distributed from November 22, 2009 to December 3, 2009 for two weeks. The answers of the questionnaires were analyzed using the SPSS program version 13 and Microsoft Excel 2003.

5.2 SUMMARY/DISCUSSIONS OF THE FINDINGS

This section concerns the overall summary and discussions of the findings from this study. It can be separated into the following discussions.

5.2.1 Gender effect can be proven by this study because it found that female and male respondents have significantly different uses of competition style and compromise style ($p < 0.05$) at a 95% confidence level; in other words, gender tends

to influence the usage of conflict management styles. Though both female staff and male staff were likely to prefer competition in low level, male respondents were more willing to compete than were female respondents, whereas female respondents were more willing to compromise in a conflict situation than male respondents were. The level of compromising was still at a middle level for both women and men. Furthermore, in descriptive statistics, female respondents used a high level of accommodation style while male respondents maintained a middle level of accommodation style. In terms of using avoidance, collaboration and compromise, both female and male respondents had the same level of usage at the middle level. Conversely, both female staff and male staff tried to use competition style at a low level but male staff were more competitive than female staff. The reason for using low competition can be explained by the study of Hofstede (2009) to describe cultural dimensions in Thailand. It demonstrated that Thai society has low Masculinity (MAS), low Individualism (IDV) and high Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) when compared to the Asian average; that is, Thai people are less assertive and less competitive. Thai society is a collectivist one, maintaining relationship within a group, following members of a group, and not liking risk and uncertainty. According to the results, they seem to avoid competition and use compromise to keep a good relationship and to save their status. This finding can support the study of Holt and DeVore (2005) which showed that males prefer dominating act and females prefer compromising. The theory of communication styles can explain this phenomenon. Gender can influence the communication styles in seeking feedback and disclosure to others. Men tend to seek less feedback and disclose less than women do; thus, men hardly spend time proposing their needs or listening to other's needs to settle the middle ground (Hamilton & Parker, 1997). Moreover, women are more likely to help other people to save face and look for fairness of the other side's concerns. This difference may come from traditional power and status differences of women in the past because the traditional women hardly tended to hold positions of authority as much as men have (Neher, 1997). Therefore, women and men possibly practice different styles of conflict management; that is, men are more competitive than women, and women are more supportive.

5.2.2 The second hypothesis, to prove whether there was a difference among conflict management styles of Thai staff categorized in different years of work experience, was rejected by the results of this study because conflict resolution styles were not significantly different in each group of work experience ($p > 0.05$). This means every level of work experience had the same level of conflict management style. In descriptive results, it was shown that low experienced staff selected accommodation style at a high level and high experienced staff and moderate experienced staff used accommodation style at a middle level. In addition, every work experience group of respondents had the middle level of using avoidance, collaboration and compromise while using competitive style was at a low level because inexperienced staff do not have enough experience to compete or convince others in conflict and high experienced staff may realize that competition is not helpful to reach their target. As a result, they selected compromise, accommodation, and avoidance rather than competition, especially inexperienced staff members who believe that accommodation is the most effective way and safe for them by facilitating others' requirements. This finding in terms of work experience supports the study of Sukanya Promkun (2549) and Upon Chanasit (2549).

5.2.3 For the third hypothesis, it was found from the study that there were no significant differences in conflict management styles among accommodation, avoidance, collaboration, competition, and compromise in different organizational culture between a Japanese company and an American company ($p > 0.05$) at a 95% confidence level. In addition, respondents who work in a Japanese company and an American company practiced the same level in using every conflict management style. They utilized accommodation, avoidance, collaboration, and compromise at a middle level and selected competitive styles at a low level. This can be explained by the fact that the national culture in the host country, Thailand, in which the subsidiary company is located, substantially influences the individual norms or behaviors of employees more than does the organizational culture of the headquarter company in the home country (Rudd & Lawson, 2007). This result also supports the study of Thomas (2004) to confirm that there are no effects of the home country's culture on preferred conflict management styles.

5.2.4 This result could be helpful for company management to motivate staff to utilize more competitive strategies because constructive competition can increase and create productivity for the company. Employees may hide their effectiveness and performance and not work completely in their daily basic work. In contrast, motivating employees to compete should be managed with care because job satisfaction of employees may be reduced since it depends on the work environment and emotional experience at work. If there are too many competitive situations at work, there will be toxic work climate and frustration among employees (McShane & Glinow, 2008). Moreover, sometimes concerns for others' feeling or anxieties about the use of power cause employees to vacillate, which may mean to postpone the decision making and increase the resentment of other employees. Besides, if compromising is overused in emphasizing on bargaining and trading off, it may cause an uncomfortable climate of gamesmanship and undermine interpersonal trust and take attention away from the merits of the issues discussed. This working atmosphere can lead to devastative performance of the company (Robbins & Judge, 2007).

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

Regarding the research findings, male Thai staff members were likely to use confrontational methods or competition style to handle conflict while female Thai staff members were more willing to compromise than male staff. Both, however, practiced compromising style in middle level and competition style in low level. To explain this phenomena, Thai staff in both companies embrace Thai culture; therefore, it mainly influences the behaviors and ideas of Thai staff although they work in foreign companies that are probably influenced by organizational culture from the headquarter company. Rimkeeratikul (2009) studied factors influencing communication apprehension levels in Thai people and expressed that Thai values and behaviors are mainly impacted by 'Kham Kreng Jai'-one of Thai cultures in considering the other's feeling and concerns-which encourages Thai people to please and less confront others. Moreover, gender influences the communication styles and the ways which women and men behave differently in a situation since women are

normally less competitive than men and prefer to soften their communication by facilitating the other's requirement (Hamilton & Parker, 1997).

The finding demonstrates that there was no difference found in conflict management styles among groups categorized by work experience of low experience, moderate experience and high experience. The descriptive result clarifies that low experienced staff who have little experience in handling conflict selected accommodation style at a high level when compared with high experienced staff and moderate experienced staff who utilized accommodation style at a middle level. It can be possibly explained that new comers are likely to accommodate others because they create a better first impression to others to expect job assistance in the future. In addition, every work experience group has competitive style at a low level as inexperienced staff do not have enough experience to compete or convince others to gain win position in conflict and high experienced staff may learn from past experience that competition may lead to lose-lose solution. Consequently, they selected compromise, accommodation, and avoidance rather than competition.

Another test of hypothesis suggested that organizational cultures of a Japanese company and an American company did not affect the preferred conflict management styles of Thai staff and Thai staff in both companies utilized accommodation, avoidance, collaboration, and compromise in middle level and selected competitive styles in low level because of the stronger effect of national culture on behaviors of Thai staff.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made for future research.

5.4.1 Studies of organizational culture such as Western, European, and Chinese could be added to provide more generalization of the findings. Each organizational culture could consist of more than 1 company and add more sample size of each company to reduce the error of the study and increase credibility.

5.4.2 The validity of the instrument remains unconfirmed because of several factors. Konovsky, Jaster, McDonald (1989) point out that there are differences of

results between the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode survey and a 5-point Likert scale in assessing avoidance and accommodation. Another research study of Weldon and Jehn (1995) further discuss the problems in studying cross-cultural differences in conflict management behavior because Western instrument and Western theories are applied to measure non-Western culture and non-Western behavior. Therefore, testing the cross-culture equivalence would be needed.

5.4.3 Translation of the instrument of this study into Thai language may distort the exact meaning of statements in the instrument. Although there are several research studies applying Thai version of the instrument to test the conflict management styles of Thai people with acceptable result of validity, the validity test still is needed when this instrument is used in the different groups of samples and expanding the sample size and selecting sampling design in validity test method could be more considered to strengthen validity and reliability of the instrument.

5.4.4 Random sample design and bigger sample size could increase the generalization of the study and reduce error of the test study.