Organizational Business Excellence

INTERNATIONAL

IMPACT OF DIFFERENT CONFLICT LEVELS ON CULTURALLY DIVERSIFIED JAPANESE ORGANISATIONS' PERFORMANCE UNDER A COLLABORATIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE

Giang Nguyen[1] and Vikas Kumar[2]

[1,2]*University of the West of England, Bristol, United Kingdom*

Abstract

With the increasing globalization, cultural diversity management has emerged as an important issue and it is regarded as a process that helps to maintain a positive workplace environment where the similarities and differences of individuals from different cultural backgrounds are valued and shared. The current research examines the impacts of levels of conflict on Japanese organisations' performance as well as how the collaboration conflict management style influences this relationship. Drawing on conflict management literature and the five levels of conflict from Speed Leas' Conflict model, the research develops a research model to examine the moderating effect of collaborative conflict management style (CCMS) on the relationship between different levels of conflicts and organisational performance. Data gathered from 58 Japanese and non-Japanese employees in Japanese companies. Data is analysed through SPSS and two-way ANOVA. The results indicate that conflict intensification triggers a negative impact on organisational performance. It also reveals that at different levels of conflicts, collaboration style has various impacts on the performance.

Keywords: collaboration, conflict management, organisational performance, Japan

INTRODUCTION

In a constantly changing global environment, workforce diversity has become the hot-button topics for multinational corporations as they are affecting all facets of the economy and grant multiple challenging opportunities and creating threats that can affect the performance of companies (DeLancey, 2013). Japan- the third-largest economy in the world by nominal GDP is facing a crisis of domestic labour shortage from an international perspective ("Japan country", 2018). According to government projections, the labour force in Japan tends to decline in the next two decades which implies a negative economy in the short term and long term. Namely, it curbs many Japanese companies' operation, pushes up wages, slows down the national economic growth, and reduce the effectiveness of monetary policies and fiscal stimulus (Ganelli & Miake, 2015; Ohsumi, 2014). In the face of those issues, immigration of short term workers mainly from developing Asian nations has been proposed as an effective solution to Japan's ageing demographic with a low birthrate and shrinking labour force ("Japan and the immigration", 2004). Moreover, a fiercely competitive business environment has compelled Japanese managers to look back at the bottom line and go for peripheral workers to reduce various costs (McDonald, 2003). However, shifting business system and social and demographic changes have become a

burdensome math problem for many Japanese managers in managing the diversified culture-related issues (McDonald, 2003, p.99). Hence, effective interaction among diverse workers has become extremely critical to smooth organizational functioning.

Some researchers consider multi-culture related conflicts can be seen as an opportunity for organizational growth if managed constructively and efficiently. Hence, it is crucial for managers/ team leaders to be able to figure out the sources of conflicts, to have an understanding of their constructive and destructive potential, apply approaches to manage conflicts and appropriately implement conflict resolution methods to promote the group performance. According to Paul et al. (2004), five patterns of conflict management styles based on the notion "Concern for Self" and "Concern for Others": *Avoidance* (low concern for others and low concern for self); *Accommodation* (high concern for others and low concern for self); *Competition* (low concern for others and high concern for self); *Collaboration* (high concern for others and high concern for self); *Compromise* (moderate concern for all). Among those conflict resolution styles, Brown (1992), Gross and Guerrero (2000) and Thomas (1976) found that Collaborative Conflict Management Style (CCMS) was perceived as the most effective and situationally appropriate strategy while other alternatives were either less useful or outright obnoxious since they deal with what is currently existing. However, the effectiveness of CCMS in a diversified environment is still a question to a lot of researchers. There are a plethora of research investigations about the effects of national cultures on conflict resolution styles or the role of national cultures on the impact of collaborative conflict resolution on group performance. Nevertheless, the focus of these researches is on the *choice* rather than the *effectiveness* of conflict resolution methods (Leung, 1988). Besides, most of the early research on conflict management theories originated from the organizational *managers' point of views* rather than from *employees' perspective* (Brown,

1992). As there are no guiding studies to date on the effectiveness of CCMS adopted by supervisors/managers on different levels of conflicts to improve organizational performance within the culturally heterogeneous workplace, especially Japanese organizations. To fill in the existing gaps, this research investigates the effectiveness of CCMS adopted by supervisors or managers on the organizational performance of Japanese companies from employees' perspectives. Drawing on the literature and the findings, the research will find out the level or levels of conflicts where CCMS will work best for managers or supervisors to increase employee engagement with colleagues to produce the highest quality organizational performance. The findings will provide new insight into the relationship of conflict levels, the effectiveness of the collaborative management style and Japanese organization performance.

The research aims to address the research questions:

- Are cultural conflicts likely to impede all aspects of organizational performance?
- Which levels of conflicts have negative implications on the organizational outcomes and which one has the positive or no impact on those outcomes?
- Is there any correlation between levels of conflicts and organisational performance?

At which levels of conflicts, the collaboration conflict management style has and does not have significantly positive impacts on improving the Organisational Performance?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on organizational conflict management has taken two directions. The first direction is measuring the amount of intensity of conflict at various organizational levels and explore the sources of those conflicts (Rahim, 2010). This approach suggested that a moderate level of conflict can be maintained for boosting organizational effectiveness by altering the sources of

conflicts. The other approach is relating various styles of handling interpersonal conflicts among employees and the effects of those styles on problem-solving quality and goal achievements (Rahim, 2010). In this research, the source of conflicts will be studied within the frame of cultural diversity in the Japanese workplace and under the influence of the collaborative conflict-handling style. Moreover, the study will focus on handling conflicts to improve organizational performance rather than altering the sources of conflicts.

Cultural Diversity and Japanese Culture

Culture is "the sum of the beliefs, rules, techniques, institutions, and artefacts that characterize human populations" (Ball et al., 2001). Hence, cultural diversity is defined as the differences in worldviews or subjective cultures which produce a potential of behavioural differences among cultural groups (Ting-Toomey, 1993; Triandis, 1972). The rise in the number of multinational corporations has brought people to face-to-face interactions which then creates organisational complexity and conflicts tied to cultural diversity (Naylor, 1997). Hence, understanding cultural differences is a must to comprehend different ways of dealing with emerging conflicts within organizations. There are three approaches to understand cultural differences: (1) cluster, (2) context and (3) dimension approaches (Martineau & Feller, 2000; Peng, 2016). The cultural cluster approach classifies cultures based on geographical locations (Martineau & Feller, 2000). Meanwhile, according to Hall Edward (1976), the context approach concentrates on the high versus low context culture. The dimension refers to social interaction among people in a society, especially in social bonds, commitments, responsibilities, communication and harmony. On the other hand, in the dimension approaches, Hofstede identified five bipolar dimensions of national culture (Anbari et al.,

2003; Paul et al., 2004; Peng, 2016) that are power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity and long term orientation. *Power distance* refers to the extent of inequality among people within a country that is considered normal. *Uncertainty avoidance,* on the other hand, refers to the extent to which people in different cultures accept ambiguous circumstances and tolerate uncertainty (Anbari et al., 2003; Peng, 2016). *Individualism-collectivism* is the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members (Geert-hofstedecom, 2017). Individualism relates to the degree that an individual's identity is fundamentally his or her own whereas collectivism is the idea of individuality's identity which is based on his or her collective group. Masculinity versus femininity dimension refers to the sex-role differentiation in a society where masculinity emphasizes the extent to which tough values prevail over tender values (Paul et al., 2004). Long term orientation dimension places emphasis on how much perseverance and savings for future betterment rather than the present. While cluster approach and context approach are useful, the dimension approach is by far the most influential. According to Samarah, Paul, and Mykytyn (2002), it performs as the theoretical basis for understanding the influence of cultural diversity on the behaviours of culturally heterogeneous groups. Hence, it will be serving as a basis for this research conducting on cultural conflicts in Japanese companies. According to Geert-Hofstedecom (2017), Japan has average power distance and individualism level, high masculinity, uncertainty and long term orientation which are shown in Figure 1. In Japanese society, these moral values and judgements play a key role in defining a culture's good or bad opinions. When these values do not align with other different cultures, conflicts are likely to emerge.
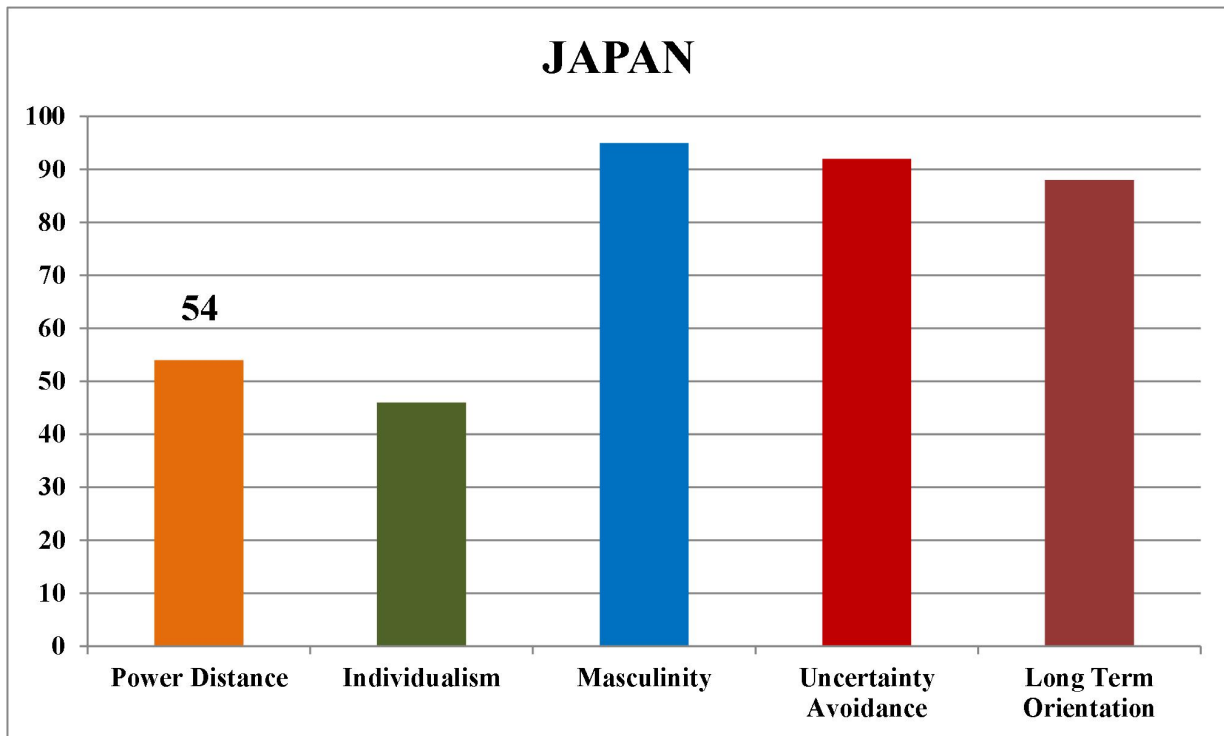
Figure 1. Japanese culture basing on Hofstede's five cultural dimensions
(Geert-hofstede.com, 2017; Hofstede, 1994)

Conflicts and Multicultural Conflicts

According to Tedeschi, Schlenker & Bonoma (1973), conflict is defined as an interactive state where the behaviours or goals of one party are to some extent incompatible with behaviours or goals of some other parties. According to Behfar et al. (2002), Greer and Jehn (2007) and Jehn et al. (2008), three types of organizational conflicts are *tasks, relationship* or interpersonal and *process conflicts*. *Relationship conflicts* are the disagreement and incompatibilities among group members about personal issues that are not task-related such as personality differences, social events, hobbies, political views or gossip (Jehn et al., 2008; Jehn, 1997a). *Task conflicts*, on the other hand, refer to "opposing views" or disagreements among individuals towards the content of tasks, including different points of views, ideas and thoughts of the tasks being performed (Jehn et al., 2008). Meanwhile, process conflicts refer to "the disagreements about the logistical and delegation issues such as how the tasks should be accomplished in a process such as who the responsible person is and how tasks should be delegated (Jehn et al., 2008).

It is believed that task and process conflicts can cause more negative consequences to organizational performance when task, process and relationship conflicts are strongly correlated (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003 and Huang, 2010). The relation of these types of conflicts can be intensified by the cultural diversity of the workplace or being called "multicultural conflict".

The multicultural conflict was stated by Ting-Toomey (2012) as "the perceived or actual incompatibility of values, norms, process, or goals between a minimum of two (interdependent) cultural parties over content, identity, relational, and procedural issues". Multicultural conflict at the workplace can disrupt organizational interaction, members' willingness and ability to collaborate as well as create organizational conflicts which are likely to have a bearing on the group's overall performance. Hence, understanding cross-cultural differences in face concerns, levels of conflicts and conflict behavioural patterns to approach appropriate conflict management skill is the first step in preserving interpersonal relationships and inclusive multicultural

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community (Gudykunst and Mody, 2002; Kim and Leung, 2000).

Conflict Levels and Conflict Perspectives

Managing conflicts successfully requires an accurate assessment of conflict level as well as appropriate management strategies to fit the level. Speed Leas has identified a five-level model of conflict to assess the intensity of a conflict in a particular situation (Leas, 2012) which is illustrated in Figure 2.
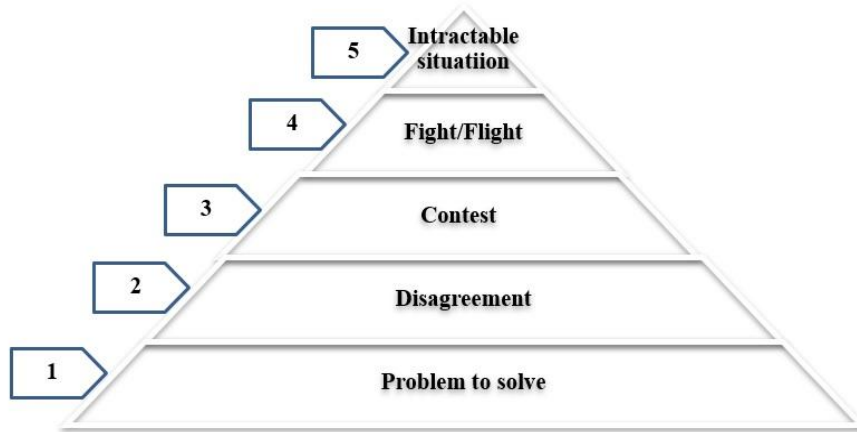

Figure 2. Speed Leas' Conflict Model (Leas, 2012)

Level I - Problem to solve: Differences are identified, then shared and discussed among members. This level is a problem or task-oriented conflict rather than a person or relationship-oriented one (Nelson, 2008).

Level II - Agreement: This is the mixture of personalities and issues; therefore, problems cannot be identified (Leas, 2012; Smith, 1992). It is the beginning of members' distrust and personalizing problems.

Level III - Contest: *Win/lose dynamics which are a fairly high level of conflict* have emerged as a result of factions, sides, camps, distorted communication or personal attacks (van Deusen Hunsinger & Latini, 2013). Conflict objectives at this level have shifted from self-protection to winning. Some people are unable to operate in presence of an "enemy". However, at this level, many people feel stimulated and exhilarated by the worthy opponents (Leas, 2012).

Level IV - Fight/Flight: The conflict participants tend to shift from winning to hurt or *get rid of their opponents* (Nelson, 2008). Therefore, conflicts at this level require the third parties' intervention to serve as "go-betweens" who can carry the messages (Shearouse, 2011; Smith, 1992).

Level V - Intractable situation/War: People in this level *no longer have a clear understanding of issues* (van Deusen Hunsinger & Latini, 2013). Energy is centred on attempts to eliminate or destroy others' reputation, position and wellbeing which eventually ruin their relationship. From level 1 to level 5, the conflict intensifies *from the task orientation* where divergence in goals, needs and values are shared to reach the agreement, to *the person or relationship orientation* where there is no understanding of the issues, parties' personality is central of unmanageable conflicts and the aim of parties is to ruin the other party's reputation.
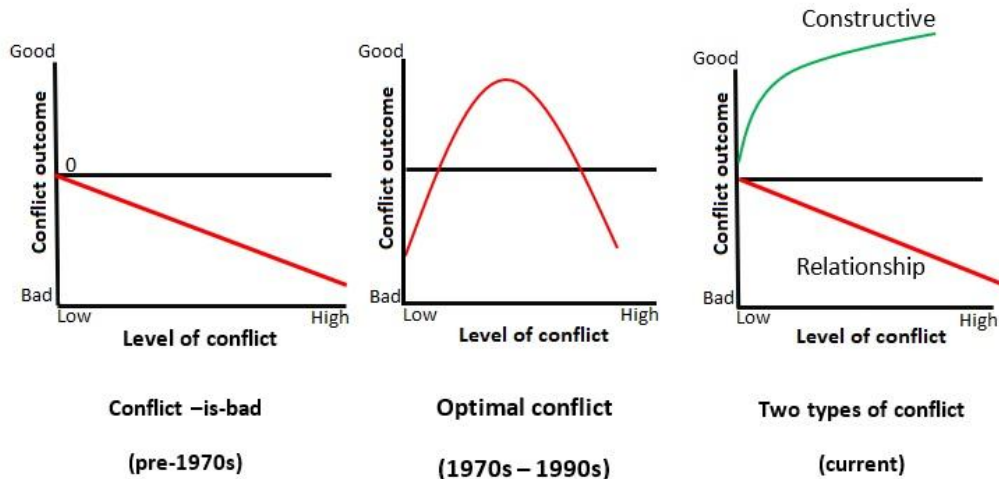
Figure 3. Past and present perspectives of conflict

Conflict-is-bad perspective (pre-1970s)

As seen in Figure 3, the pre-1970s perspective "conflict-is-bad" has prevailed for most of the time, it claimed that organizational conflict intensification can hamper a company from achieving the common vision as it is viewed from different perspectives and interests (Dougherty, 1992) as well as easily turn task issues into emotional issues (Pelled, 1996). From this view, it assumes that conflict is always detrimental to efficiency and hence should be prevented and minimized at all costs (Rahim, 2010).

Temporary/ human relations or optimal conflict perspective (1970s-1990s)

By the 1970s, the perspective "conflict-is-bad" was replaced by the optimal conflict perspective which suggests that conflict is natural and inevitable in all organizations and it might have either a healthy or detrimental effect. Indeed, Schulz-Hardt, Jochims & Frey (2002) and Hollenbeck et al. (1998) found that the decision-making is more effective when pre-discussion preferences are in disagreement rather than agreement, as they believed that those uncorrelated or negatively correlated ideas tend to provide more values as a unit than those whose recommendations are

correlated and hence redundant. Nonetheless, this positive effect breaks down quickly when the level of conflict intensifies (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003). Therefore, the perspective implies that either too little or excessive level of conflicts has a destructive outcome (Brown, 1983; Gray & Starke, 1988).

Modern perspective: Constructive and destructive conflict

The modern view also agrees with the optimal conflict perspective that without conflict, group or organization is more likely to become inflexible, unadaptable and static. Hence, a minimum level conflict is relatively beneficial for organizations as it produces creativity and competition among individuals. Although it does not claim that every type of conflict is beneficial or healthy, it clearly states that only functional and constructive forms of conflict can benefit the organizations while the destructive and dysfunctional ones can destroy its performance. All these conflict perspectives are shown in Figure 3.

A growing tendency in the literature suggests that only moderate levels of 'task conflicts' are constructive in stimulating organizational performance while a high level

of *'task conflicts' can be transformed into 'relationship conflicts'* which are regarded as the destructive factor to organizational performance (Jehn, 1997b). In other words, the "negative outcome of task conflict is the relationship conflict" (Jimmieson, Tucker & Campbell, 2017). Therefore, if not effectively handled to maintain the conflict to the moderate levels, it can escalate and lead to nonproductive results such as tearing the relationships apart and interfering with the exchange of ideas, information and resources (Abiodun, 2014; Thakore, 2013). Therefore:

H_1: Without conflict control or management methods, levels of conflict have a negative correlation with organizational performance.

In general, organizations need to make an accurate assessment of their conflict levels so that an appropriate type of intervention can be determined. This is because an appropriate approach at one level can be ineffective or counterproductive if being used at another level (Nelson, 2008). Depending on the levels of conflict, different types of conflicts are preferred to enhance organizational performance.

Conflict Management Styles

According to Rahim (2010), a moderate level of conflicts can provide necessary activation and stimulation to optimize the job performance of the organizational members or enhance their adaptive and innovative capabilities. Hence, Brown (1983) suggested that in conflict management, intervention or conflict management is required to reduce the level of conflicts if it is too much or to promote the conflict level if it is too little. There has been a plethora of psychologist and communication researchers making efforts to discover conflict management approaches. One of the first researchers devoting considerable theory of organizational conflict management styles was Blake & Mouton research (1964) who centred on two indices: concern for self-interest (assertiveness) and concern for other conflict parties

(cooperativeness). Graphing these two dimensions, they elicited five corresponding conflict management strategies: Compromising, Avoiding (Withdrawal), Smoothing (Accommodating), Confronting (Problem-solving, integrating or collaborating) and Forcing. Similarly, based on Blake & Mouton's handling conflict style taxonomy, Thomas & Kilmann (1974) also built a grid model of five factors that are competition, avoidance, accommodation, compromising and collaboration.

Avoidance (low assertiveness and low cooperation): refers to the intentional withdraw from a conflict situation (Paul et al., 2004). Instead of confronting conflicts, this style ignores conflicts (Xie, Song & Stringfellow, 1998)

Accommodation (low assertiveness but high cooperation): In this approach, one party yields to the expectations of the other. Instead of combining two diverse ideas, the decision is made by one side.

Competition (high assertiveness and low cooperation): refers to the tendency of one party's power usage on the other (Boonsathorn, 2007).

Collaboration (high assertiveness and high cooperation) refers to the integration of all involved people's views. Participants collaborate toward a "win-win" solution by bringing all relevant issues to the light, sharing information and analyzing the situation (Rahim, 2002).

Compromise (intermediate assertiveness and cooperation): Both parties' wishes and interests are taken into consideration to find a middle ground solution that is viewed as fair and mutually acceptable to both (Rahim, 2002).

In general, conflict management strategies play a key role in effectively managing the conflicts that usually arise from divergent needs among parties with an organization (Barbuto, Phipps & Xu, 2010). Among conflict

resolution styles, collaboration is regarded by many researchers as the answer to organizations' culturally diverse conflicts.

Collaborative Conflict Management

According to Brown and Berkun (2013), collaboration can improve team performance by enabling them to work effectively and efficiently. In addition, it is considered the most effective conflict resolution style (MacIntosh & Stevens, 2008; Gross & Guerrero, 2000) because it can lessen both conflicts and stress (Friedman et al., 2000). Especially, according to Xie, Song and Stringfellow (1998), the collaboration conflict resolution method will be more effective in a culture of low individualism, high power distance, high uncertainty avoidance and long term orientation than a culture that has a high score on the first dimension and low on other dimensions. Japan is the country of low to average individualism (46/100) but high on power distance (54/100), uncertainty avoidance (92/100) and long-term orientation (80/100) (Hofstede, 1994). Hence, the collaboration conflict management style becomes the centre of this study in Japanese culture.

Resolving the high-conflict issues involving steps such as sharing the differences, eliciting the rationales of parties, understanding their viewpoints and reaching a consensus requires an intensive investment of time, emotion and energy (Jones & Brinkert, 2007; Putnam & Poole, 1987). However, at intense levels (level 4 and 5), employees' propensity is to compete and strive to get rid of their opponents as well as eliminate or destroy their colleagues' reputation, position and wellbeing. Hence, those levels of conflicts will hinder the efforts to interact collaboratively or the effectiveness of collaborative management which requires perseverance and open communication among employees. In addition, collaborating requires and advances a high level of trust and respect between parties (Jones & Brinkert, 2007) which do not mainly exist at level 4 and level of 5 of conflicts of an autocratic culture where the highly top-down boss favours using power to

resolve the conflict rather than negotiate collaboratively as well as lack of cooperation among employees. Therefore, it is believed that:

H_2: Under the influence of collaboration, high levels of conflicts (level 4 and 5) will not have significant positive impacts on organizational performance

At medium levels of conflict, the firm employees who are eager and enthusiastic for collaborating with others are expected to expend effort and time to identify sources of information, solve problems and achieve the mutually satisfactory decisions which come from the integration of all people's views. Particularly, at level 2 of the conflict, although members hesitate to confront criticism and honest dialogues and focus on self-protection and not getting hurt (a signal of distrust and personalizing problem), they are still willing to cooperate to solve the problems. Therefore, managers or team leaders play a key role in connecting members to achieve mutual goals and having a strong influence on their performance (Hinds & Bailey 2003). Furthermore, at level 3 of conflicts, despite distorted communication and shifting from self-protection to winning, members do not focus on hurting or getting rid of their opponents (van Deusen Hunsinger & Latini, 2013). Some members prefer to operate in the presence of their "enemies" and feel stimulated by their worthy opponents (Leas, 2012) which imply that members prefer a healthy competition where new ideas, conflicting ideologies, information sources and evaluation of alternatives are promoted. Hence at moderate levels of conflict, the collaborative management style will exert a positive impact on organizational performance.

H_3: Under the influence of collaboration, moderate levels of conflicts (level 2 and 3) will exert significantly positive impacts on organizational performance.

However, at level 1 of conflicts, conflicting goals, different viewpoints and information

sources are openly identified, then shared and discussed among members (Leas, 2012 and Smith, 1992) which indicates that everyone in the team understands each other and the content of the conflicts and the conflicts are not over issues that fundamentally ruin a relationship that members can solve the conflicts on their own (Weingarten & Leas, 1987). Hence, although their role in group communication is necessary and they facilitate the decision-making process faster, their impact is not considered effective in managing conflicts.

H$_4$: Under the influence of collaboration, a low level of conflicts (level 1) will not have a significantly positive impact on organizational performance.

Organisational Performance

There are two measures of organizational outcomes which are individual performance and group performance. The elements in each measure are extracted from the "Interactional model of the impact of diversity on individual career outcomes and organizational effectiveness" which are developed and modified by Cox (1994), McDonald (2003) and Hanaoka (1999). To measure the effectiveness of collaborative conflict management styles on organizational performance, our model will analyze both individual level and group level performances.

At the individual level, employees can be measured on their Engagement on how well they cooperate and communicate with team members and devote effort to participating in decision making to enhance organizational performance, especially in a culturally diverse workplace where communication between people from different backgrounds is a challenge. According to Markos and Sridevi (2010), employee engagement in decision making is a strong predictor of positive organizational performance. Moreover, to employees, failing to have a sense of belonging or attachment to the organization can have a negative effect on organizational productivity. Hence, a sense of belonging is a key employee

engagement measure. In addition, their perception of opportunities for equal participation (participation equity) also influences employees' job satisfaction and contribution to the organization (Mejias et al., 1996). Last but not least, satisfaction with decision quality which is the employees' attitudes towards group decision process.

At the group level, the extent of agreement or consensus among group members is important in the context of the group with diverse cultural orientations (Mejias et al., 1996). Consensus is based on the notion that although each individual might not have been totally contented with their overall decision, acceptance of group decisions, rather than unanimity, was satisfactory. According to Suter et al. (2009), group communication and cohesiveness are important means for fostering effective role understanding in collaborative practice. Lack of clear communication and cohesiveness among employees, especially in a diverse culture, can hamper collaboration and organizational performance since employees struggle to understand their specific job functions and strive for better performance (Harun & Mahmood, 2012). Additionally, organizational performance measurement should be based on the achievement of goals and objectives that tie to the statement of organizational missions or group purposes (Probst, 2009). These outcomes can reflect the effectiveness and efficiency of group work and efforts of each individual as well as the further improvement in future organizational performance. Furthermore, measuring an organizational performance can be based on its success in creating changes. This is because "creativity and innovation in the workplace have become truly important determinants of an organization's performance, success as well as long term survival" (Anderson, Potočnik & Zhou, 2014). The organizations always seek their employees' ideas and suggestions since the process of idea generation and accomplishments have become a source of competitive advantage (Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2004; Zhou & Shalley, 2003). Problem-

solving skill/level is also one of importance. The more efficiently and effectively problems get resolved, the greater the propensity for increased employee morale, productivity and profit. Therefore it has remained an important endeavour for business.

In culturally heterogeneous group's conflicts, the impact of collaboration on conflicts might ultimately result in different performance outcomes comparing with those without collaboration on conflicts. The focus of the research is to examine: at different levels of conflicts, how the collaborative conflict management style influences organizational performance. Figure 4 presents the hypothesized conceptual model:
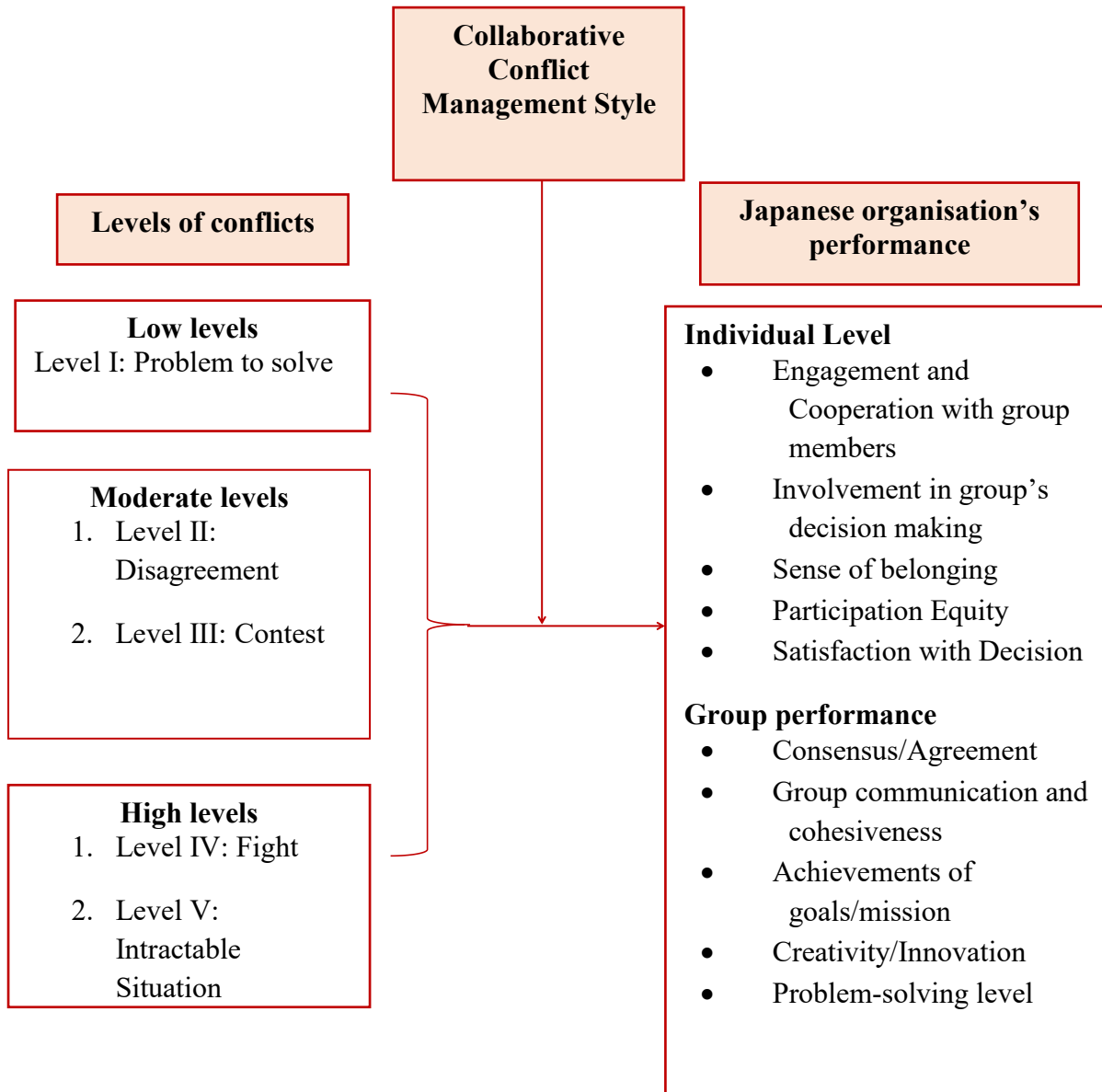
Collaborative Conflict Management Style

Levels of conflicts

Japanese organisation's performance

Low levels
Level I: Problem to solve

Moderate levels
1. Level II: Disagreement

2. Level III: Contest

High levels
1. Level IV: Fight

2. Level V: Intractable Situation

Individual Level
- Engagement and Cooperation with group members
- Involvement in group's decision making
- Sense of belonging
- Participation Equity
- Satisfaction with Decision

Group performance
- Consensus/Agreement
- Group communication and cohesiveness
- Achievements of goals/mission
- Creativity/Innovation
- Problem-solving level

Figure 4. Conceptual model of conflict management

METHODS
Research Strategy

This research employs the quantitative research design (surveys) in collecting information from foreign employees and Japanese employees in Japanese organizations and companies. Through the quantitative approach, the researcher can gain insights into the research phenomenon, measure the variables, test the hypotheses as well as predict the prevalence of study results. This approach benefits the researchers when they collect information or data on large groups of the population. Moreover, it also provides

reliability and validity of results. To broaden understanding of the topic and prove the reliability of theoretical points and strengthen the author's argument, the research needs both primary and secondary data. The primary data is gathered from surveys with foreign workers and Japanese workers in multicultural organizations in Japan while the secondary one is collected from books, journals, articles, etc.

Design Overview

The research setting was conducted within Japanese workplaces where Japanese employees who used to work with foreigners and foreign employees who used to work or are currently working in Japan. The survey structure of this study was designed originally in English and data collection would be from Japanese and non-Japanese employees. A bilingual scholar translated the first English version of the survey into Japanese. To detect any possible deviation between the original version of the questionnaire structure and the translated version, a second bilingual scholar back-translated the Japanese version into the English version by using a back-translation technique in order to ensure conceptual consistency. A third bilingual scholar then translated the second version of the English survey back to Japanese. In the end, three bilingual scholars discussed the differences and determined the final Japanese version of the survey.

Pre-Test

Prior to conducting the pre-test, the survey was reviewed by the academic researchers who experienced in questionnaire design and next it was piloted with three students and workers currently working in Japan.

Sample

The link of questionnaires was distributed through Social Media Tools including LinkedIn, Facebook, Email and friends who are working in Japan. The researcher's friends in Japan, in turn, printed and distributed questionnaire papers to their colleagues at the workplace which were later returned anonymously to my researcher's friends. Japanese and non-

Japanese participants in the survey represent diverse regions, business types, gender, age, working experience and education level in Japanese organisations of different sizes. Participants were informed regarding the criteria to be eligible to participate in the study. Due to the difficulty of the questionnaires which required respondents to be knowledgeable, considerate and thoughtful, participants in the survey are mainly white-collar workers rather than blue-collar workers. 58 out of 65 responses were found to be valid and analysed. Table 1 provides the current sample of demographic data.

Table 1. *Demographic characteristics of survey respondents*

Variable	Category	Number of respondents	Percentage
Nationality	Japanese	27	46,55%
	Non-Japanese	31	53,45%
Working experience in Japanese organisations (only for non-Japanese employees)	Less than 1 year	7	22,58%
	1-3 years	9	29,03%
	3-5 years	9	29,03%
	5-10 years	5	16,13%
	>10 years	1	3,23%
Employment status	Full time	39	67,24%
	Part time	19	32,76%
	Self employed	0	0
	Unemployed	0	0
	In employment training	0	0
Type of contract	Contemporary	34	58,26%
	Permanent	24	41,38%
Position in company/organisation	Staff	50	86,21%
	Team Leader/ Manager	8	13,79%
Size of organisation	< 20 people	0	0
	20- 50 people	7	12,07%
	50-100 people	5	8,62%
	100-500 people	10	17,24%
	500-1000 people	12	20,69%
	More than 1000 people	24	41,38%
Age range	18 - 24	26	45,61%
	25 - 30	17	29,82%
	31 - 40	9	15,79%
	40 - 50	5	8,77%
	Above 50	0	0

Measures

The research variables include two main dependent variables with five elements each (Main dependent variable 1: Individual performance and five elements including Engagement and Cooperation with group members, Involvement in group's decision

making, sense of belonging, Participation Equity, Satisfaction with the decision) (Main dependent variable 2: Team performance with five elements including Consensus/Agreement, Group communication and cohesiveness, Achievements of goals/mission, Creativity/Innovation and Problem-solving level). The measurements of the dependent variables are shown in Table 2. Meanwhile, the independent Variables include Level I: Problem to solve; Level II: Disagreement; Level III: Contest; Level IV: Fight and Level V: Intractable situation which is defined and clarified in Table 3. Two main dependent variables and independent 5 variables were measured by a construct of 7-point Likert scales with the degree of positive and negative impacts with 1 - extremely positive to 7 - extremely negative.

Table 2. *Question title and question content to measure the dependent variables*

Question title		Question content
Individual performance	Engagement and Cooperation with group members	Your motivation to cooperate with colleagues
	Involvement in group's decision making	Your effort to participate in group's decision-making (sharing your ideas etc)
	Sense of belonging	Your involvement and being a part of your organisation
	Participation Equity	Your feeling of being listened respectfully and recognised
	Satisfaction with Decision	Your satisfaction with the final solutions/decisions and expectation that the decision is successfully carried out
Group performance	Consensus/Agreement	Acceptance and agreement of all members to group's decisions
	Group communication and cohesiveness	Strong social bond among members
	Achievements of goals/mission	Accomplishment of tasks towards

	mutual goals
Creativity/Innovation	Sharing Innovative and creative ideas/suggestions
Problem-solving level	Speed of problem solving (PS) process and improvement of PS skills

On the other hand, there is only one moderating factor that is the CCMS adopted by the team leader/manager/supervisor. The measurement for this factor is "If your manager/team leader brings the issues immediately up for open discussion and get employees involved in sharing information and analyzing the situation to come up with new solutions that satisfy both sides". The measurements for the effectiveness of CCMS is shown in Table 4. By using the 7 point-Likert scales with 1 to 7.

Table 3. *5 Independent variables – 5 levels of conflicts*

Level 1 conflict (Problem to solve)	**Your differences and misunderstanding are openly identified, shared and discussed among members.**
Level 2 conflict (Disagreement)	You misunderstood and be disappointed due to conflicting with your cultural values and personal interests. However, instead of focusing on resolving the problems, you both choose to avoid the criticism and honest dialogues or confronting one another about disappointment to save face.
Level 3 conflict (Contest)	You are frustrated and resented by arguments because your personal values and interests are harmed. They want to Exert Power on you, Point Out your Inaccuracies to win the debates than to solve the problems
Level 4 conflict (Fight)	You do not want to talk as you both consider each other as Opponents to Get rid of. Hurting colleagues is more important than either winning or solving the problems
Level 5 conflict (Intractable Situation)	You both become aggressive, hopeless and have cultural stereotypes against each other which eventually ruin your relationship. They want to eliminate or destroy your reputation and position as

they are a source of threat.

analysis of both constructs are shown in order in Table 5 and 6.

Table 4. *Measuring the effectiveness of moderating factor*

	Question title	Question content
Individual performance	Engagement and Cooperation with group members	I am likely and motivated to cooperate with colleagues
	Involvement in group's decision making	I am willing to participate in group's decision-making (Sharing ideas etc)
	Sense of belonging	I feel proud of my group membership and staying in a group feels valuable
	Participation Equity	I feel being listened respectfully and recognised
	Satisfaction with Decision	I am satisfied with final solutions/decisions and strongly expect that the decision is successfully carried out
Group performance	Consensus/Agreement	Members happily accept and agree to groups' decisions
	Group communication and cohesiveness	Members are willing to communicate and collaborate to build a strong social bond
	Achievements of goals/mission	Members attempt to complete tasks to achieve mutual goals
	Creativity/Innovation	Members openly share innovative and creative ideas/suggestions
	Problem-solving level	Speed of problem solving is faster and skill of problem solving is more improved

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
Construct Reliability Testing

The research deploys two constructs using a group of 10 Likert-scale questions, to measure [Performance before CCMS] and [Performance under CCMS]. In order to verify the internal consistency of these two constructs, the research employs the Cronbach's Alpha testing as it is considered the most appropriate for the current survey type. Results of the reliability

Table 5. *[Performance before CCMS] construct*

Item	Item content	Internal correlation
Q1	Your motivation to cooperate with Japanese colleagues	0,946
Q2	Your effort to participate in the group's decision-making (sharing your ideas etc)	0,957
Q3	Your involvement and being a part of your organisation	0,961
Q4	Your feeling of being listened respectfully and recognised	0,964
Q5	Your satisfaction with the final solutions/decisions and expectation that the decision is successfully carried out	0,955
Q6	Acceptance and agreement of all members to group's decisions	0,957
Q7	Willingness to communicate, collaborate and commit among employees to build a strong social bond	0,957
Q8	Accomplishment of tasks towards mutual goals	0,959
Q9	Sharing Innovative and creative ideas/suggestions	0,963
Q10	Speed of problem solving (PS) process and improvement of PS skills	0,943
Cronbach's Alpha		0,992

Table 6. *[Performance under CCMS] construct*

Item	Item content	Internal correlation
Q1	I am motivated to cooperate with Japanese colleagues	0,893
Q2	I am willing to participate in group's decision-making (sharing your ideas etc)	0,907
Q3	I feel proud of their group membership, and staying in the group feels valuable.	0,865
Q4	I feel being listened respectfully and recognised	0,894
Q5	I am satisfied with the final solutions/decisions and strongly expect that the decision is successfully carried out	0,880
Q6	Members happily accept and agree to group's decisions	0,909
Q7	Members are willing to communicate and collaborate to build a strong social bond	0,918
Q8	Members attempt to complete tasks to achieve mutual goals	0,889
Q9	Members openly share Innovative and creative ideas/suggestions	0,908
Q10	Speed of problem solving (PS) is	0,844

faster and and PS skills are more improved		
Cronbach's Alpha	0,977	

Hypothesis Testing

Since the research aims at clarifying the moderating effects of CCMS on the relationship between different conflict levels and performance level accordingly, the two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) appears to be the most effective method to justify if the interaction of CCMS factor is significant or not. Hence, a two-way ANOVA test has been conducted in accordance with each of the conflict level, with each result showing the significance of the interaction between the independent variable conflict level and the moderating factor CCMS on the dependent variable performance. The results of the two-way ANOVA tests are shown respectively in Table 7.

Table 7. *Two-way ANOVA (CCMS) Result*

	Two-way ANOVA (CCMS)									
	Conflict Level 1		Conflict Level 2		Conflict Level 3		Conflict Level 4		Conflict level 5	
	F	p	F	p	F	p	F	p	F	p
Performance	3,063	0,083	156,117	0,000	183,875	0,000	140,760	0,000	83,828	0,000

The result of the two-way ANOVA has shown no significant moderating effect of CCMS on the interaction between conflict level and performance at level 1 (p = 0,083 > 0,01), and significant moderating effect with regard to level 2, 3, 4 and 5 (p = 0,000). Therefore, from the statistics above, we can come to the conclusion that while H_3 and H_4 are strongly supported, H_2 is not supported. However, if the H_2 is analysed from different angle by applying another different technique, it will show us a different view where SPSS technique is limited to do so. Hence, to provide a detailed picture of how the collaboration has effects on organisational performance at 5 levels of conflicts (especially level 4 and 5), the Scatter Chart as depicted in Figure 5 explains further and support the hypotheses testing.

H_1: Without conflict control or management methods, levels of conflict have a negative correlation with organizational performance
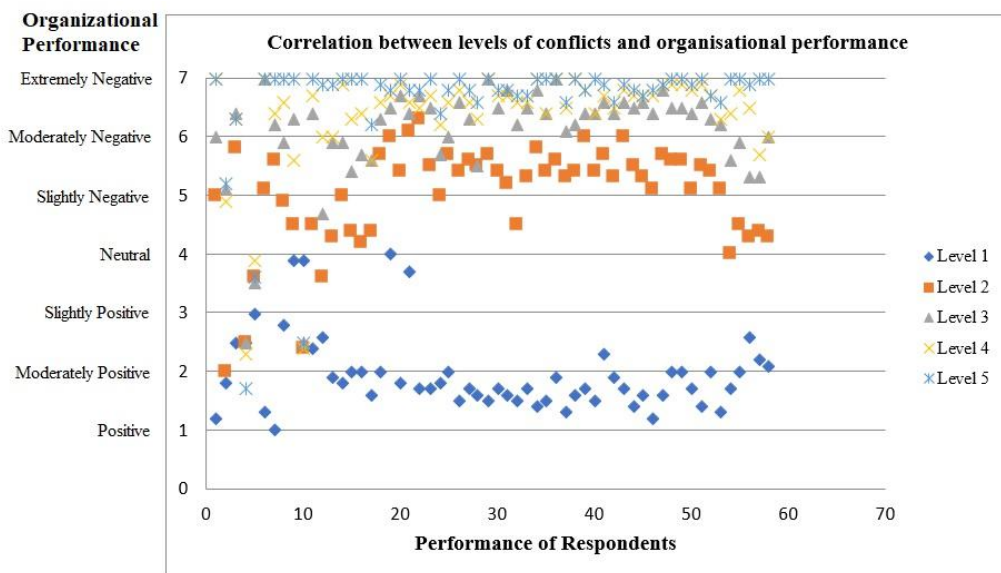

Figure 5. Correlation between levels of conflicts and organisational performance

The research employs the Scatter Chart "Correlation between levels of conflict and organisational performance" (Figure 6(a) and 6(b)). The result shown in the Scatter Chart
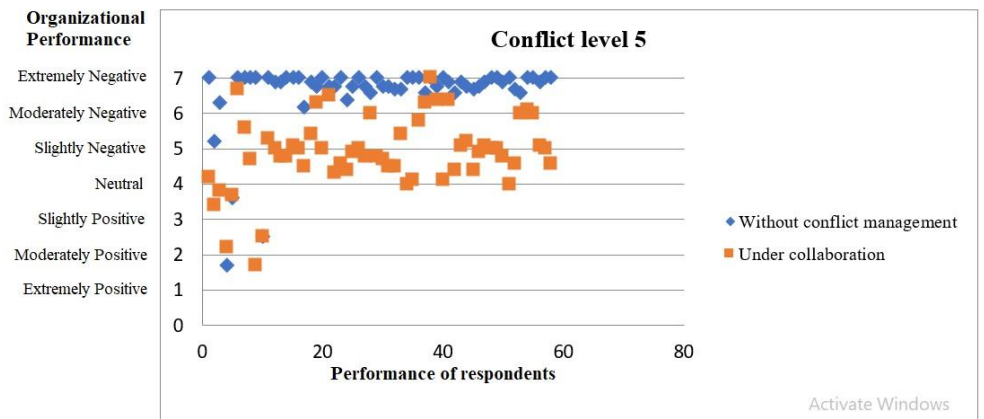
reveals that without conflict management, the performance of Japanese organisations at the individual level and team level shows a negative movement from extremely-to-moderately positive at level 1 to moderately-to-extremely negative at level 5. Especially, it appears obvious that Japanese organisations have seen a considerably negative performance of employees and group performance when the conflict between Japanese and non-Japanese employees have raised intensity from level 1 to level 2. It appears obvious that at a low level of conflict, respondents initially focus on task solving and are motivated to work with colleagues to find satisfactory solutions. However, when the conflict level is accelerated to a higher level, their emotion dominates the task issues and they no longer want to keep harmonious relationships with their colleagues. Hence, we can conclude that without conflict management, levels of conflict have a negative correlation with organisational performance.

H_2: Under the influence of collaboration, high levels of conflicts (level 4 and 5) will not have significant positive impacts on organizational performance
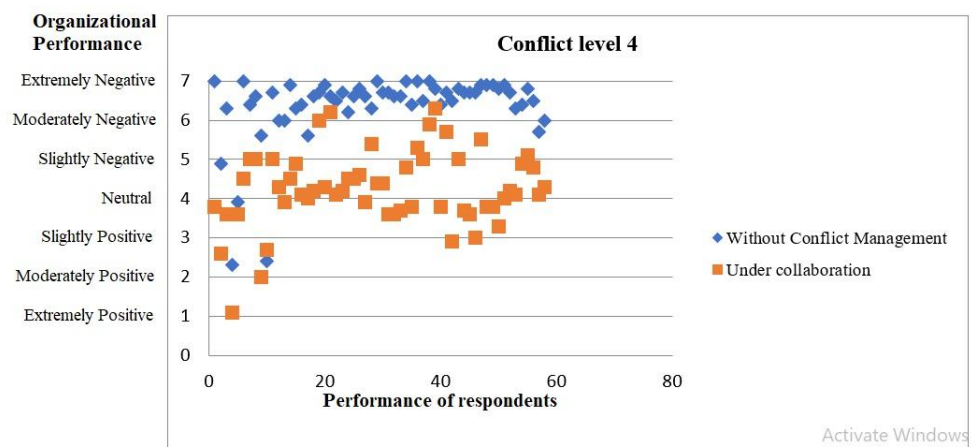
(a)

(b)

Figure 6(a) and 6(b). Comparison between "no conflict management" and "under collaboration" performance at level 4 and 5 of conflicts

The result shown in the Scatter Chart reveals that under the effect of collaboration, the performance of Japanese organisations at the individual level and team level at level 4 and 5 of conflict has witnessed a significant improvement. This chart is also supported by the data produced by the SPSS technique. However, the organisational performance is still poor although the data has shown that collaboration has exerted a significant positive change on organisational performance, which implies that despite the effort of managers or

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team leaders in bringing the issues immediately for open discussion, connecting members, getting them involved in decision-making, members are still not eager to cooperate with each other. Therefore, despite having a considerable positive change in levels of conflict, collaboration has not exerted any

significant positive impact on organisational performance. In conclusion, H_2 has been supported.

H_3: Under the influence of collaboration, moderate levels of conflicts (level 2 and 3) will exert significantly positive impacts on organizational performance
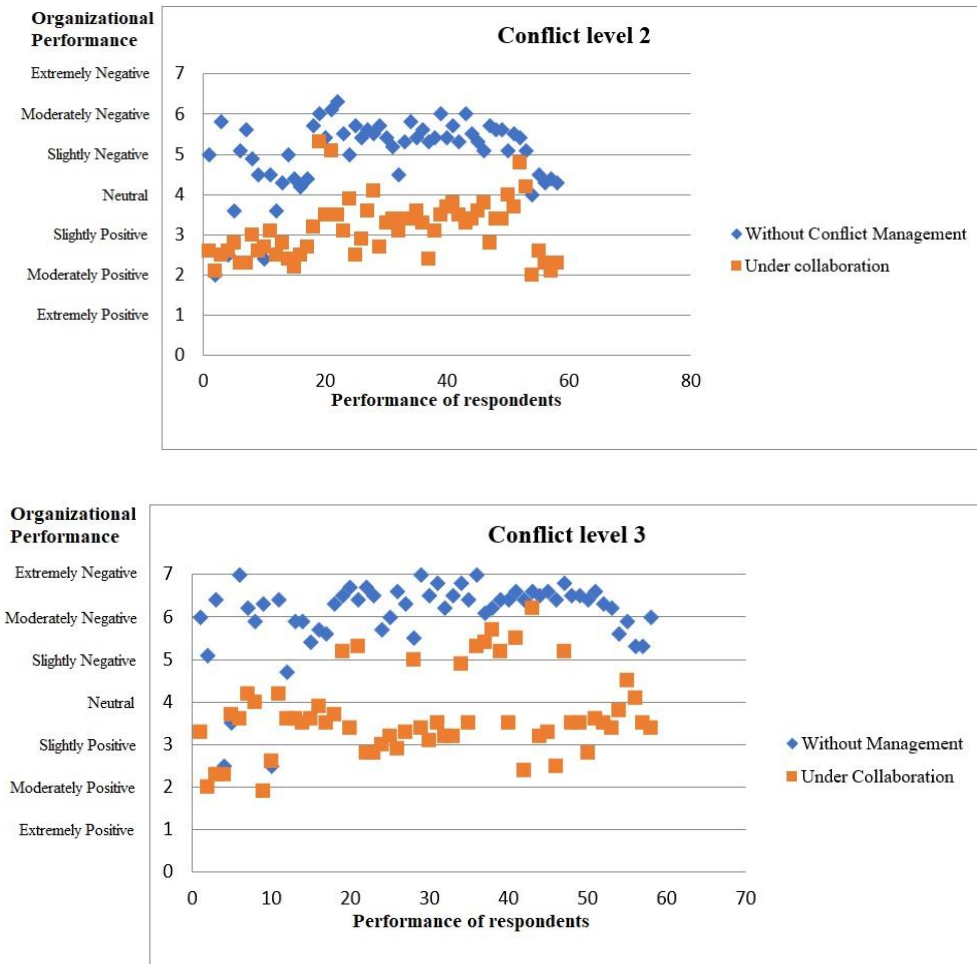

Figure 7. Comparison between "no conflict management" and "under collaboration" performance at level 2 and 3 of conflicts

Using the same calculation method as at level 4 and 5 of the conflict, the research has revealed a substantial improvement in organisational performance at level 2 and level 3 (Figure 7). Particularly, level 2 and 3 of conflict has witnessed a significantly positive transformation in performance at individual and team level under the collaboration conflict management style. It is evidenced by the fact that at level 2 where the performance is affected slightly or moderately negative by the conflicts. By introducing the collaboration, the

performance has been enhanced to become moderately positive. Similarly, under the conflict without any management from the team leader, performance at level 3 at the moderately to the extremely negative state has been improved to become slightly positive. The charts give a hint that at moderate levels of conflict where employees are still eager and stimulated to cooperate with colleagues to solve the problems and identify key issues in the conflicts, the collaboration management approach adopted by the managers or team

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leaders can foster the connection and collaboration attitudes of employees to come up with the satisfactory decision for all parties. From the result, H₃ is also supported.

H_4: Under the influence of collaboration, a low level of conflicts (level 1) will not have a significantly positive impact on organizational performance.
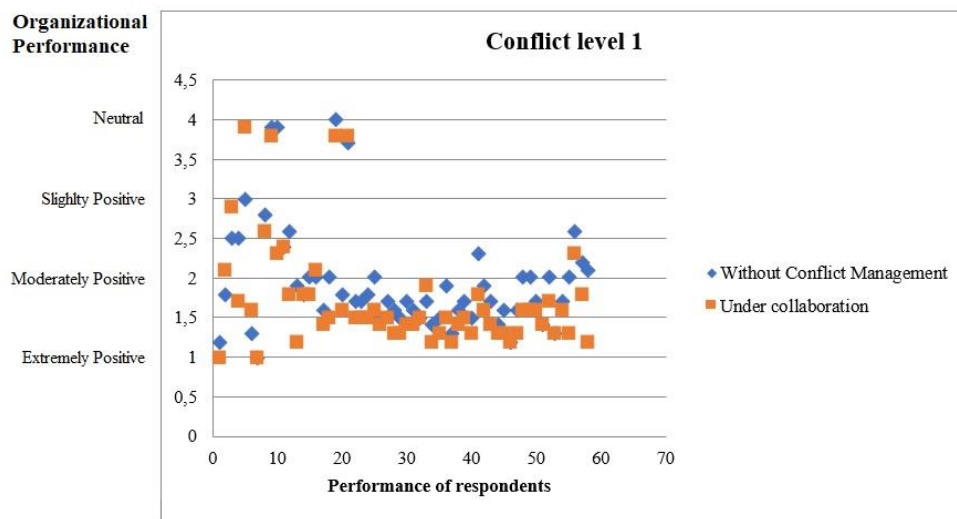

Figure 8. Comparison between "no conflict management" and "under collaboration" performance at level 1 of conflicts

The Scatter Chart in Figure 8 has obviously shown no signs of change in organisational performance between "no conflict management" and "under collaboration" at level 1 of the conflict. At level 1 of the conflict, the collaboration has actually not improved the organisational performance significantly despite showing highly positive performance. It is clear that the performance has been enhanced from moderately positive to extremely positive under managers or team leaders' collaborative conflict handling approach. Nonetheless, it is not a considerable transformation. It is easily understandable since at level 1 of conflicts, conflicting goals, different viewpoints and information sources are frankly and publicly analysed, identified and discussed among members (Leas, 2012 and Smith, 1992) which implies that differences and miscommunication are solved by employees themselves and strong relationships are maintained (Weingarten & Leas, 1987). Hypothesis 4, as a result, is highly supported.

Discussions

The extant literature has shown no significant attempt in conducting an empirical comparative study between performance before and after collaboration at different levels of conflicts. Realizing the serious lack of knowledge in this area, the present research aims to address the issue and challenge the traditional line of reasoning with the expectation of uncovering the effectiveness of collaboration in different levels of conflicts in Japanese organisation in order that Japanese managers can utilize this approach the produce the best result of individual and group's performance. From the findings, we can conclude that the collaboration exerts the most positive influence on organisational performance at level 2 and 3 of conflicts while there are no significant positive effects on the performance at level 1, 4 and 5. Moreover, the research also reveals that there is a strong negative correlation between the levels of conflicts and organisational performance. It is also noted from the research result that although there are three different perspectives on conflicts and their impact on organisational performance including "Conflicts are bad" (pre-1970s), "Optimal conflicts" (the 1970s-1990s)

and "Two types of conflicts" (Modern), each view does not disclaim the value of other alternative views as well as not mention about the conditions where conflicts are handled to lead to productive or destructive performance results. Hence, from the result of this research, we can come to a conclusion that Conflicts are bad when they are not handled or interfered with by the managers or leaders, especially at the high levels where employees are not able to solve on their own; and Moderate levels of conflicts are only beneficial to organisations when employees can handle them by themselves or through the timely intervention of their managers or leaders to avoid the case that the conflicts escalate into higher unmanageable levels where emotional issues dominate the problem-solving issues.

Apart from hypotheses testing, the study has also revealed some hidden facts. Task issues regarding conflicting goals, ideas and solutions, and personal issues such as differences in lifestyle, perspectives and norms are the most faced conflicts in Japanese organisations, Especially, the difference in cultural value is mainly the source of conflicts which are raised between them and their colleagues from different cultural backgrounds. The majority of respondents revealed that during their work life, the intensity levels of conflicts they have gone through the most are level 2; however, instead of focusing on resolving the problems, they chose to avoid the criticism and honest dialogues or confronting one another about disappointment to save face. When the conflicts are intensified to level 3 where power is the main focus and members aim to point out the inaccuracies to win the debates, while almost half of the respondents still apply the CCMS by sharing information and analyzing the situation, the rest preferred to withdraw from and ignore the conflicts to persevere the relationships. The higher the conflicts, the more likely propensity people choose to withdraw from the conflicts and some of them only chose to find the middle group solution. More interestingly, while all Japanese respondents felt motivated and encouraged to cooperate with non-Japanese

colleagues, 25,81% of non-Japanese employees neither agree nor disagree. In response to openness and involvement in decision-making, all Japanese employees were willing to share thoughts and feelings as well as ideas in decision making whereas almost half of the non-Japanese employees hesitated to share or felt discouraged to get involved in decision-making. However, despite low involvement in the decision-making process, both Japanese and non-Japanese employees agreed that they felt being part of the organisations. This, therefore, can be important information for Japanese managers to take a consideration so that they can fill in this dissatisfaction gap.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research demonstrates efforts in bridging the gap in the current literature regarding the effects of collaboration management styles on the outcomes of organisational performance at different levels of conflicts. The research findings have provided various meaningful insights through which researchers can ground their studies to continue uncovering the potentials of different conflict-handling approaches towards the success of organisational performance or external and internal factors in solving the cultural diversity conflicts at different levels of conflicts. Despite the lack of previous researches, an empirical comparative study using real-life data has been successfully conducted and the study findings, though not generalizable onto the international level, offering practical knowledge which can totally be applied to actual business practices.

In addition to enhancing the theoretical understanding, this research has important practical implications for effective collaboration between Japanese and non-Japanese employees in Japanese organisations. This study helps managers or team leaders identify the appropriate levels of conflicts for achieving the highest outcomes of organisational performance as well as facilitate the conflicts at low or moderate levels so that those conflicts will not accelerate into uncontrollable levels. Furthermore, while

opening up a variety of possibilities for future researches, the study also gives several recommendations for any managers/team leaders or organisations in handling cultural diversity conflicts. Firstly, leaders or managers need to educate their team members to be sensitive to cross-cultural differences, train them with collaborative negotiation skill and adaptive intercultural communication that help the employees handle the conflicts by themselves (Oetzel and Ting-Toomey, 2006). To achieve effective collaboration, employees need to be able to explore issues and debate points in a constructive manner with their colleagues from different backgrounds. Second, serving as the team consultant, the leader must build trust and a sense of belonging where team members believe they can share openly and address the conflicts without fear of reprisal. Managing the emotional climate of the team is also crucial to maintain the right climate to address the conflict in order that the negative conflict emotions will not push the conflict to more intense levels where members eliminate each other for acts of revenge. Destructive can get out of control quickly so timely intervention is the key. It is also strongly recommended that constructive communication techniques such as listening for understanding, sharing thoughts and feelings, perspective-taking and creating solutions should be applied to keep the conflict conversations moving in a way to facilitate collaboration

Undoubtedly, the culturally diverse environment of the workplace has been constantly changing and evolving, which requires researchers and business practitioners to innovate and never stop staying ahead of the new trends, as well as diversifying ourselves and standing out from the crowd. Under such a dynamic context, this study will set the cornerstone for future researches in the respective field of study as well as to contribute to the overall performance outcomes of Japanese organisations which have invested a huge effort in utilizing the international labour force.

In light of our research findings, we have found a wide range of potential issues which can become potential targets for future researches. First and foremost, the research respondent population might not fully represent the nature of a broader community. Due to the limitation of networks and research capability, the non-Japanese respondents are mainly Vietnamese although respondents come from various backgrounds such as Thailand, Cambodia, Australia, Korea, China, Philippines, Indonesia or Germany. Since Asian respondents dominate in the study, all of them share a generally similar cultural background with Japanese culture; it might fail to challenge the concept of cultural diversity conflicts where conflicts are exposed to various unique individuals from totally different backgrounds. It is also interesting to know whether internal factors such as job promotion, pensions or job opportunities or external factors such as educational backgrounds or language barrier can significantly alter the way employees handle and comprehend the content of conflicts. Either researching by undertaking large-scale experiments (macro-level), or by breaking down the population into specific target segments and comparing the difference between them (micro-level), we can expect that these findings will certainly contribute to our current wealth of knowledge.

Secondly, the research survey was extremely long and complicated which required a considerable investment of attention, time, energy and knowledge from respondents to answer carefully. Due to the complexity and length of the survey, the number of responses collected was relatively low. Thus their answers might not completely reflect their true thoughts of the general population. Moreover, to collect the responses, friends of the researcher were asked to hand out the survey papers to their colleagues. Even though they caused absolutely no disturbance or manipulation to the process of answering the questionnaire of the participants, the presence of their colleagues could be a potential influence on the reliability of the respondents' answers. Therefore, future

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studies are strongly recommended to conduct their experiments in a completely natural situation, without any control or intervention so that their results can become as practical as possible.

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