

# The Role of Type A Personality in Conflict Handling Styles<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study is to examine the associations between Type A personality (including its dimensions; egocentrism, competitiveness, work Orientation and impatience) and conflict handling styles with peers (i.e., integrating, compromising, obliging, avoiding and dominating). Totally 220 employees from several sectors in Turkey were participated to the study. The results indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between dominating and Type A global score. Also egocentrism, competitiveness, and work orientation dimensions of type A personality were positively related to dominating. Egocentrism were negatively related to compromising. Competitiveness was positively related to integrating.*

**Key Words:** *Personality, Type A personality, Conflict, Conflict Handling Styles*

**Özet:** *Bu çalışmanın amacı A tipi kişilik (bencillik, rekabetçilik, iş odaklılık ve sabırsızlık boyutları ile birlikte) ve çalışma arkadaşları ile yaşanan çatışma yönetim tarzları (bütünleşme, ödün verme, uzlaşma, kaçınma ve hükmetme) arasındaki ilişkilerin incelenmesidir. Türkiye’de çeşitli sektörlerden 220 çalışan*

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*çalışmaya katılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre A tipi kişiliğin toplam skoru ile hükmetme arasında pozitif ilişki elde edilmiştir. Aynı zamanda A tipi kişiliğin bencillik, rekabetçilik ve iş odaklılık boyutları, hükmetme ile pozitif ilişkilendirilmiştir. Bencillik ödün verme ile negatif ilişkilendirilmiştir. Rekabetçilik bütünleşme ile pozitif ilişkilendirilmiştir.*

**Anahtar Kavramlar:** Kişilik, A Tipi kişilik, Çatışma, Çatışma Yönetim Tarzları

## Introduction

Personality has been studied extensively in organizational behavior and so far it has been related to many variables in organizational context (George, 1992; Bono & Judge, 2004). The role of personality in conflict handling styles has been examined in previous studies (Antonioni, 1998; Messarra, Karkoulian & El-Kassar, 2016). However these studies have been conducted to examine the relationships between personality and conflict handling styles, mainly with either the Big Five Personality factors (Antonioni, 1998) or with Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Mills, Robey & Smith 1985; Whitworth, 2008). To our knowledge there is no research that has been analyzed the associations between type A personality and interpersonal conflict handling styles. Therefore in this study it was aimed to analyze the relationships between Type A personality and conflict handling styles in order to provide new insights on the role of personality (i.e Type A personality) in conflict handling styles.

## Defining the concepts

### Type A personality

Type A personality were introduced by Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman in 1950's. Later on, it got a significant attention in social psychology, organizational psychology, industrial psychology and cardiovascular diseases (Jenkins, 1998). People who score high on Type A personality have some behavioral tendencies such as "*competitiveness, success-orientation, work-orientation, aggressive behavior and felling under time pressure*". Therefore, these characteristics present the key facets of Type A personality.

*Work orientation:* Work has a central position for people who score high on Type A personality. They always want to perform more than before (Buchanan & Huczynski, 1997; Brief, Schuler & Sell, 1981; Carroll, 1992; Kunnanatt, 2003; Luthans, 2010; Rayburn & Rayburn, 1996).

*Time pressure:* They usually act, eat, walk, and talk too fast. Time is so critical for people who score high on Type A personality (Buchanan & Huczynski, 1997; Carroll, 1992; Fretwell, Lewis & Hannay, 2013; Friedman &

Rosenman, 1974; Greenberg, 1999; Luthans, 2010; Nahavandi et al., 1992; Rayburn & Rayburn, 1996; Suls & Sanders, 1988; Watson, Minzenmayer & Bowler, 2006).

*Competitiveness*: They always compare themselves with others around and want to perform more than the people around (eg., at school or work) (Buchanan & Huczynski, 1997; Carroll, 1992; Fretwell, Lewis & Hannay, 2013; Friedman & Rosenman, 1974; Kunnanatt, 2003; Luthans, 2010; Nahavandi et al., 1992; Rayburn & Rayburn, 1996; Suls & Sanders, 1988; Watson, Minzenmayer & Bowler, 2006).

*Aggressiveness*: People who score high on type A personality get angry quickly and having a tendency to get angry is one of the main characteristics of Type A personality (Buchanan & Huczynski, 1997; Carroll, 1992; Fretwell et al., 2013; Friedman & Rosenman, 1974; Luthans, 2010; Rayburn & Rayburn, 1996; Watson, Minzenmayer & Bowler, 2006).

*Success orientation*: As being work oriented and competitive, they seek for power and they tend to earn more. That is why; success plays a vital role in their life (Brief, Schuler & Sell, 1981; Carroll, 1992; Fretwell, Lewis & Hannay, 2013; Nahavandi et al., 1992; Rayburn & Rayburn, 1996; Watson, Minzenmayer & Bowler, 2006).

### **Conflict handling styles**

Conflict is indispensable “*when more than two social entities come in contact with*” (Rahim, 2010). When such entities (i.e. individuals, groups, organizations, and nations) have different attitudes, values, beliefs, and skills, then conflict is likely to occur (Rahim, 2010). That’s why conflict is defined as “*an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (i.e., individual, group, organization, etc.)*” (Rahim, 2002: 207). Organizations consist of individuals and groups (both formal and informal) and therefore conflict in organizations are also indispensable (Rahim, 2010; Üngüren, 2008). Over the time, approaches to conflict has been changed, because previously conflict was seen undesirable, but now it is considered that conflict should be managed optimally so that its consequences provides positive outcomes for both individuals and organizations (Göral, Bozkurt & Bozkurt, 2015). In other words, handling conflicts in organizations provides effectiveness and increases performance in organizational setting (Rahim, 2002). Below five main conflict handling styles in organizations are discussed briefly.

*Integrating (IN)*: It involves high concern for self and also for the others who are involved in conflict. It is concerned with problem solving. To be able to

reach an acceptable solution for the parties involved in conflict, exchanging of information, examining the differences and openness are necessary (Rahim, 2002).

*Obliging (OB)*: It involves low concern for self and high concern for others who are involved in conflict. By using this style a person attempts to play down the differences and emphasizes commonalities to satisfy the concerns of the other parties involved in conflict (Rahim, 2002).

*Dominating (DO)*: It involves high concern for self and low concern for the other party. It is highly related with forcing behavior to win one's position (Rahim, 2002).

*Avoiding (AV)*: It involves low concern for self and also for the other party who are involved in conflict. It has been associated with withdrawal and side stepping (Rahim, 2002).

*Compromising (CO)*: It involves intermediate in concern for self and other party involved in conflict. It is associated with "give-and-take" when both sides of the conflict give up something to make a mutually reasonable decision (Rahim, 2002).

It is important to note that all these styles could be appropriate or inappropriate depending on the importance of the conflict and the situation (Rahim, 2002).

## **Hypotheses**

Although previous research provide that people who score high on type A personality have tendency to have higher level of conflict (Baron, 1989), it is still hard to predict the relationship between the conflict handling styles and Type A personality depending on the previous findings. Because there are limited numbers of studies that examined the relationship between Type A personality and conflict handling styles. Yet as having tendency for being competitive, selfish and aggressive it is expected that;

H<sub>1</sub>: Type A personality will associate with dominating positively. Because dominating style includes high concern for self and low concern for the others who are involved in conflict (Rahim, 2002).

H<sub>2</sub>: Type A personality will associate with integrating negatively. Because integrating emphasizes collaborating (Rahim, 2002) and since Type A personality has characteristics as being aggressive, selfish and impatience (Friedman & Rosenman, 1974), a negative relationship is expected between integrating and Type A personality.

Since compromising, obliging and avoiding dimensions do not involve high concern for self it is expected that;

H<sub>3</sub>: Type A personality will associate with compromising negatively.

H<sub>4</sub>: Type A personality will associate with obliging negatively.

H<sub>5</sub>: Type A personality will associate with avoiding negatively.

## Method

**Data collection and procedure:** The data collected by conducting a survey method. We created a questionnaire form including Rahim Conflict Management Scale (ROCI-II-C), Type A personality Scale, and some personal information questions. Participants were from several sectors in Turkey from Ankara, Sakarya, and Kocaeli. We distributed the questionnaire forms to employees by hand and collected totally 220 valid questionnaire forms. 111 employees were working for subcontractor as blue color employee in Sakarya. The rest of the participants were from Ankara and Kocaeli working at several private sector companies.

**Participants:** After eliminating the sloppy and missing questionnaires, 220 valid questionnaire forms were obtained. 50.04 % of participants working for subcontractor as blue color employee and the rest of the participants were from several sectors working in Turkey. Demographics of the participants; female 52.7 %, aged between 19 and 59, mean age 33.07 ( $SD=8.27$ ), 56.4 % married, 9 participants did not report their marital status. Education level of the participants: primary school degree (10 %), secondary school degree (31.4 %), high school degree (40.5 %), bachelor's degree (16.4 %), master degree (0.9 %). 16.8 % of the participants were from the private sector.

## Measures

*The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II-C):* It is a 28-item conflict handling style scale that was developed to measure five dimensions of organizational conflict (conflicts with co-workers). Participants were asked how much they agreed (1 strongly disagree, 5 strongly agree) with the items. The dimensions are Integrating (IN), Compromising (CO) Obliging (OB), Dominating (DO), Avoiding (AV) described by Rahim (Rahim, 1983; Rahim & Magner, 1995).

*Type A personality (TAPS):* To assess the Type A personality, a 23-item Type A scale suggested by (Yıldız & Özsoy, 2013) was used. The scale was proposed for studies in Turkish Language. The scale normally measures Type A personality with five dimensions, however in this study we used four

dimensions (Competitiveness (CP), Egocentrism (EG), Work Orientation (WO) and Impatience (IM). Participants were asked how much they agreed (1 strongly disagree, 5 strongly agree).

**Findings:** Descriptive statistics and internal consistency findings are presented in Table 1. Intercorrelations are presented in Table 2.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistency Findings**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math></b>
<i>Global Type A</i>	2.94	0.58	.78
<b>Egocentrism</b>	2.40	0.87	.84
<b>Competitiveness</b>	3.33	0.97	.71
<b>Work Orientation</b>	2.55	1.31	.75
<b>Impatience</b>	3.50	0.90	.75
<b>ROCI-II</b>			.80
<b>Integrating</b>	3.27	0.63	.75
<b>Compromising</b>	2.86	0.81	.75
<b>Obliging</b>	3.28	0.67	.71
<b>Avoiding</b>	3.07	0.66	.73
<b>Dominating</b>	2.86	0.81	.74

Note.  $N=220$ ,  $M$ = mean,  $SD$ = standard deviation,  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , ROCI-II= The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II

The internal consistency for both scales was found to be acceptable (minimum score was .71 for obliging). Therefore as it is seen from the Table, both for TAPS and ROCI-II-C, the internal consistency was found to be satisfactory.

**Table 2. Inter-correlations**

	TA	CP	EG	WO	IM	IN	CO	OB	DO	AV
<b>Total Type A Score (TA)</b>	1									
<b>Competiveness (CP)</b>	.54***	1								
<b>Egocentrism (EG)</b>	.53***	0,07	1							
<b>Work orientation (WO)</b>	.63***	.14*	.17*	1						
<b>Impatience (IM)</b>	.54***	.18**	.02	.16*	1					
<b>Integrating (IN)</b>	-,03	.17*	-,07	-,11	-,09	1				
<b>Compromising</b>	-,08	-,01	-,13*	.03	-,04	.25***	1			
<b>Obliging (OB)</b>	-,02	.09	-,06	-,03	-,05	.70***	.27***	1		
<b>Dominating (DO)</b>	.28***	.14*	.35***	.15*	.02	.02	.04	.09	1	
<b>Avoiding (AV)</b>	-,08	-,01	-,13	.03	-,04	.25***	.33***	.27**	.04	1

Note. N=220, \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Expect dominating, a negative relationship was expected among Type A personality (i.e., total Type A score) and conflict handling styles; however even though negative relationships were achieved they were not significant. Therefore H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>3</sub>, and H<sub>4</sub> were all rejected. On the other hand, as expected Type A score was positively correlated with dominating. Thus H<sub>1</sub> was supported.

It is also useful to mention that some dimensions of Type A personality were related to some of the conflict handling styles. For example, egocentrism was positively related to dominating and negatively related to compromising. Further competitiveness was positively related to integrating.

### Discussion & Conclusion

People who score high on Type A personality were found to be have higher tendency persuading on dominating style of handling the conflict. Egocentrism dimension of Type A personality was related to dominating positively and integrating negatively. Being work oriented as a key element of Type A personality was positively related to avoiding and negatively related to integrating. All the other facets of Type A personality dimensions had insignificant relationships with the conflict handling styles. It is an expected finding that dominating and Type A personality is positively related, as already explained earlier in this manuscript dominating style includes high concern for

self and low concern for the others. On the other hand we expected negative relationships between other conflict handling styles and type A personality. Although negative relationships were obtained, those were all insignificant.

The main contribution of the research was to indicate that conflict handling styles vary depending on some individual differences (i.e., type A personality). The more it is known the factors affecting conflict handling styles the better approach could be followed by organizations. Because conflict could be a starting point for destructive working climate, if it is not effectively handled. Therefore managers or leaders should be aware of the roles of individual differences in conflict situations so that better outcomes could be obtained.

On the other hand this study has some critical limitations; it only includes a small sample group (i.e., 220 employees). That is why; with this limited amount of sample size, it is hard to make general assumptions. This study only provides some new insight on the relationships between Type A personality and conflict handling styles.

In future research it is suggested that this study should be replicated by a larger sample size. Additionally we only tested the relationships between type A personality and conflict handling styles among peers, however measuring the conflict handling styles with supervisors and subordinates might also provide some new critical findings. Since it is clear that supervisor-subordinates relationships is affected by many factors (e.g., organizational culture, organizational type, organizational size, national culture and etc.) it would be interesting to conduct research to determine the role of personality (i.e., Type A personality) in conflict handling styles in different organizational aspects. For the future research it might be also necessary to conduct research on the role of several critical individual differences (e.g., self-efficacy, the Dark Triad, and bright personality traits).

It is clear that, managing conflict optimally is critical for both individuals and organizations. Thus it is necessary to understand the role of individual differences in conflict handling styles in organizational context. Even though the current study has critical limitations, it still provides some new findings on the relationships between Type A personality and conflict handling styles. To sum up Type A personality plays role in conflict handling styles and it is suggested that further research will provide detailed insight on the role of type A personality in conflict handling styles.

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