THE MEASUREMENT OF NEGOTIATING ABILITY: EVIDENCE FROM INDIA

Himanshu Rai, Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow, India

ABSTRACT

Conflicts are an ever present reality; and, we see that with an increase in psychological maturity at workplaces, conflicts are increasingly being handled through negotiations. While contemporary literature and tools deal with negotiating strategy, tools and techniques, what they miss out on is negotiating "ability". The primary premise of this paper is that behind these tools used in negotiations, is the individual ability to grapple with such interactions. The paper draws from an earlier work on the morphology of dispute handling capability to generate items for negotiating ability. The research was carried out in three phases. In the first phase, thirty incidents of dispute from Mahabharata - an Indian epic about a war transcending human race and its complexities - were outlined and subsequently analyzed to draw insights into negotiating and the capability required to negotiate. In the second phase, thirty exploratory in-depth interviews were carried out with executives to obtain an insight into the concept of negotiating ability using the critical incident technique. In the third phase of the research, findings from the qualitative methods were validated through survey method. The emerging scale along with the sub- scales shows robust psychometric properties and is expected to be useful for academics and practitioners alike.

INTRODUCTION

We live in a volatile world where disputes of varying magnitudes and consequences abound and dispute handling capability appears to be a scarce commodity. It can be argued that disputes, if not handled well, could have far reaching consequences. On the other hand, well-handled disputes can have some positive outcomes as well. Conventional wisdom considers disputes as destructive; however, researchers (Pincus, 1986; Bendersky, 2003) consider them as opportunities to create awareness about problems, bring about organizational change, provide better solutions and improve internal management. Hellman (1993) perhaps brings out the dichotomy succinctly when he suggests that agreement is not necessarily good but then neither is disagreement especially when people disagree for the sake of disagreeing, as a way to assert themselves and to avoid feeling dominated. Researchers (Barker, Tjosvold, and Andrews, 1988; Lippitt, 1982; Schmidt, 1974; Sethi, 1977; Sayeed, 1990; Syeed, 1990; Walton and McKersie, 1965) have also indicated several dispute handling strategies employed by executives at an individual level. Justice research suggests that voice (Batt, Colvin and Keefe, 2002; McCabe and Lewin, 1992), through enhancement of procedural justice (Barry, 2000; Trevino, 1992), and fairness perceptions (Blancero, 1995; Mesch & Dalton, 1989; 1992; Naumann et al., 1995; Schwartz & Moayed, 2001) helps in minimizing and resolving issues causing disputes. Besides, based on the norms of reciprocity, perceived organizational support (Naumann et al., 1995) and the quality of leader member exchange (Cleyman et al., 1995) also assist in keeping dispute-causing issues to a minimum.

While these are a few illustrations of how disputes could be handled, the focus of this study is not to examine these modalities. The focus of this study is on Negotiating Ability behind and beyond these methods premised on the assumption that it is this capability which is critical in choosing and deploying one or more of these methods. The following section reviews the literature on negotiating ability. The

review is followed by a section on research methodology that outlines the three phases in which the research was conducted. The section on results and discussion provides the statistical analysis of the data and provides empirical support for the framework. Finally, the conclusion highlights the implications of the study for the academia and the practitioners, the limitations of the study, and the areas for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kumar, Rai & Pati (2009) suggest that works in the field of negotiation could be divided into three areas, viz, negotiating ability, negotiating style and negotiating strategy. While negotiating style is the natural way in which one reacts to an interpersonal situation of conflict, negotiating strategy is the conscious choice a negotiator makes given the dual concerns of substantive and relational goals. While a lot of work has been done on negotiating style (e.g., Adler, 1983; Kumar, Rai & Pati, 2009; McDonald, 1996; Schein, 1985; Weingart, 2007) and negotiating strategy (Ackerman & Eden, 2011; Bard, 1987; Lumineau & Henderson, 2012; Ready & Tessema, 2009), there is no substantive work on negotiating ability. The only relevant literature that one can draw from is the literature on related issues about the ability abilities to manage conflicts and disputes. These include an understanding of the dynamics of interpersonal and intergroup conflict, for which the manager needs the knowledge of arbitration, bargaining, and collaborative problem solving, as well as skills in establishing and managing appropriate procedures for these approaches (Nugent, 2002), reputation and trust (Eden and Ackerman, 1998), refraining from making a fault on a moral issue (Borg, 2000), the ability to listen better and not be judgmental (Hall, 2002), the ability to protect the self esteem of all disputing parties (Shell, 1999), focus on substance and not personalities, commitment to standards of honesty, fairness and trust, commitment to meritocracy, organizational values and norms, personal integrity, and sensitivity to timing (Badaracco and Ellsworth, 1991), patience, endurance and demonstrated integrity and impartiality (Moore, 1996) and the personality traits of being trustworthy, ethical, fair, courteous, personable, tactful, sincere, fair minded, and self controlled (Hall, 1993). Further, these may also include empathy and equality (Lippitt, 1982), ability to see things as they really are (Bottles, 2001), ability to accept differences (Lee, 1998), strong oral and written communication skills (Neslund, 1988), assertive communication, active listening, problem solving skills (Antonioni, 1995), and mutual understanding (Bannon, 2003). However, there is a need to integrate these abilities conceptually in terms of a coherent framework that can explain its morphology and modality.

Rai (2007: 188, 189) suggested that the dispute handling capability manifests itself through five dimensions: Artfulness, which represented "the elements of shrewdness and calculatedness in the context of handling disputes", Diplomacy, which represented "the elements of tact, sensitivity and the ability to look at issues with acutely penetrating mental discernment", Detachedness, which represented "the elements of rational thinking and dissociating judgment from desires", Fair-mindedness, which represented "the elements of selflessness and equality in the context of handling disputes", and Sagacity, which represented "the elements of seeking the right path, equanimity, and reliance on own counsel apart from the rule-book". Given the increase in psychological maturity of conflict handlers in the corporate sector, it is likely that these conflicts would be increasingly handled through Negotiation. Consequently, Rai's dimensions of Dispute Handling Capability can be said to be a surrogate representation of Negotiating Ability itself. This Negotiating Ability can be defined as a "set of strengths required to negotiate and handle disputes effectively".

However, there is a need for empirical research to substantiate and measure this Negotiating Ability. The current study, therefore, seeks to determine the morphology of the concept of Negotiating Ability, develop measures for the construct and also to profile the modalities of the phenomenon in relation to some correlates identified through literature. The study tests the model suggested by Rai (2007) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Negotiating Ability (NA) Conceptual Frame of Reference (Adapted from Rai, 2007)
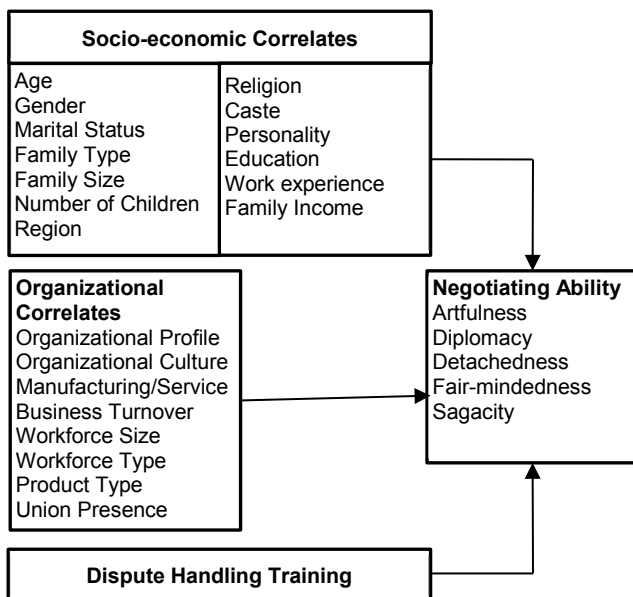
Model suggested by Ray (2007)and tested in this study

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This exploratory-formulative research used a three-phase strategy. The first stage included outlining and analysis of 30 incidents of dispute from Mahabharata, which besides being an Indian epic is an allegorical representation of the universal human situation in all its manifestations, ramifications and intricacies. The broad objective of this phase was to get a grounded view of Negotiating Ability and its correlates from a systematic study of complex characters and incidents of disputes in various contexts that formed a part of this epic and to generate measures for Negotiating Ability. Thirty incidents of dispute were outlined, described and subsequently analyzed to draw insights into dispute handling and the ability required to handle disputes better through negotiation. Two independent post-graduate readers with prior experience in the area of dispute handling coded the description of the incidents and the behavioral patterns observed. They commented on the presence of dispute elements and the behavioral patterns displayed by those involved in the disputes as well. The codings were compared and finalized after a thorough reexamination.

In the second stage, 30 exploratory in-depth interviews with executives from varied backgrounds and demography were conducted to get an insight into the concept of executive dispute handling capability. A semi-structured questionnaire was used. The interviews employed critical incident technique wherein the executives were asked to detail and describe one incident where they were in dispute with someone or if they handled disputes between two or more other parties. Subsequent questions sought information on the way the dispute was handled, and the capability required to handle it. The dispute situations could be at the workplace, or in the social sphere. The description of such an incident included information about when and where it happened (time, location and social context), what actually happened (who said or did what), what the respondent was thinking and feeling at the time, and just after the incident. Next, the respondent was asked to reflect on the incident in terms of why the particular incident stood out, what was going on, what he or she was assuming or taking for granted, and whether he or she could have interpreted this event differently from another point of view. Finally, the respondent was asked to reflect on what he or she had learnt from the incident in the sense that if they considered it had gone well, what

may have helped that to happen, and what were their skills, knowledge or understanding that proved useful. Alternatively, if they considered it had gone badly, they were asked what they could have done differently, what else was going on at the time, and how would they deal with it if it recurred. The in-depth exploratory interviews were carried out at various locations in a city in India and lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. During the interview, clarifications were given to the respondents whenever they were unsure of what exactly was being asked of them. The interviews were recorded on tape with permission from the respondents and subsequently, transcripts of the recordings were made for each interview. The profiles of the respondents, nature of the dispute, intensity of their involvement and success in handling disputes were also analyzed. Two independent post-graduate readers with prior experience in the area of dispute handling coded the text. These codings were compared and finalized after a thorough re-examination.

Finally, in the third stage, survey methodology involving a questionnaire survey was used. The survey instrument was developed using inputs derived from related literature, the 30 incidents from the Mahabharata and the 30 exploratory interviews.

Development of the Negotiating Ability Scale

Based on the survey of literature, the case study of the Mahabharata and the insights from the exploratory interviews, a list of 237 items was identified. For each item, a statement which would capture Negotiating Ability was generated. The content validity was assessed by using 10 raters, seven from academia and three from industry. Besides ensuring that the statements were representative of the domain of Negotiating Ability variable, the raters also provided feedback on the difficulty, comprehension and sufficiency of the items. Inter-rater agreement was sought and items with eighty per cent of raters agreeing were retained. The anchor points of the items were determined and a 5-point Likert scale was developed ranging from 'totally disagree' to 'totally agree'.

Pilot Study of the Negotiating Ability Questionnaire

The content validity exercise of the questionnaire ensured the appropriateness of the items in the given context and their adequacy in capturing the concept of Negotiating Ability. Next, a pilot study was conducted with a sample size of 106. The respondents were selected from organizations across the city of Ahmedabad in India. This was followed by factor analysis to determine if the constructs/dimensions were present in the data as theoretically posited. Items were retained based on factor loading, inter-item correlation, and item-to-total correlation. Reliability of the scale was assessed and the Cronbach Alpha value was found to be 0.9562, much greater than the accepted value of 0.6.   Items which seemed repetitive or confusing to the respondents were also either modified or dropped as deemed appropriate. Finally 100 items were retained in the survey instrument for the measurement of Negotiating Ability. These 100 items were then again given to three independent referees to be conceptually segregated into the dimensions of artfulness, diplomacy, detachedness, fair-mindedness and sagacity as explained before. Subsequently, 14 items formed the artfulness subscale, 22 items formed the diplomacy subscale, 26 items formed the detachedness subscale, 17 items formed the fair-mindedness subscale and 21 items formed the sagacity subscale.

Sample for the Survey

Subsequent to scale development, a survey was conducted among executives across the country. Cutting across industries, the respondents came from various domains such as steel, banking, software, educational institutions, insurance, and other manufacturing and service sectors. All respondents were, however, from the executive cadre of their respective organizations and came from various departments. The organizations varied in terms of their location, product, services, workforce, and turnover. In all,

1,000 questionnaires were given out. Of these, 540 received a response (54%), among which 505 were found to be usable. Out of the total number of responses received, 35 questionnaires had several items unanswered, including the dependent variable, and were considered not usable. The respondents included 373 males (73.86%), and varied in terms of age, work experience, marital status, family type and size, number of children, and personality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Scales

For negotiating ability, the pilot study and the content analysis generated 100 items to measure Negotiating Ability. On completion of the data collection item analysis was redone. The item analysis was done at the subscale level. Inconsistent items were removed and only those items were retained which "hung together" and were significantly correlated with the index scores for each subscale. The final analysis generated 7 items for artfulness, 12 items for diplomacy, 19 items for detachedness, 10 items for fair-mindedness, and 13 items for sagacity. These items in each sub scale were found to be loading on to one factor when subjected to factor analysis indicating that they were indeed measuring the underlying construct. The Cronbach alpha values for the subscales were 0.7137 for artfulness, 0.888 for diplomacy, 0.9078 for detachedness, 0.8353 for fair-mindedness, and 0.8613 for sagacity. While Nunnally (1967) has recommended a value of Cronbach alpha over 0.5 in case of exploratory studies, the high values computed for this study showed the sturdiness of the subscales. Based on literature, exploratory interviews and the incidents from the Mahabharata, several variables were identified as likely correlates of NA. Of these, social correlates like age, gender, marital status, family type (joint or nuclear), family size, number of children, region (in terms of five regions viz. North, South, East, West and Central), religion, caste, education, work experience and family income were measured as a part of the demographic data. Personality type was assessed using a modified version of Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Data on organizational correlates such as organization profile (regional, national or a multinational profile), organization type (manufacturing or services), business turnover, workforce size, workforce type (regional, multicultural or multinational profile), product type (single product, multiproduct or multibusiness organization), and union presence was included in the study. Organizational culture was measured using the 40-item version of the OCP used by Cable and Judge (1997) and derived originally from O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell (1991). Finally, dispute handling training was measured in terms of number of days of training received by asking the respondents as to how many days of training on dispute handling had they received in their entire work tenure.

External Validity Issues

The external validity of a study refers to the extent to which findings can be generalized across time, persons and settings (Cook and Campbell, 1979). The external validity of findings would be threatened if the sample were systematically biased, for instance, if the responses on the Negotiating Ability scales had either "very high" or "very low" scores. The standard deviation of the individual items is within acceptable limits. Further, the responses show good distribution on Negotiating Ability subscales since the mean and median are similar, skewness is less than 2 and Kurtosis is less than 5 (Ghiselli, Campbell and Zedeck, 1981). Overall, there does not seem to be an evident bias due to the dependent variable measure used in this study (Refer Table 1).

The 30 exploratory interviews used Critical Incident Technique as explained in the preceding discussion. The interviews were recorded on tape with permission from the interviewees and subsequently transcripts of the interviews were made. These transcripts were then subjected to content analysis. Phrases and words denoting Negotiating Ability and its correlates were gleaned out and their frequency was recorded. Conclusions were drawn based on these results.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics: Dimensions of Negotiating Ability

		Artfulness	Diplomacy	Detachedness	Fair-mindedness	Sagacity
N	Valid	505	505	505	505	505
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.7021	3.8089	3.9101	3.9703	3.9570
Median		3.7143	3.9167	3.9474	4.0000	4.0000
Std. Deviation		0.5698	0.6286	0.5708	0.5567	0.5635
Variance		0.3246	0.3952	0.3259	0.3099	0.3175
Skewness		-0.514	-0.692	-0.950	-0.682	-0.717
Std. Error of Skewness		0.109	0.109	0.109	0.109	0.109
Kurtosis		0.971	1.557	1.492	1.057	0.916
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.217	0.217	0.217	0.217	0.217
Range		3.29	3.75	3.05	3.10	3.08
Minimum		1.71	1.25	1.95	1.90	1.92
Maximum		5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

Similarly, the incidents of dispute taken from the Mahabharata were subjected to content analysis after the incidents were outlined and described in details. Phrases and words that explained the understanding of negotiating ability, its dimensions and its correlates were noted down and their frequency was recorded. Conclusions were drawn based on these results.

The survey data was subjected predominantly to correlational analysis where the independent variables were continuous or dichotomous and comparison of means where the independent variables were categorical. Interpretations were made based on these results. Descriptive Statistics have been generated for the five conceptual dimensions of Negotiating Ability as shown in Table 1. These statistics show the sample distributions on these variables as well as the frequency distributions of each of these. Further, correlational analysis was done for the five dimensions of Negotiating Ability. Wherever the proposed correlates were categorical, their means vis-à-vis Negotiating Ability were determined and the independent samples T test procedure for comparison of means between groups divided in twos was carried out. These correlations indicate the strength and the direction of relationship between the independent variables viz. socio-economic correlates, organizational correlates and dispute handling training, and the dependent variables, viz. the five dimensions of Negotiating Ability.

Socio-economic Correlates

The significance of the correlations between the socio-economic correlates of the various dimensions of Negotiating Ability and the dimensions of Negotiating Ability (dependent variable) is outlined in Table 2 below. These are the socio-economic variables which were either continuous or dichotomous in nature.

Table 2: Comparison of Socio-economic Correlates

Dimension Variable	Artfulness	Diplomacy	Detachedness	Fair-mindedness	Sagacity
Age	0.290 (S)	0.340 (S)	0.372 (S)	0.356 (S)	0.357 (S)
Gender	0.092 (S)	-0.002 (N)	0.060 (N)	0.091 (S)	0.100 (S)
Marital Status	0.091 (S)	0.139 (S)	0.170 (S)	0.127 (S)	0.086 (N)
Family Type	0.032 (N)	0.011 (N)	-0.038 (N)	0.081 (N)	0.020 (N)
Family Size	0.055(N)	-0.016 (N)	-0.037(N)	-0.023 (N)	0.033 (N)
Number of Children	0.070 (N)	0.102 (S)	0.088(S)	0.108 (S)	0.079 (N)
Work Experience	0.266 (N)	0.299 (S)	0.324 (S)	0.333 (S)	0.331 (S)

Socio-economic variables were either continuous or dichotomous in nature. Age and work experience are significantly correlated with all the dimensions of NA. Gender is a correlate of artfulness, fair-mindedness and sagacity dimensions.

As can be seen from the table, age and work experience are significantly correlated with all the dimensions of NA. Gender is a correlate of artfulness, fair-mindedness and sagacity dimensions. Marital

Status is significantly correlated with Artfulness, Diplomacy, Detachedness, and Fair-mindedness. Family type and family size do not correlate with any dimension while number of children is correlated with Diplomacy, Detachedness and Fair-mindedness. The comparison of the means for other categorical independent variables (highest) has been shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Comparison of Means for Socio-economic Correlates

Dimension Variable	Artfulness	Diplomacy	Detachedness	Fair-mindedness	Sagacity
Region	West	North	South	North	South
Religion	Sikhism	Sikhism	Sikhism	Hinduism	Sikhism
Caste	Brahmin	Brahmin	Brahmin	Brahmin	Brahmin
Personality Type	IIFP	IIFP	ESTP	IIFP	IIFP
Education	Graduate	Graduate	Graduate	Graduate	Graduate
Family Income	Higher	Higher	Higher	Higher	Higher

Table 3 shows a comparison of the means for other categorical independent variables (highest.)

The region-wise analysis indicates that while the West has the highest mean for artfulness, the South has the highest mean for detachedness and sagacity. The North has the highest mean for diplomacy, and fair-mindedness. In religion, Hinduism has the highest mean for the Fair-mindedness dimension and Sikhism for all other dimensions. For Caste, Brahmins have the highest mean across all Negotiating Ability dimensions. For the personality type, ESTP type has the highest mean for detachedness while IIFP has the highest mean for all other dimensions. As can be seen from the table, in Education, Graduates have significantly higher means than others across all Negotiating Ability dimensions. For family income, higher income group has the highest mean for all the dimensions.

Organizational Correlates

The significance of the correlations between the organizational correlates of Negotiating Ability and the dimensions of Negotiating Ability (dependent variable) is outlined in Table 4 below. These are the organizational level variables which were either continuous or dichotomous in nature.

Table 4: Comparison of Organizational Correlates

Dimension Variable	Artfulness	Diplomacy	Detachedness	Fair-mindedness	Sagacity
Organizational Culture	0.516 (S)	0.467 (S)	0.565 (S)	0.474 (S)	0.546 (S)
Manufacturing or Services	-0.043 (N)	0.074 (N)	0.044 (N)	0.053 (N)	0.021 (N)
Business Turnover	-0.060 (N)	-0.039 (N)	-0.068 (N)	-0.062 (N)	-0.070 (N)
Workforce Size	-0.046 (N)	0.085 (N)	0.007 (N)	-0.014 (N)	0.022 (N)
Union Presence	-0.091 (S)	-0.007 (N)	-0.082 (N)	0.008 (N)	-0.059 (N)

Table 4 outlines the significance of the correlations between the organizational correlates of Negotiating Ability and the dimensions of Negotiating Ability (dependent variable)

As can be seen from the table, organizational culture is a significant correlate of all dimensions of Negotiating Ability. Union Presence is a significant correlate of the artfulness dimension. None of the other organizational level variables significantly determine any dimension of Negotiating Ability. The comparison of the means for other categorical independent variables (highest) has been shown in Table 5 below. For the organizational profile, multinationals have the highest mean for all dimensions of Negotiating Ability. For the workforce type, multinational workforce has the highest mean for all the dimensions. As can be seen from the table, for the product type, multi-business has the highest mean for the artfulness and sagacity dimensions of Negotiating Ability, while multi-product has the highest mean for the other dimensions.

Table 5: Comparison of Means for Organizational Correlates

Dimension Variable	Artfulness	Diplomacy	Detachedness	Fair-mindedness	Sagacity
Organizational Profile	Multinational	Multinational	Multinational	Multinational	Multinational
Workforce Type	Multinational	Multinational	Multinational	Multinational	Multinational
Product Type	Multi Business	Multi Product	Multi Product	Multi Product	Multi Business

Table 5 shows that product type, multi-business has the highest mean for the artfulness and sagacity dimensions of Negotiating Ability, while multi-product has the highest mean for the other dimensions.

Dispute Handling Training

The significance of the correlation between Dispute Handling Training and the various dimensions of Negotiating Ability (dependent variable) has been outlined in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Comparison of Dispute Handling Training

Dimension Variable	Artfulness	Diplomacy	Detachedness	Fair-mindedness	Sagacity
Training	0.205 (S)	0.204 (S)	0.276 (S)	0.217 (S)	0.223 (S)

Table 6 shows that training has a significant correlation with all the dimensions of Negotiating Ability.

As is evident from the table, training has a significant correlation with all the dimensions of Negotiating Ability. The data analysis has thrown up some interesting results. Results suggest that the sample for this study shows good distribution on the construct of Negotiating Ability dimensions. Further, the results also indicate the strength and the direction of the relationship of socio-economic correlates, organizational correlates, and dispute handling training with the dimensions of Negotiating Ability. While the strength of these relationships varies from weak correlations to strong correlations, the significance of the relationship varies between not significant to very significant.

Dimension Level Analysis

Age and work experience are significantly correlated with all Negotiating Ability dimensions. The results for age and work experience are consistent with the findings in phase 1 and phase 2 of the study where these two variables have high frequencies in the content analyses. One of the variables that came up for discussion during the exploratory interviews was past experience of handling disputes. However, this could not be measured during the survey for the want of an objective way of measurement. Prior handling of disputes would both add to the experience and provide hands-on training. Thus, it could be a significant correlate of Negotiating Ability. Perhaps, this variable gets reflected in age and work experience also because it would be reasonable to assume that with the advancement in age and work experience, one would have handled more disputes in all spheres of life including those in the domestic and social space. Another argument can be provided from the Mahabharata itself. Mahabharata reveals that power in its various manifestations could also be a significant determination of dispute handling capability. One such element of power is the amount of leverage that the executive has and will use to drive his actions through. This could be based on official position (authority), self-acquired respect and mastery (prestige), proximity to powerful people (referent power) and handle on resources (resource power). Each of these could be a correlate of Negotiating Ability. It is plausible that with increasing age and work experience, an executive would have a higher amount of leverage within the organization. This, in turn, would lead to greater Negotiating Ability.

Marital status is also significantly correlated to Negotiating Ability such that married people have been found to have higher Negotiating Ability than unmarried one. One explanation for this could be that marriage is understood to bring greater responsibilities and decision-making opportunities to people. This

enables a person to hone his or her skills related to handling day-to-day domestic issues. Moreover, married people experience a lot of work-family conflict as compared to unmarried people since they spend comparatively a larger amount of time in family activities (Burke, 1988; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). As prior experience has a high frequency in connection with determining Negotiating Ability, it stands to reason that married people would have a higher Negotiating Ability than unmarried people. Similar argument can be given for the positive relationship between number of children and Negotiating Ability. The number of children is significantly correlated with diplomacy, detachedness and fair-mindedness dimensions as well as the overall construct. Since more children would indicate more chances of disputes (among them) at the domestic front as well as disputes arising out of higher demands on their parent's time (Greenhaus and Kopelman, 1981), people with more children are likely to have more experience of dispute handling. Moreover, they are likely to inculcate the ability to be diplomatic, unbiased and fair-minded while dealing with children. Consistent with the findings of the in-depth interview, therefore, the number of children is positively associated with Negotiating Ability dimensions.

The results for gender are consistent both with the content analysis of incidents from the Mahabharata and the previous literature. Gender is a significant correlate of artfulness, fair-mindedness and sagacity dimensions of Negotiating Ability. The correlation with some specific dimensions of Negotiating Ability is in line with earlier studies (e.g., Nicotera and Rancer, 1994) which suggest that women are generally more nurturing and tentative in nature as compared to men. Their nurturing nature would dampen their artfulness abilities while the tentative demeanour would affect their fair-mindedness and sagacity capabilities to handle disputes. Family size and family type have not been found to be significantly related to Negotiating Ability dimensions. This may look to be inconsistent with the fact that large families are likely to produce higher incidences of work-family conflict (Greenhaus and Beutell,1985), however, one needs to take a closer look at these two dimensions together. A closer look at the data reveals that the family size is greater in Joint families. This is logical since a joint family would include people other than the immediate family and in most cases, parents (of the respondents). In such families, domestic pressures get dispersed over a larger cross-section of people and demands of time from children and spouse are perhaps met by other family members. This contradicting effect probably cancels the independent effect that these two dimensions may have otherwise had.

Region was one of the dimensions identified by the interviewees for determining Negotiating Ability. The argument offered was that different regions in India had various cultures and their associated peculiarities. Given Nugent's (2002) framework that suggested that culture and cultural differences, including national culture, would impact and influence the conflict and managerial intervention possibilities in a significant way, it was likely that cultural peculiarities of different regions of India would have differential effects on Negotiating Ability. For region-wise analysis, the West has the highest mean for artfulness, the South has the highest mean for detachedness and sagacity. The North has the highest mean for diplomacy, and fair-mindedness. However, except for the South, none of the differences were significant. This could be explained perhaps with two arguments. First, the instrument required respondents to indicate their state of domicile. However, the respondent may choose to work in some other state and over a prolonged work duration and residence, the effect of home state peculiarities may get diluted or modified. Second, the states have been put into the region bracket from purely a geographical perspective. For instance the states of Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal were included in North while the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu were included in South. The states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, Orissa, and West Bengal were included in East while those of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan were included in west. The states of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh formed the region of Central India. Going by conventional knowledge, one can argue for instance that there would be cultural differences within the eastern states of Assam, West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. The same argument can be extended to other regions and their states as well. Given that it was in fact the culture that should have determined the classification of these regions and not their

geographical location, perhaps, the insignificant differences in determination of Negotiating Ability region wise stand explained.

The cultural perspective can be extended to religion as well. Religion has a significant effect on the thinking, attitude and behavior of its constituents (Rai, 2005). Studies (e.g., Weaver and Agle, 2002) point out that research has established that religiosity is related to personality, cognition, stress coping mechanisms, overall health, marital patterns, political behavior, voting behavior, use of illicit or illegal substances, and business ethics. In religion, Hinduism has the highest mean for the Fair-mindedness dimension and Sikhism for all other dimensions. The results for Sikhs and Parsees have to be addressed with caution given their small sample sizes of 5 and 2 respectively.

Since the sample size for religions other than Hindus is small, for discussion purposes the study would combine all other religions into the others category and then see the variation between the majority and the other religions in India. Religion has a significant correlation with the various dimensions of Negotiating Ability (except Artfulness). Although both Hindu and Muslim societies are collectivistic (Kanekar and Merchant, 2001), the Hindu philosophy basically talks about action with a sense of detachment and selflessness where the fruits of the action are subservient to the goal of common good and fundamental duties of the human beings (Rai, 2005) and can be said to assist Negotiating Ability building. The nuances of cultural differences are also manifested in Castes in the Indian context. The Indian social system still suffers from an inflexible caste system (Mehta and Kapoor, 1998) where caste has been a determining dimension in education, work and employment as well. Earlier classified into occupational groups with Brahmins representing the class involved with learning and teaching, Kshatriyas the warrior class, Vaishyas as the trading class and Shudras as those doing the menial work, the caste divisions are determined by birth today. So, a Brahmin's child is a Brahmin and so on and so forth. In India, caste is a dominant dimension determining social stratification that leads eventually to social reproduction. In this study, Brahmins have the highest means across all Negotiating Ability dimensions.

For personality type, the personality type IIFP has significantly higher correlations with all other dimensions except detachedness. The people of IIFP type tend to be quiet, reserved, deeply passionate, sensitive, dedicated to those close to them, creative, original, imaginative, curious and flexible. They have deep beliefs and tend to live in harmony with their values. A look at the instrument to measure Negotiating Ability would show that all these characteristics are an integral part of Negotiating Ability. On the other hand, the other types have one or more characteristics which could adversely impact their Negotiating Ability. While EIFJ personality types are passionately opinionated, EIFP personality types are disorganized. EITJ are outspoken while EITP are irreverent. ESFJ are easily hurt and conventional while ESFP are impulsive and unpredictable. While ESTJ are sceptical, ESTP are casual and at times, impulsive. ISFJ are uncompromising and easily offended while ISFP are sensitive to criticism. ISTJ are not diplomatic while ISTP are impulsive. IITJ are reserved, IIFJ are reserved, while IITP are casual and unpredictable. The results are in line with extremely high scores given to personality type as a correlate of Negotiating Ability both in the interviews and the analysis of Mahabharata dispute incidents. They are also consistent with reference to previous studies (e.g., Song et al, 2000) who suggest personality, environmental and structural characteristics as correlates of these capabilities.

Perhaps the most surprising result is that of the independent comparison of means of the various categories of education with Negotiating Ability dimensions. Although the proposition that education would have an impact on Negotiating Ability is brought out by the high frequency of acceptance in the content analysis of interview data, it is the detailed analysis that is surprising. The finding that MBAs and Post Graduates have significantly higher correlations with Negotiating Ability as compared to CAs can be explained in terms of management being a professional course with specific subjects targeted towards understanding of disputes, dispute handling, negotiations etc. Management Education broadens background for general management, broadens thinking about other areas of business, helps in updating

and rethinking of management problems and techniques, and broadens base of knowledge for decision-making (Crotty, 1974). The significant growth effects of attending MBA programs have been found to include awareness of wider business problems, and knowledge of other functional areas in terms of professional growth; analytical and management skills in terms of analytical growth; acceptance of other points of view in terms of ethical growth; and broadened thinking and confidence in own ability in terms of personal growth. Since all these attributes are likely to contribute towards better handling of disputes at workplace, it is plausible that management education results in higher Negotiating Ability. However, it is tough to explain how graduates seem to have a higher Negotiating Ability as compared to CAs and Engineers. One reason could be that some respondents filled up graduate as their level of education even though it is likely that they had an engineering degree, or some other professional degree like a management graduation or a graduation in computer applications etc. Second, the sample size of CAs is only 15 as compared to 132 graduates, 152 MBAs and 95 post graduates. This difference in numbers would likely make data a little skewed. For family income, the higher income group has significantly higher correlations with all Negotiating Ability dimensions. The fact that lower income group only had 4 respondents explains its exclusion from the significance list.

Amongst the organizational level variables, organizational culture has the greatest impact on all Negotiating Ability dimensions. In fact, the Pearson Correlation values suggest a very strong impact. This is in line with the high score culture receives in the interview data analysis as well as previous literature. Organizational culture has proved to be a significant determinant of the dispute handling approaches (Chew and Lim, 1995; Chiu, Wong and Kobinsky, 1998; Liao and Tsai, 2002; Morris et al, 1998; Samantara, 2003), and it is therefore likely that it would be a significant correlate of executive dispute handling capability. This is also supported by Nugent (2002) whose framework suggests that culture and cultural differences, including organizational culture, would impact and influence the conflict and managerial intervention possibilities in a significant way. The finding that workforce size, business turnover and the type of organization in terms of manufacturing or service providing needs to be studied in greater details. Results indicate that the type of organization, in terms of being a manufacturing or service organization, does not have a significant correlation with Negotiating Ability. However, the sign of the relationship indicates that respondents from manufacturing organizations have higher Negotiating Ability scores than those from service organizations. On the other hand, respondents from non-unionized organizations seem to have higher Negotiating Ability than those from unionized organizations. Further analysis reveals that manufacturing organizations are more likely to be unionized. This would imply that perhaps executives from manufacturing organizations which are non-unionized have a better Negotiating Ability than others. Studies (Benson, 2000) have indicated that employees in unionized workplaces were found to have significantly more voice mechanisms present than in non-unionized workplaces. In India, historically, the trade unions have played the role of an agent of social and economic changes, protecting and enhancing the interest of its members and trying to squeeze more and more out of managements through bargaining or conflict. To achieve this, they have resorted to several means ranging from collective bargaining and representation to strikes and disruptive activities. A corollary of this fact is that executives have to deal with the unions in unionized workplaces for most incidents of disputes and since union management interface happens through specific people in the organization, only those individuals are likely to have had previous experiences of handling disputes. On the other hand, in non-unionized workplaces, all executives need to handle disputes in their own work areas and thus, with increasing experience, they are likely to improve their Negotiating Ability.

For organizational profile, multinationals have a significantly higher correlation with Negotiating Ability dimensions as compared to National level organizations and Regional organizations. It is likely that multinationals attract more talented and qualified people as compared to national and regional organizations. Moreover, the quality of work and training would be superior in multinationals. Also, they are likely to be bigger organizations and since all these dimensions help achieve better Negotiating ability, a combination of these can explain this result. By the same argument, the results for

organizational workforce type can be explained. For organizational workforce, although organizations with a multinational workforce have the highest mean, they are not significantly different from organizations with a multicultural workforce or regional workforce in relation to their Negotiating Ability. This could be because of the small number (30) of the organizations with a regional workforce profile. For Product Type, Multi-business organizations and multi-product organizations have significantly higher correlations with Negotiating Ability dimensions in comparison to Single product organizations. Multi-business has the highest mean for the artfulness and sagacity dimensions of Negotiating Ability, while multi-product has the highest mean for the other dimensions. This stands to reason since single product organizations are likely to be small organizations where instances of disputes itself may be low. Training on dispute handling seems to have a strong correlation with all Negotiating Ability dimensions. This is in line with previous researches which have found training to be an effective tool; this is also echoed by the analysis of the interview results, which show a very high frequency for training as a correlate of Negotiating Ability.

CONCLUSION

This research has significant implications both for the academia and the practitioners since it has developed a robust instrument to measure Negotiating Ability through its conceptual dimensions. The study has operationalized the concept of Negotiating Ability, and, the fact that the sample for the survey came from all across the country gives it a high generalizability. Moreover, the study has used both qualitative and quantitative approaches and the results of both indicate a common culmination of findings. This further increases the robustness of the results. Although the study is based in India, the concept of negotiation transcends borders. The Negotiating Ability scale is blind to the causes or peculiarities of disputes and thus can be said to be universal in nature. The practitioners stand to benefit from this study too. Handling disputes is a primary job of all managers irrespective of their work area and responsibility. Managers encounter disputes not only in a formal manner but in latent forms every day of their work life. This study will provide them with a better understanding of the concept of dispute handling and provide them with an instrument to diagnose their Negotiating Ability. The significant finding that Negotiating Ability is not necessarily something that a person is born with, but is an attribute that could be honed through training gives them a chance to improve their capabilities in terms of handling disputes. Similarly, other findings that age, work experience, and personality type may be significant correlates of Negotiating Ability, would enable organizations to choose personnel for negotiations and bargaining in the event of disputes. This study would also help organizations to design their mentoring and coaching programmes with an aim to instill these capabilities in their executives.

The study suffers from the following limitations: The information on Negotiating Ability was self reported and is thus liable to be affected by social desirability and self-enhancement effects. This problem was, however, addressed by giving the respondents a limited time to respond, and by convincing them of the confidentiality of the process. While this may have limited the problem to some extent, it could not have completely eliminated it. Future studies may use Negotiating Ability data reported by colleagues, or superiors, or subordinates, or a combination of these for the individual targets. One important variable which came through the interviews in Phase 1 was past experiences of dispute handling. This variable could not be measured in this study due to lack of an objective measure which could have indicated both the extent and the quality of past experiences. In future, researchers may try to bolster their survey data with short interviews of the respondents which could indicate the extent and quality of their previous experiences. Future research may also test this instrument across different contexts and cultures.

REFERENCES

Ackermann, Fran & Eden, Colin. (2011). Negotiation in strategy making teams: group support systems and the process of cognitive change. Group Decision & Negotiation, 20(3), 293-314.

Adler, N.J. (1983). A topology of management studies involving culture. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 14(2), 29-47.

Antonioni, David. (1995). Practicing conflict management can reduce organizational stressors. *Industrial Management*, 37(5), 7-8.

Badaracco Jr., Joseph L. and Ellsworth, Richard R. (1991). Leadership, integrity and conflict. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 4(4), 46-55.

Bannon, Jeff. (2003). Anger at Work. *Training and Development*, 57(10), 64-65.

Bard, Jonathan F. (1987). Developing competitive strategies for buyer-supplier negotiations. *Management Science*, 33(9), 1181-1191.

Barker, Jeffrey, Tjosvold, Dean, and Andrews, Robert I. (1988). Conflict approaches of effective and ineffective project managers: a field study in a matrix organization. *Journal of Management Studies*, 25(2), 167-178.

Barry, Bruce. (2000),. When will grievants desire voice?: A test of situational, motivational, and attributional explanations. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 11(2), 106-134.

Batt, Rosemary; Colvin, Alexander and Keefe, Jeffrey. (2002). Employee voice, humans resource practice and quit rates: evidence from the telecommunications industry. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 55(4), 573-594.

Bendersky, Corinne. (2003). Organizational dispute resolution systems: a complementarities model". *Academy of Management Review*. 28(4), 643-656.

Benson, John. (2000). Employee voice in union and non-union Australian workplaces. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 38(3), 453-459.

Blancero, Donna. (1995). Non-Union grievance systems: system characteristics and fairness perceptions. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 84-88.

Borg, Marian J. (2000). Expressing conflict, neutralizing blame, and making concessions in small-claims mediation. *Law and policy*, 22(2), 115-141.

Bottles, Kent. (2001). The good leader. *The Physician Executive*, March-April, 74-76.

Burke, R.J. (1988). Some antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict. In E.B. Goldsmith (eds.). *Work and Family: Theory, Research and Applications*, Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Chew, Irene K.H. and Lim, Christopher. (1995). A Confucian perspective on conflict resolution. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 6(1), 143-157.

Chiu, Randy K; Wong, May M and Kobinski Jr., Frederick A. (1998). Confucian values and conflict behavior of Asian managers: a comparison of two countries. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 26(1), 11-22.

Cleyman, Kelly L.; Lex, Steve M. & Love, Kevin G. (1995). Employee grievances: an application of the leader-member exchange model. *The International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 3(2), 156-174.

Cook, T and Campbell, D. (1979). *Quasi-experimentation: Design and Analysis Issues for Field Settings*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Crotty, Philip T. (1974). Continuing Education and the experienced manager. *California Management Review*, 17(1), 108-123.
Eden, Colin and Ackerman, Fran. (1998). *Making Strategy*. London: Sage Publications Limited.

Ghiselli, E.E., Campbell, J.A., and Zedeck, S. (1981). *Measurement theory for behavioural sciences*. San Francisco, CA: W.H. Freeman and Co.

Greenhaus, J.H. and Beutell, N.J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. *Academy of Management Review*, 10(1), 76-88.

Greenhaus, J.H. and Kopelman, R.E. (1981). Conflict between work and non-work roles: implications for the career planning process. *Human Resource Planning*, 4(1), 1-10.

Hall, John R. (2002). Handling difficult people can be the toughest job. *Air Conditioning Heating and Refrigeration News*, 217(16), 13.

Hellman, Paul. (1993). Cavemen don't bowl. *Management Review*, June, 64.

Kanekar, Suresh and Merchant, Shariffa M. (2001). Helping norms in relation to religious affiliation. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 141(5), 617-626.

Kumar, Manish, Rai, Himanshu and Pati, Surya P. (2009). An Exploratory Study on Negotiating Styles: Development of a Measure. *Vikalpa*, 34(4), 37-49.

Liao, Da-Chi and Tsai, Tien-Chu. (2002). The democratic concepts held by local elites on both sides of the Taiwan Strait: the perception of political participation, economic equality, and conflict reconciliation. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 11(31), 319-360.

Lippitt, Gordon L. (1982). Managing conflict in today's organizations. *Training and Development Journal*, July, 67-74.

Lumineau, Fabrice & Henderson, James. (2012). The influence of relational experience and contractual governance on the negotiation strategy in buyer-supplier disputes. *Journal of Operations Management*, 30(5), 382-395.

McCabe, Douglas and Lewin David. (1992). Employee voice: a human resource management perspective. *California Management Review*, 34(3), 112-123.

McDonald, J.W. (1996). An American's view of a U.S. negotiating style. *International Negotiation*, 1(2), 323-326.

Mehta, B.C. and Kapoor, Kranti. (1998). Caste, education and class relationship in India. *Journal of Higher Education*, 21(1), 37-58.

Mesch, Debra J. & Dalton, Dan R. (1989). Gender context in resolution of American workplace conflicts. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 129(5), 699-701.

Moore, Christopher. (1996). *The Mediation Process: practical strategies for resolving conflict*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Morris, Michael; Williams, Katherine; Leung, Kwok; Larrick, Richard; Mendoza, Teresa; Bhatnagar, Deepti; Li, Jianfeng; Kondo, Mari; Luo, Jin-Lian and Hu, Jun-Chen. (1998). Conflict management style: accounting for cross-national differences. *Journal of International Business Studies,* 29(4), 729-748.

Naumann, Stefanie E.; Bies, Robert J. & Martin, Christopher L. (1995). The roles of organizational support and justice during a layoff. *Academy of Management Proceedings,* 89-93.

Nicotera, Ann Maydan and Rancer, Andrew S. (1994). The influence of sex on self- perceptions and social stereotyping of aggressive communication. *Western Journal of Communication*, 58(4), 283-307.

Nugent, Patrick S. (2002). Managing conflict: third party interventions for managers. *Academy of Management Executive*, 16(1), 139-154.

Nunnally, J.C. (1967). *Psychometric Theory*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Pincus, David. (1986). Employee involvement programs as alternative dispute resolution strategies. *Labor Law Journal*, August, 520-524.

Rai, Himanshu. (2005). The Role of Hinduism in Global India and her Business Ethics in *Business and Religion: A Clash of Civilizations*. Edited by Nicholas Capaldi. Salem: M&M Scrivener Press. 379-389.

Rai, Himanshu. (2007). Dispute Handling Capability: Morphology and Modalities-Development of a Model. *Management & Labour Studies*, 32(2), 183-202.

Ready, Kathrine J & Tessema, Mussie T. (2009). Perceptions and strategies in the negotiation process: a cross-cultural examination of U.S. and Malaysia. *International Negotiation*, 14(3), 493-517.

Samantara, Rabinarayan. (2003). Management of superior-subordinate conflict: an exploration. *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 38(4), 444-459.

Saner, Raymond, Yiu, Lichia and Sondergaard, Mikael. (2000). Business diplomacy management: a core competency for global companies. *Academy of Management Executive*, 14(1), 80-92.

Sayeed, Omer Bin. (1990). Conflict management styles: relationship with leadership styles and moderating effect of esteem for coworkers. *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 26(1), 28-52.

Schein, E.H. (1985). Organizational culture and leadership. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Schmidt, Warren H. (1974). Conflict: a powerful process for good or bad change. *Management Review,* December, 4-10.

Schwartz, Murray & Moayed, Taraneh. (2001). Minimizing the likelihood of employee litigation. *Employee Rights Quarterly*, 53-57.

Scott, Bill. (1981). *The skills of negotiating*. London: Gower Publishing Company Limited.

Selltiz, Claire, Jahoda M, Deutsch M., and Cook, S.W. (1959). *Research method in social relations*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Sethi, Narendra K. (1977),. Conflict management: some suggested techniques and mechanisms. *Industrial Management*, May-June, 23-25.

Shell, Richard G. (1999). *Bargaining for Advantage*. New York: Penguin Group.

Song, Michael X; Xie, Jinhong and Dyer, Barbara. (2000). Antecedents and consequences of marketing managers' conflict handling behaviours. *Journal of Marketing*, 64, 50-66.

Sukhadeo, T. & Deshpande, R.S. (1999). Caste and labour market discrimination. *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 42(4), 841-854.

Syeed, Omer Bin. (1990). Managerial response to handling conflict situations: an appraisal of conflict management strategies. *Decision*, 17(1), 1-19.

Tarakeshwar, N.; Stanton, J., & Pargament, K.I. (2003). Religion: an overlooked dimension in cross-cultural psychology. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 34(4), 377-394.

Trevino, Linda Klebe. (1992). The social effects of punishment in organizations: a justice perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 17(4), 647-676.

Tyler, Tom R. (1991). Using procedures to justify outcomes: testing the viability of a procedural justice strategy for managing conflict and allocating resources in work organizations. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 12(3), 259-279.

Walton, Richard E. and McKersie, Robert B. (1965). *A behavioral theory of labor negotiations*. McGraw-Hill Book Company: USA.

Weaver, Gary R. and Agle, Bradley R. (2002). Religiosity and ethical behaviour in organizations: a symbolic interactionist perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 27(1), 77-97.

Weingart, L.R. (2007). Negotiating differences: How contrasting styles affect outcomes. *Negotiation*, 10(1), 1-4.

White, Daniel. (2004). Repairing damaged work relationships in R&D. *Research Technology Management*, January-February, 56-60.

White, Russell J. (2002). Solutions: employee conflict. *Credit Union Management*, June, 56-57.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

BIOGRAPHY

Himanshu Rai is an Associate Professor at the Indian Institute of Management Lucknow. His profile includes a stint of over eight years at Tata Steel, India, where he played a pivotal role in developing Quality Systems for his departments and Communication Policy for the company. His current areas of research include negotiation and influence tactics, cross-cultural issues including gender, gender differences in communication, management and religion, spirituality, recruitment advertising and proxemics. Details of his work are available on www.himanshurai.com and he can be reached at himanshu@iiml.ac.in and himanshurai@gmail.com