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Research Article

Conflict Management Practices of Customs Broker Practitioner: A Comparative Approach

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ABSTRACT

Conflict is inevitable in all organizations as well as in all professions and with proper management its negative effect can always be mitigated. This research utilized a descriptive-comparative approach and determined the extent of conflict management practices in customs brokerage from one hundred eighty professional brokers. Results revealed that customs brokers highly practiced the following conflict management: Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, Avoiding, and Accommodating. Likewise, results further revealed that there is no difference in the extent of practices of conflict management by customs brokers when industry, years in practice, and age are considered.

Keywords: *Conflict Management, Customs Administration, Conflict Management Style, Customs Broker*

Introduction

Every profession has a different focus of specialization and every professional's competence is measured against their level of expertise, effectiveness; and efficiency; particularly in their style of handling conflict which is part of life and business. In the customs broker's profession, conflict is everywhere. It occurs in the workplace, in an organization, within the business, and between the people transacting the business. The practice of the Customs Broker profession is imbued with public service, and, understandably, the Customs Broker works with a common interest in giving their best to serve their clients.

In addition, it is their responsibility to ensure the legal importation and exportation of articles to protect the interest of the government and the clients which will redound to the general welfare. On the other hand, because of so many differences particularly in priorities, background, views and opinions, levels of expertise, financial considerations, communication styles, and other factors, conflict will often arise, causing failures and delays in transactions and losing confidence, which sometimes causes the loss of clients and/or lawful revenue.

Thus, this study has been conducted to determine the extent of conflict management

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practices in the customs profession, and if they differ from industry, years of practice, and age of customs brokers.

Methods

The study utilized a quantitative descriptive design. Quantitatively, the study determined the conflict management practices of customs broker practitioners in selected industries using descriptive and comparative approaches.

Sample and Sampling

A total of one hundred eighty (180) customs brokers are utilized in the study via random-purposive sampling, specifically, 35

from public practice, 83 from private practice, and 62 from the academe.

Research Instrument

A survey instrument is used in gathering data containing the demographics and factors for conflict management style. The instrument is tested and passed reliability and validity tests using Cronbach alpha and Pearson correlation. Likewise, the following interpretation is used in assessing the extent of conflict management practices:

3.51 – 4.00	Highly Practiced
2.51 – 3.50	Practiced
1.51 – 2.50	Less Practiced
1.00 – 1.50	Not Practiced

Result and Discussion

Profile Distribution of Customs Broker Practitioner

Table 1. Summary of Profile Distribution in terms of Industry

Industry	f	%
Public	35	19.4
Private Firm	83	46.1
Academe	62	34.5
Years of Practice	f	%
3 years and below	48	27
4 – 7 Years	36	20
8 – 10 Years	67	37
11 years and above	29	16
Age	f	%
25 – 30 years old	42	23
31 – 36 years old	47	26
37 – 42 years old	66	37
43 years old and above	25	14

The table shows the summary of the profile distribution of the respondents in terms of Industry, Years of Practice, and Age. Results revealed that most of the respondents are

engaged in private practice, with at least eight to ten years of experience, and are thirty-seven to forty-two years old.

The Extent of Conflict Management Practices of Customs Brokers

Table 2. Summary of Extent of Conflict Management as Practice by Customs Broker

Conflict Management	Mean	Interpretation
Competing	3.54	Highly Practiced
Collaborating	3.67	Highly Practiced
Compromising	3.82	Highly Practiced
Avoiding	3.64	Highly Practiced
Accommodating	3.58	Highly Practiced

4.00 – 3.51 Highly Practiced, 3.50 – 2.51 Practiced, 2.50 – 1.51 Less Practiced, 1.50 – 1.00 Not Practiced

The table shows the extent of the practice of conflict management by customs brokers. Results revealed that conflict management in terms of Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, Avoiding, and Accommodating are all assessed by the respondents to be Highly Practiced. One reason for the said assessment is that customs brokers are guided by their code of ethics, and said norms are directly related to

the practice of conflict management in their profession. As mentioned by Doyo, J et al (2024), customs brokers usually and always adhere to their code of ethics, and as indicated in the research of Cajayon, M et al (2024), all members of the organization should cooperate and collaborate in creating effective and efficient ways in solving conflict between and among members of the organization.

Significant Differences in Conflict Management

Table 3. Differences based on Industry of Practice

Factors	Group	Mean	F	Sig
Competing	Public	3.53	1.916	0.412
	Private	3.62		
	Academe	3.67		
Collaborating	Public	3.66	4.695	0.218
	Private	3.87		
	Academe	3.72		
Compromising	Public	3.51	4.491	0.421
	Private	3.55		
	Academe	3.62		
Avoiding	Public	3.55	1.443	0.647
	Private	3.72		
	Academe	3.54		
Accommodating	Public	3.51	2.736	0.081
	Private	3.58		
	Academe	3.54		

****Significant at alpha 0.05**

The table shows the differences in the assessment of respondents about their practice of conflict management for the nature of the industry. Results revealed that there are no differences in their assessment towards Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, Avoiding, and Accommodating with probability values greater than 0.05. Conflict is inevitable in all professions, and cannot be eradicated, however, various strategies are available to lessen the possible negative effects of various conflicts either for the organization or for the individual practice of a profession. As mentioned by

Igbokwe, P (2024), conflict is generally perceived as something devastating, abnormal, dysfunctional, and detestable, but could also be a precursor of positive change if constructively handled. Thus, to address such, in the context of customs administration, said conflict management practices are considered an effective and strategic way of managing conflicts in their profession. Cajayon, M et al (2024) mentioned that the development of strategic solutions is a must to address the adverse or detrimental effect of the existing conflict not just for the employees but for the entire organization.

Table 4. Differences Based on Years of Practice

Factors	Years of Practice	Mean	F	Sig
Competing	3 & below	3.55	2.495	0.689
	4-7 years	3.51		
	8-10 years	3.64		
	10 & above	3.58		

Factors	Years of Practice	Mean	F	Sig
Collaborating	3 & below	3.67	7.784	0.516
	4-7 years	3.57		
	8-10 years	3.75		
	10 & above	3.52		
Compromising	3 & below	3.57	4.092	0.712
	4-7 years	3.89		
	8-10 years	3.75		
	10 & above	3.56		
Avoiding	3 & below	3.80	1.125	0.357
	4-7 years	3.92		
	8-10 years	3.68		
	10 & above	3.78		
Accommodating	3 & below	3.58	2.554	0.077
	4-7 years	3.55		
	8-10 years	3.69		
	10 & above	3.67		

****Significant at alpha 0.05**

Results revealed that there is no difference in the assessment of the customs brokers when years of practice are considered indicated in the P-values which are all greater than 0.05. Experience plays a critical role in dealing with and managing a conflict in a specific profession. Practitioners tend to have conflict with their colleagues when there are misunderstandings on certain procedures in brokering, though, very minimal, these conflicts often arise due to indifference in terms of execution of customs procedures, thus, competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating a

good management practice in mitigating conflict in their field while maintaining their professionalism. As indicated in the research conducted by Rallang, F & Gutierrez, E (2024), a practitioner who closes a deal with the clients is solely responsible for delivering the expected professional service. Thus, executing the mentioned conflict management practices in a very professional manner adds to its effectiveness and efficiency. The more professional the brokers are, the more effective and efficient their conflict management practices.

Table 5. Differences based on Age

Factors	Age	Mean	F	Sig
Competing	25 - 30	3.54	4.022	0.810
	31 - 36	3.62		
	37 - 42	3.59		
	43 & above	3.55		
Collaborating	25 - 30	3.57	2.410	0.092
	31 - 36	3.89		
	37 - 42	3.78		
	43 & above	3.65		
Compromising	25 - 30	3.63	4.245	0.401
	31 - 36	3.87		
	37 - 42	3.74		
	43 & above	3.81		
Avoiding	25 - 30	3.62	2.578	0.635
	31 - 36	3.75		
	37 - 42	3.64		

Factors	Age	Mean	F	Sig
Accommodating	43 & above	3.68	3.011	0.084
	25 - 30	3.81		
	31 - 36	3.59		
	37 - 42	3.90		
	43 & above	3.78		

****Significant at alpha 0.05**

The table shows the differences in the assessment of customs brokers when their age is considered. Results revealed also that there is no significant difference in their assessment towards Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, Avoiding, and Accommodating with P-values greater than 0.05. Age may be a factor to consider, however, in this case, regardless of the age, customs brokers agreed that the mentioned conflict management practices are all effective, especially in their field of profession. There is a presumption that the more mature the broker, the more effective and efficient their conflict management, then again, it's not always the case. As mentioned by Guiab, R & Miguel, C (2023), the demographic profiles of the faculty and staff do not influence their conflict management styles. Concurred by Ebeh, R et al (2023), age was found not to have any influence on workers effectiveness. Thus, as indicated in the results of this research, the demographics, specifically Age did not cause differences in the assessment of customs brokers concerning their conflict management practices.

Conclusion

Conflict is present in all professions and customs brokerage as public service is not an exemption. Total eradication of such is impossible, however, lessening its detrimental effect is possible through the effective and efficient execution of conflict management practices anchored in a code of ethics and professionalism. We notice that conflicts are inevitable, thus, creative, and strategic approaches to resolving conflicts are a must to ensure proper conduct of the customs profession. The results contradict existing findings regarding demographics and conflict management; thus, further analysis and explanation of the effect are advised.

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