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Cultural intelligence and conflict management styles

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Abstract

Purpose – Negotiating effectively in multicultural contexts or others is not only a very important skill for all organizational elements but also crucial to inter-organizational relations (Adler, 2008). If defined as a process that occurs when one party feels adversely affected by another (De Dreu, 1997). Conflict management styles can be analyzed as a function of personality variables. In this respect, cultural intelligence and self-monitoring appear to be relevant variables, as they are characterized by the demonstration of flexibility and interest in elements that are present in conflict management styles. This study aimed to evaluate the extent to which variables such as cultural intelligence and self-monitoring can positively influence the ability to solve interpersonal conflicts more effectively.

Design/methodology/approach – This study, with a sample of 399 individuals, aimed to test a model that explores how cultural intelligence and self-monitoring are related as predictor variables in the styles of conflict resolution.

Findings – It was observed that cultural intelligence presents itself as a reasonable predictor of conflict management styles, whereas self-monitoring appeared as a dispositional and controversial measure in relation to those styles. Self-monitoring exhibited itself as an important predictor of conflict management, but on the other hand, it had an influence on the choice of the dominating style in conflict situations.

Practical implications – Understanding the predictors of conflict management style and, in particular, realizing the extent to which cultural intelligence promotes a more effective conflict management style can help in the development of selection processes and skill training programs. The development of these multicultural skills will contribute to individual, social and organizational well-being.

Originality/value – This study contributes to the literature of individual differences and conflict management, demonstrating that some individual differences that predict the styles of conflict management can lead to a certain ambiguity in understanding the behaviour that an individual may adopt in situations of conflict.

Keywords Conflict management styles, Cultural intelligence, Self-monitoring

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

In the light of globalization and the increased cultural diversity of organizations, it is essential to understand how cultural differences influence both conflict management styles and the negotiation process. Conflict is a perceived divergence of interest between two or more sides (Pruitt and Rubin, 1986) and, depending on the style adopted, conflict can be an asset, as it can stimulate creativity, independence and innovation.

Organizations are now exposed to unfamiliar cultural contexts and culturally diverse workforces. These intercultural interactions are a challenge, as cultural differences can increase conflict, tensions and difficulties (Earley and Ang, 2003). Moreover, multiculturalism will tend to increase the time that needs to be spent managing conflicts. So, the abilities to relate to people of different cultures (Dusi *et al.*, 2014) and to resolve conflicts have been perceived as key competencies, given the significant increase in interactions between individuals of different cultural backgrounds (Templer *et al.*, 2006). Consequently, new global skills must be acquired to achieve effective negotiation and interaction both in multicultural (Robinson and Harvey, 2008) and domestic contexts. Several multicultural skills, which are considered fundamental to deal with all the metamorphoses that organizations have to face, have appeared in the literature. Highlighted amongst them is the role of cultural intelligence, which can be defined as a set of capabilities and skills that facilitate adaptation to diverse cultural situations and allow us to interpret unfamiliar behaviours and situations (Van Dyne *et al.*, 2010). Cultural intelligence is considered to be an important and vital competence (Earley and Mosakowski, 2004) not only to deal with cultural diversity but also to achieve better adaptation and intercultural adjustment (Earley and Ang, 2003). On the basis of previous research, it may be reasonable to suppose that cultural intelligence plays a key role in the adoption of effective conflict management styles. This is because cultural intelligence endows individuals with the capacity to overcome cultural barriers, for example, to adjust their behaviour to work efficiently and effectively in specific cultural and other situations (Van Dyne *et al.*, 2012). On the other hand, personality is an antecedent of cultural intelligence (Earley and Ang, 2003), so the personality trait self-monitoring, which is considered to be a central concept in the analysis of social interaction (Anderson, 1987; Furnham and Capon, 1983), can function as a positive predictor of conflict management when associated with the cultural intelligence. The objective of this study is to evaluate the extent to which variables such as cultural intelligence and self-monitoring can predict conflict management styles.

Furthermore, with the exception of some studies (Chen *et al.*, 2014; Engle *et al.*, 2013; Imai and Gelfand, 2010; Groves *et al.*, 2014; Ramirez, 2010) that analyzed the influence of cultural intelligence on conflict management styles, there is a lack of research in this area, in particular, about the construct of self-monitoring as a predictor. Negotiating effectively is a critical skill for all organizational members, and it has a crucial role in inter-organizational relations (Adler, 2008; Cai and Drake, 1998; Imai and Gelfand, 2010). Thus, the identification of positive predictors for effective conflict management is assumed as being key to organizational success.

In short, the literature seems to point to a potential relationship between cultural intelligence and conflict management. On the other hand, self-monitoring associated with cultural intelligence can function as a predictor of conflict management to the extent that high self-monitoring allows individuals to change their behaviour according to the environment where they are (Snyder, 1974). So, this exploratory study proposes that cultural intelligence associated with self-monitoring can have a positive impact on the choice of most effective interpersonal conflict resolution styles. This article is organized as follows:

- as a first step, it presents a review of the literature on the variables under study (conflict management styles, cultural intelligence and self-monitoring) reflecting on the relationship between them; and

- after it is presented, the methodology used in the study (sample, procedures and instruments), main results, discussion and conclusion are stated.

Conflict management styles

Conflict is an inevitable reality both in personal and organizational life. Given its inevitability, it must be managed. Conflict is defined as "a perceived or real incompatibility of values, expectations, processes or outcomes between one or more parties in practical and/or relational issues" (Ting-Toomey, 1994, p. 360).

The strategies used to deal with conflict can be categorized according to the way in which two variables intersect each other:

(1) the desire to satisfy the interests of the counterparty; and

(2) the desire to satisfy one's own interests (Cunha *et al.*, 2005).

Five main styles of conflict management result from this intersection (Blake and Mouton, 1964; Pruitt and Rubin, 1986; Rahim and Bonoma, 1979): integrating, avoiding, dominating, compromising and obliging. Rahim and Bonoma (1979) identify each style of conflict management as a function of the degree of concern with self and the degree of concern with the others. The integrating style refers to a high concern with others and self. The focus of this style is cooperation and it is the most effective in conflict resolution. Win/win situations are sought in which the issues are discussed and resolved for the benefit of both parties. The views of the parties can be combined into a more comprehensive whole to reach a consensus. The avoiding style refers to low concern with self and the others – the individual seeks to avoid conflict and may even delay the matter until a more suitable occasion or even withdraw himself/herself from the ominous scenario. The dominating style refers to a high concern with self and a low concern with the others. It is a style associated with authoritarianism, reflecting a concern to impose self-interest. An individual with this style does everything to win or achieve his or her goal, often ignoring the needs of the other party. It can also be used when it is necessary to take quick decisions which are sometimes imposed, unpopular or important (Rahim, 2002). The compromising style refers to an average concern with self and with the others. It is an intermediate style in which both parties give way to manage to win other things. Both parties have equal power, usually without time pressure. The parties tend to reach a temporary solution with which neither party is totally satisfied, and this creates a situation which could lead to new conflicts in the future. The obliging style refers to a low concern with self and a high concern with the others. Here, the individual seeks to minimize the differences and to focus his or her efforts on solving the problems by maximizing the common points to satisfy the other party. It aims at peaceful coexistence and recognition of common interests. There is a process of generosity, goodness and obedience relative to the other party (Rahim, 2002).

In general, organizational conflict literature shows that the integrating style is related to the effective management of conflict and is positively associated with individual and organizational outcomes (Burke, 1970; Rahim, 2002). On the other hand, dominating and avoiding styles are related to the ineffective management of conflict (Rahim, 2002), whereas confrontation style is used to a significantly greater degree in higher-performing organizations (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967; Rahim, 2002). Although

these styles are often applied to organizational scenarios, it is possible to generalize them to scenarios that involve interpersonal interactions (Kaushal and Kwantes, 2006) or different cultural contexts (Kim *et al.*, 2015). Considering that the conflict management styles are defined by the concern with the others' interests and viewpoints and the availability to be flexible, cultural intelligence emerges as an individual attribute predictably associated with conflict management styles. Will the conflict management styles adopted be influenced by the individuals' cultural intelligence levels? Then, the study focuses on the concept of cultural intelligence as a predictor variable of conflict management styles.

Cultural intelligence as a predictor of conflict management style

In past two decades, the ability to adapt to others has been emphasized through the identification of various types of intelligence (Gardner, 1993) such as emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996), social intelligence (Cantor and Kihlstrom, 1985; Goleman, 2006), or interpersonal intelligence (Gardner, 1993). Although cultural intelligence is consistent with the conceptualizations of intelligence (adaptability and adjustment to the environment) (Gardner, 1993; Sternberg, 2000), it differs from other types of intelligence because it focuses specifically on the culturally diverse interactions (Van Dyne *et al.*, 2008). Despite its close relation to emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence is making headway where emotional intelligence leaves off (Earley and Mosakowski, 2004): an individual with high emotional intelligence integrates what makes us simultaneously human and different from each other, whereas a person with high cultural intelligence is able to comprehend certain features of human behaviour that are specific to a person or group, as well as those features that are neither universal nor idiosyncratic. Cultural intelligence is a set of skills and competencies that facilitates the adaptation to different cultural situations and allows us to interpret unfamiliar behaviours and situations (Van Dyne *et al.*, 2010).

Earley and Ang (2003), based on the multi-dimensional intelligence model of Sternberg and Detterman (1986), define cultural intelligence as an individual capacity to work and effectively manage social interactions in different cultural settings. It is a specific form of intelligence focused on the ability to learn, evaluate and behave effectively in different situations characterized by cultural diversity (Ang *et al.*, 2007). This multi-dimensional construct enables the individual to learn continuously and have a better coexistence with people of other cultures. It consists of four bases of "intelligence": metacognitive, which refers to the awareness that individuals have for interactions with individuals of different cultures; cognitive, which refers to the specific knowledge one has about the rules, habits and conventions in new cultural backgrounds; motivational, that captures the motivation that an individual has to learn and act effectively in various situations; and behavioural, conceptualized as the flexibility of an individual to demonstrate appropriate actions with individuals from other cultural contexts (Ng *et al.*, 2012; Van Dyne *et al.*, 2008; Ward *et al.*, 2011). Some studies have linked personality attributes (intelligence, ethics, flexibility, assertiveness and openness) with conflict management styles. In this sense, the cultural intelligence construct which provides individuals with the skills that promote creativity (Leung *et al.*, 2008; Livermore, 2011; Sahin *et al.*, 2013), the management of teams (Janssens and Brett, 2006) or leadership (Ng *et al.*, 2009) could also facilitate the management of

conflicts (Chen *et al.*, 2014) and enable people to face the daily challenges professionally, either in domestic or multicultural contexts.

Considering the defining characteristics of cultural intelligence and its dimensions, it is expected that individuals with high levels of cultural intelligence are able to organize their social behaviour, opting for more integrative styles and more cooperative relations, compared to those with lower levels of cultural intelligence (Imai and Gelfand, 2010). They are more likely to persist, even if negotiating becomes stressful and difficult, given their high motivation in different situations (Van Dyne *et al.*, 2012). The metacognitive dimension promotes active thinking in relation to people and situations. It unleashes critical thinking about habits and beliefs and enables the individual to make an assessment and to review mind maps, thereby increasing the ability to understand (Van Dyne *et al.*, 2008). Individuals with high levels of cognitive cultural intelligence have a deeper understanding of how people are shaped/influenced by the environment in their way of thinking and acting (Van Dyne *et al.*, 2012). Similarly, high levels of culturally intelligent behaviour are essential in conflict management. Individuals with high levels of culturally intelligent behaviour can overcome the natural human tendency to rely on habits, demonstrating a behavioural flexibility in different situations which can include a change of code and an adjustment to the negotiating context (Molinsky, 2007). Greater verbal flexibility increases communicational effectiveness; non-verbal flexibility allows the individual to demonstrate compliance with the standards; and it is especially critical because it works as a "silent language" allowing the individual to interpret light indicators of sincerity, honesty and competence, etc. (Hall, 1959), which are fundamental in a negotiation process. Greater flexibility in terms of the spoken word demonstrates that the individual understands the communication standards and puts others at ease. In general, cultural intelligence enables individuals to change their behaviour so that it is aligned to the nature of the conflict and the requirements of the negotiation process. This change of behaviour, according to specific situations, is a factor of utmost importance during conflict resolution, and the way individuals decide to change their behaviour (or not) is strictly related to the self-monitoring personality trait. Consequently, its analysis as a mediating variable in conflict management styles is presented as having relevance. Subsequently and because of its importance, the study approaches the self-monitoring concept (a trait that can influence the conflict management styles adopted) and its relation with the conflict management styles.

Self-monitoring as a predictor of conflict management style
According to Snyder (1974), individuals regulate their behaviour to introduce a specific self according to situational cues, i.e. they differ in the way they present themselves in social situations.

Self-monitoring is considered to be a central concept in the analysis of social interaction (Anderson, 1987; Furnham and Capon, 1983). It entails both sensitivity to situational cues and the ability to adapt to situational demands (Bell *et al.*, 2000). Some individuals are motivated to present an appropriate self in different social situations, whereas others are impelled to be themselves (Gainey, 2012). According to the self-monitoring theory, people are internally or externally motivated (Snyder, 1974).

Internally motivated individuals are characterized as low self-monitors, and externally motivated individuals are characterized as high self-monitors. Individuals with a high self-monitoring are considered "the world's chameleons", willing to change their behaviour depending on the environment where they are (Snyder, 1974). Studies have reported that those with high self-monitoring are more likely to be good actors, to be sensitive to the social appropriateness of behaviour, to regulate the degree to which emotional states are displayed to others, to show more cross-situational variability in behaviour and to act in ways that are less consistent with privately held attitudes (Bell et al., 2000). Usually, these individuals obtain more positive results at work because they change their behaviour depending on the situation and are more likely to resolve conflicts through the integrating and compromising styles (Warech et al., 1998). With their "reading-situation" capacity, they tend to be the right person, in the right place, at the right time (Snyder, 1987), engaging in appropriate behaviours by means of mentally tailored images which are used as guides (Gupta et al., 2013). These evidences are not restricted to an organizational scenario because high self-monitoring presents itself is a variable linked to superior interpersonal effectiveness (Warech et al., 1998). On the other hand, individuals who exhibit low self-monitoring seek to be themselves in different social situations (Gangestad and Snyder, 2000). To be themselves, they resort to introspection, focusing their attention on their thoughts, beliefs and feelings. They use internal attitudes, values and beliefs as guides to behaviour (Gupta et al., 2013; Snyder and Monson, 1975) so that their behaviour is consistent even in different social situations, or at least similar, because they are motivated by dispositions, which do not differ from one situation to another (Gangestad and Snyder, 2000; see Snyder, 1987, for review).

According to the study by Gupta et al. (2013), self-monitoring is a significant predictor of cultural intelligence and its dimensions. The conflict management styles adopted indicate a characteristic of personality, so the trait of a self-monitoring personality and the attribute of cultural intelligence can predict the conflict management style to be adopted. In other words, it is expected that individuals with a high level of self-monitoring, who adapt to situations of conflict and act according to the needs of the others, adopt the integrating and compromising styles to resolve those conflicts. Individuals with lower levels of self-monitoring, which evidence a stable and carefree behaviour towards the others' needs, will tend to adopt the dominating and avoiding styles (Kaushal and Kwantes, 2006). Research linking these concepts simultaneously with concomitant conflict management styles is scarce, at least as far as we know. A notable exception is the study by Kaushal and Kwantes (2006), which sought to explore the influence of self-monitoring in conflict resolution styles. These authors did not find any relationship between these variables, suggesting the application of a measure with more items than the scale of 16 items developed by Warech et al. (1998). A further contribution by Mehra and Schenkel (2008) showed that individuals who have a high self-monitoring tend to experience greater degrees of conflict.

Given the importance of conflict resolution in organizations, the identification of predictors of effective conflict management is assumed to be key to organizational success. The present study examines the effect of cultural intelligence and self-monitoring on conflict management styles. This study proposes the following model (Figure 1) for investigation.

In summary, it is expected that cultural intelligence associated with self-monitoring acts as predictors of the conflict management styles adopted. To the achievement of this goal, it was made a correlational quantitative study using regression analysis.

Research design and methodology
Population and sample
The study sample consists of 399 individuals (62.9 per cent female and 30.8 per cent male) from several regions of Portugal (22.3 per cent Alentejo and Algarve, 23.5 per cent Beiras, Estremadura and Ribatejo and 8.2 per cent foreigners – who were all Portuguese speakers) aged between 18 and 59 years (M = 26.40; SD = 8.90). Many of the participants were graduates (46.9 per cent).

Measures
Cultural intelligence scale. The cultural intelligence scale, adapted to the Portuguese population by Sousa *et al.* (2015), was originally developed in English by Van Dyne *et al.* (2008). This 20-item tool, rated according to a Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), is a multi-dimensional measure that includes four dimensions of "intelligence": metacognitive (four items: Item 1: "I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds"), cognitive (six items: Item 7: "I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures"), motivational (five items: Item 11: "I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures") and behavioural (five items: Item 18: "I vary the rate of my speaking when a cross-cultural situation requires it"). The Cronbach's alpha for the Portuguese adaptation of the scale was 0.93; the alpha of the scale dimensions ranged from 0.86 to 0.89.

Conflict management style. The participants answered the instrument developed by Simões (2008) based on the assumptions of the Rahim's (1983) contingencial model, demonstrating a Cronbach's alpha of 0.80. This instrument consists of 30 items rated according to a Likert-type scale from 1 (rarely) to 7 (usually), contemplating the five conflict management styles: dominating (Item 7: "I'd rather win than agree to compromise"), avoiding (Item 2: "I'd rather avoid the person until the problem is solved by itself"), compromising (Item 30: "If both give in a little, we will have a solution easily"), obliging (Item 25: "I agree immediately before discussion") and integrating (Item 12: "I try to act as a mediator not as an adversary"). The five scale dimensions showed acceptable levels of internal consistency, varying the alpha between 0.66 and 0.73.

Self-monitoring. We used the self-monitoring scale developed by Snyder and Gangestad (1986) and translated and tested for the Portuguese population. The face
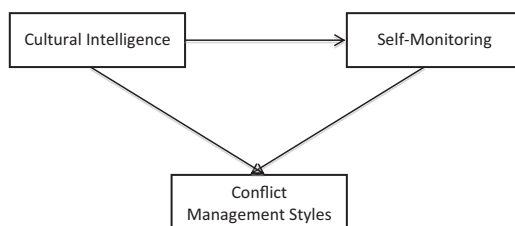

Figure 1.
Proposed model

validity was supported by translation and retranslation made by four bilingual translators and subsequently adjusted to the final version. Participants rated the extent to which they regarded the statements as true or not, concerning their own behaviour. A Likert scale of 1 (not true) to 7 (totally true) was used. In terms of reliability, the scale showed an internal consistency of 0.80.

In addition to the scales, items on the biographical variables (age, gender, employment status and educational level) were included to characterize the sample.

Procedure
Data collection. Upon approval of the Scientific Committee (the entity responsible for monitoring the procedures and ethical safeguards of the research) and assurance of ethical criteria (information about the voluntary and anonymous nature of the study), participants were asked to answer an online questionnaire with an average completion time of 15 min.

Data analysis. The statistical analyses of data included mean scores and standard deviations for each dimension of the variables under study and hierarchical regression. The data collected were statistically analyzed using IBM SPSS (version 20.0). The probability of significance at the level of 0.05 (Fisher, 1973) was considered, as the use of the p value is the most frequently used criterion for a decision on statistical inference (Marôco, 2011).

Results
In Table I, we can see the means and standard deviations of all the variables under study. Regarding cultural intelligence, the cognitive dimension features the lower mean (M = 3.97; SD = 1.06), whereas the metacognitive dimension presents the highest mean (M = 5.20; SD = 1.02). These results suggest that although individuals do not possess a specific knowledge about the standards, habits and conventions of the new cultural contexts, they seek to be more aware when they interact with individuals from other cultures. As for self-monitoring, M = 3.92; SD = 0.60. In relation to conflict management styles, it turns out that the style integrating presented the highest mean (M = 4.83; SD = 0.96) and the style obliging the lowest mean (M = 3.13; SD = 0.94).

Variables	M	SD
Cultural intelligence		
Metacognitive	5.20	1.03
Cognitive	3.97	1.07
Behavioural	5.12	1.11
Motivational	4.92	1.10
	M = 4.74; SD = 0.83	
Self-monitoring	3.92	0.61
Conflict management styles		
Obliging	3.13	0.94
Avoiding	3.21	1.09
Compromising	4.07	0.81
Integrating	4.83	0.97
Dominating	3.74	1.01

Table I.
Means and standard deviations for cultural intelligence, self-monitoring and conflict management styles

The verification of the model was made by means of hierarchical regression analyses carried out to explore the effects of the cultural intelligence and self-monitoring on the conflict management styles.

The two dispositional variables (cultural intelligence and self-monitoring) explain 13 per cent of the variance [$F(3,398) = 19.212, p = 0.00$]. We also observed that the explanatory weight of cultural intelligence on conflict management styles increases slightly when it is alone as an independent variable ($\beta = 0.182, p = 0.00$) (Figure 2).

The four dimensions of cultural intelligence are only related to the integrating style of conflict management. The metacognitive dimension is the only one that presents a considerable percentage of the variance of this style, 11 per cent ($R^2 = 0.113$) [$F(1,398) = 50.546, p = 0.00$] and an explanatory power of $\beta = 0.336; p = 0.00$. The remaining dimensions had very low regressions on the five conflict management styles. The contribution of self-monitoring to the conflict management styles provides an explanation for 11 per cent of the variance [$F(1,398) = 48,435, p = 0.00$].

In exploring which of the styles had the greater explanatory weight, it was found that the dominating and compromising strategies have a higher weight in relation to the others ($\beta = 0.280, p = 0.00$ and $\beta = 0.264, p = 0.00$, respectively). It should be noted that the integrating strategy did not appear to be significant in this relationship ($\beta = 0.041, p = 0.41$) (Table II).

Discussion

This article aimed to test a model in which high levels of cultural intelligence are mediated by a high self-monitoring, and affect and predict positively the tendency an individual has to use effective conflict management styles according to the individual characteristics of those involved in the conflict. In terms of the dispositional measures used to predict the conflict management styles, it was observed that cultural intelligence presents itself as a reasonable predictor of conflict management style. By adding the
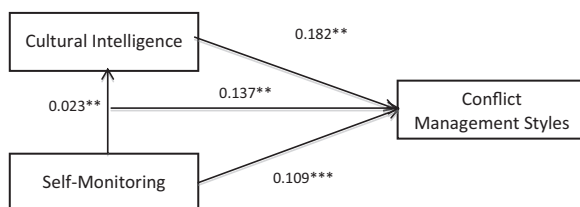

Figure 2.
Cultural intelligence and self-monitoring: predictor effect in conflict management styles

Conflict management styles	Self-monitoring β	t	R^2
Dominating	0.280	5.816	0.079**
Avoiding	0.224	4.579	0.050**
Compromising	0.264	5.458	0.070**
Obliging	0.196	3.991	0.039**
Integrating	0.041	0.822	0.002

Note: **$p < 0.001$

Table II.
Self-monitoring as a predictor of conflict management styles

self-monitoring variable, its explanatory power decreased slightly. However, it is emphasized that the single dimension of cultural intelligence having a determining power in conflict management styles is the metacognitive dimension. This dimension reasonably predicts the integrating style. It promotes active thinking about people and situations and unleashes critical thinking about habits and beliefs. It also enables the individual to make an assessment and to review mind maps, which also increases the capacity to understand (Van Dyne et al., 2008). In addition, this is the dimension that presents a higher mean.

These results indicate that the existence of cooperative reasoning in individuals with high levels of intelligence is very important to interpersonal relations, as the outcome in conflict situations will be more satisfactory for both parties (Imai and Gelfand, 2010). So, if individuals have a greater awareness of the cultural background of each other during social interactions and behave to emphasize on their connection with others, then, in a conflict, they will be likely to opt for strategies that benefit not only themselves but also the other party, and perhaps, more importantly, strengthening and maintaining, at the same time, their relationship with the others.

Self-monitoring appeared in the study as a predictor of conflict management style; being particularly important in the dominating dimension. The current study is consistent with the Mehra and Schenkel's (2008) research and it suggests that there may also be some disadvantages to being a social "chameleon": as individuals who exhibited high self-monitoring, they used a more aggressive style of conflict management than those with low levels of self-monitoring. If it is considered that an individual with high self-monitoring has a special ability to focus on the emotions of others, it might be expected that integrative strategies could be observed. Thus, a company seeking employees with high levels of cultural intelligence and high levels of self-monitoring might not obtain the desired integrative result. A culturally intelligent individual will normally choose integrative strategies, but if he or she exhibits high self-monitoring, then he or she will tend to adopt the dominating style and may, therefore, experience more conflict situations (Mehra and Schenkel, 2008).

Overall, this study examined the predictive power of personality variables on conflict management styles. No previous study has simultaneously investigated the effects of cultural intelligence and self-monitoring on conflict resolution styles. In fact, there seems to be a gap in identifying variables that make it possible to predict what strategy of conflict management will an individual adopt before the cultural characteristics of the parties involved (Ramirez, 2010) and in identifying the impact of cultural intelligence levels, including variables such as self-monitoring, which can contribute to the selection of culturally appropriate strategies and that have not been tested as predictors of the conflict management styles adopted. So, this study is a contribution to the literature in this area.

The findings of the present study showed that cultural intelligence can reasonably predict a person's choice of conflict resolution strategies, and self-monitoring introduces itself as a controversial dispositional measure in relation to those styles. On the one hand, it presents itself as an important predictor of conflict management ability, but on the other, it has a greater weight in the choice of the dominating style in conflict situations. If an individual presents a greater ability to perceive their environment and to draw clues that give him or her the ability to act accordingly, one would expect that in

situations of domestic or cultural diversity, such individuals would show evidence of being more sensitive and skilled in managing these aspects.

Although these findings have shed some light on the influence of both cultural intelligence and self-monitoring constructs on conflict resolution styles, more research is needed to fully understand the role of both in conflict behaviour. The sample size used in this study can also be considered restrictive of the results achieved, as it is relatively small and homogeneous (collected only in Portugal). Furthermore, the fact that the sample having more women and individuals with higher qualifications may affect the results, in particular, on the issue of conflicts and in the self-monitoring. Remember that several studies have shown that gender explains part of social skills and personality attributes. For example, with regards to the self-monitoring variable, some studies show that women are more sensitive to behavioural expectations and, hence, present a greater emotional expression and an enhanced ability to decode emotions (Boyatzis *et al.*, 1993; Hall, 1984). As for the style of conflict management, differences between men and women tend to be determined by gender roles. So, although men present a more aggressive and competitive conflict management style, women tend to adopt a more cooperative stance, opting for the compromise, the accommodative or even the avoidance styles. (Holt and DeVore, 2005). This aspect, rather than a limitation, because our goal does not report the effect of biographical variables, can point to the need for future studies that may include gender as a predictor variable.

Apart from these, another key variable of social skills and, therefore, probably associated with conflict management styles is empathy. According to the theory of empathizing–systemizing (Baron-Cohen, 2002), the female gender has a kind of cognition based on empathy, unlike the male gender that has a type of cognition based on systematization (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2011). These assumptions may be considered in future studies to contribute to a better understanding of the determinants of conflict management styles by using a more balanced sample in terms of gender. Moreover, the fact that the sample is composed of individuals, mostly with higher qualifications, can also distort the results. Therefore, a more heterogeneous sample with regards to academic qualifications will allow a deeper analysis. This is because some authors have shown that individuals with higher education levels tend to prefer more competitive conflict management styles (Pinto and Ferrer, 2002; Vokic´ and Sontor, 2009). Also, a larger sample might permit a broader analysis. Larger sample sizes from different countries should be included in future research to conduct a comparative research or for an analysis of the *locus* of control. Given the cultural diversity and multiculturalism that guide societies and the world of work and given that our sample refers only to a particular culture (Western culture), it does not allow a cultural comparison. Future studies may adopt a cross-cultural perspective, also deepening the variable *locus* of control. The *locus* of control, characterized by the belief that a person has about the control over the events of life (Findley and Cooper, 1983; Rotter, 1954), is a variable that tends to vary with the culture. For example, individuals of Western cultures have more internal *locus* of control characteristics, whereas those of more Eastern cultures are more likely to present characteristics of external *locus* of control (Chan, 1981; Chiu, 1986; Hsieh *et al.*, 1969). Thus, the variable *locus* of control may have effects on the conflict management style adopted, as individuals with a greater internal *locus* of control tend to opt for the resolution and commitment styles (Anderson and Schneider, 1978; Brenders, 1987;

Rubin and Rubin, 1992), whereas those who have an external *locus* of control prefer the style avoidance (Taylor, 2010).

Future studies may also contribute to this analysis with aspects that are relevant to conflict management, such as mimicry. Mimicry is an important factor in conflict resolution (Maddux *et al.*, 2008; Swaab *et al.*, 2011) and varies according to the self-monitoring levels (Cheng and Chartrand, 2003). Multicultural personality may also be a variable to consider in future research as it focuses on cultural adaptation, intercultural competence and multicultural effectiveness (Ponterotto *et al.*, 2011; Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven, 2000). It is also suggested that subsequent analyses use the intercultural conflict style developed by Hammer (2005) that measures the individual level (the style that the individual has in conflict management styles) and allows comparison with cultural groups (level of conflict style aggregation).

Conclusion
Notwithstanding its limitations, the study has implications for cross-cultural management practice. It would help human resource professionals in creating a culturally competent workforce. By demonstrating the relationship between cultural intelligence, self-monitoring and conflict management styles, this study allows organizations to improve their human resource strategies. Understanding the predictor variables of conflict management style and, in particular, the extent to which cultural intelligence promotes a more effective conflict management style could help in decision-making and negotiation and therefore contributing to organizational success. Given the multiculturalism present in the current organizations, these should consider cultural intelligence as an essential variable not only in the selection of foreign nationals but to all its employees who daily deal with people of different cultures. This daily multicultural communication and the cultural differences that then emerge are likely to generate conflicts, reason why employees should be prepared to deal with such situations. One way to ensure that the conflict is well managed is to find ways to improve the constructive resolution of conflicts skills of individuals (Reguieg, 2014). It is, therefore, crucial that individuals, in addition to being culturally intelligent, build appropriate conflict management behaviours to each situation. In this sense, organizations must invest in training programmes aimed at improving skills as the sensitivity to cultural differences and effective conflict management to reduce stress and improve relationships and work performance (Amason and Schweiger, 1997; Brislin and Yoshida, 1994; Jehn, 1997; Yu and Chen, 2008).

The organizational complexity caused by cultural diversity is now a challenge for human resources management. Nowadays, intercultural meetings are almost inevitable, and interactions between individuals from different cultures involve different communication styles, expectations, beliefs and ways to deal with conflict (Reguieg, 2014). Factors such as globalization, the demands of international markets or migration increasingly intensify the need for individuals to confront their differences and manage their conflicts (Tjosvold, 2008).

As cultural differences can result in misunderstandings (Earley and Ang, 2003), it is relevant to consider predictor variables that have a positive and productive effect on conflict resolution.

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