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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES OF ACADEMICS: THE IMPACT OF EDUCATION AND DESIGNATION IN PAKISTANI PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to identify the conflict management styles of teachers at post-graduate level. This study aimed to investigate those styles which are used for the conflict management by the teachers. Five public universities of Lahore district was the sample of this research. This study was consisted of 300 post graduate (male, female) teachers. The data was collected through self-developed instrument based on the frame work of Thomas-killmann (2006). The major finding of the study was that there is statistically significant difference in levels of education regarding compromising style between Masters and M.Phil holders. There is statistically significant difference in designation regarding using compromising style between lecturer and professors, assistant professor and professor, and between associate professor and professor. There is no statistically significant difference found regarding accommodating style among teachers in relation to designations. This study suggested that use of numerous conflict management styles according to the existing situation/matter are more effective rather than to use single style of conflict management.

Key words: conflict management styles, conflict management, competition, collaboration, avoidance, accommodation, compromise

1. INTRODUCTION

Different kinds of conflict create tension, anxiety and unpleasant experiences among professionals (Schmuck & Runkel, 1985). Owens (2004) and Fleetwood (1984) argued that the application of conflict management techniques in any professional may not only minimize the destructive potential of conflict but also produce productive, creative and useful outcome out of conflict. Teachers may need to know those methods which are helpful in reducing the conflict level. Furthermore, teachers should solve those problems which become the cause of conflict and bring hurdles in the work.

When frustration increases it develops a situation of conflict as a natural part of life and, therefore, a natural part of educational institutions. Conflicts may exist where incompatible activities occur and these may be among individuals, groups and whole society and culture. Conflicts between two or more persons or social units are called interpersonal or intergroup conflicts. Most conflicts are interpersonal and intergroup.

Most of the research on conflict management has been conducted in traditional organizations but this does not mean that educational institutions are free of conflicts. Conflicts are more likely to occur in the institutions of higher education due to the encouragement of academic freedom and uncontrolled thinking. Conflict can occur between students and faculty, faculty and faculty, faculty and administrators and students versus students.

Educational institutions similar to other organizations should develop a mutual vision of its people including endeavoring to attain aims and goals for both teachers and students. That is why, there is a need for finding ways of recognizing and resolving conflicts between teachers and students. In Zimbabwe, Ndofirepi and Makaye (2012) point out conflicts which exist mostly in schools between heads and teachers over unequal distribution/allocation of resources and gossips. Furthermore, most teachers are not satisfied with the ways in which problems were resolved by their heads. Teachers prefer District Education Officers (D.E.Os) to work as mediators while resolving conflicts with their school heads. Okotoni and Okotoni (2003) argue that an effective use of relevant strategies by Nigerian school administrators cannot be ignored.

The study of Masila (2012) finds out that few principals of primary and secondary schools of South Africa are organized sufficiently for conflict resolution. They tend to misunderstand the role of conflict and immediately avoided or halted this situation. Thus, there is a need for effective strategies to deal with conflicts within educational institutions. Strategies adopted for this purpose may vary according to the conflict, institutions and parties involved. Evidence provided in the study of the Graham (2009) about use of conflict management strategies that administrators might multiple conflict management styles to resolve the issues and conflicts. So, it is proved that single style of conflict resolution is not fit for all circumstances. Overall, an appropriate conflict management strategy may depend

on the type of conflict and the seriousness of the issue. Because of the importance of conflict management in educational institution, this study aims to find out various conflict management strategies used by teachers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ghaffar (2005) argues that conflicts in it are neither productive nor destructive but the ways through which conflicts are handled make them either positive or negative. Each type of Conflicts is occurring in all type of departments, organizations and educational institutions such as schools, colleges, universities. He also maintains that numerous methods of conflict resolution may be used for conflict handling and the most significant method for conflict management are mediation, avoidance, negotiation, collaborating etc.

Rahime, Buntzman, and White (1999) described various styles of handling interpersonal conflicts which included integrating (i.e., problem solving), obliging (i.e., accommodating), dominating (i.e., competing), avoiding, and compromising in the institutions. Other researchers also discussed a variety of approaches for conflict management and categorized them based on similarities and contributions (e.g. Rahime, et al., 1999; Schlesinger, Eccles & Gabarro, 1983; Hoy, 2001). Whereas, Lynette, Wilson and Jeni (2006) indicated that teachers commonly use a limited range of strategies and rely mostly on familiar conflict management techniques.

Owens (2004) observes the people can solve many problems and issues in order to improve the institutional functioning through conflict management. He also says, often when conflict occurs win-lose approach might be avoided because it is the least productive approach in which one person must have to get success and other one fails. On the other hand, if we use win-win approach, it may be more fruitful and productive because both persons get success here. Filley (1986) offers problem-solving methods as an alternative to power-oriented approach for conflict management in the universities. Meyers (2003) suggests that teachers are usually not prepared to handle classroom conflicts effectively, which may be disturbing, distressing and disruptive for students and learning environment. Schlesinger et al. (1983) state, bargaining and forcing, smoothing and avoidance, and confrontation and problem solving are the modes of conflict resolution. On the other hand, Peer meditation is also one of the strategies to resolve a conflict. In this process, a group of teachers may be selected as peer mediators (Silver, 1983).

Keneth Thomas (2006) presented five conflict management styles competing, avoiding, accommodation, compromising and collaborating. These five styles have been explained by Keneth Thomas (2006) and Hassanzadeh (2010) Avoiding (Unassertive and uncooperative): Avoidance means that person ignores the clash. In this mode, one prefers to avoid any type of dispute. When a conflict is minor or more significant conflicts are pressing and there is need to cool down persons temporarily and regain perspective.

Accommodating (Unassertive and cooperative): This style lies in high cooperative and low assertiveness in which person satisfies other's needs but neglects his/her own concerns, wishes and needs. He/she sacrifices his/her own concerns for fulfilling the others desires/concerns.

Compromising (Moderately assertive and moderately cooperative): A person seeks such type of solution which is acceptable for both parties. In other words, both parties address their concerns by exchanging concessions to find a middle-ground position. Compromise may be used for that type of solution of the complex problem which is not permanent.

Competing (Assertive and uncooperative): In this style one person satisfies his own concerns rather than others. So it is highly assertive and uncooperative approach. Person can use power for pursuing his goals so it is win-lose approach. One person wants to win whenever conflict arises. He/she does not prefer the other's needs and not bargain with others. They actually want to fulfill their own needs, desires and wishes. Because they are determine to achieve their goals.

Collaborating (Assertive and cooperative): A person strives to take care of all interests of both persons when he is trying to get solution of problem between them and satisfy them completely. In collaboration, it is important to address all underlying interests of both of them and also try to find substitutes in order to satisfy them. Finally, requirement of collaboration and problem solving approach is to choose real conflict resolution if time and cost permit and the both persons are ready to be both assertive and collaborative.

Chusmir and Mills (1989) indicate, male and female teachers have multiple roles at their job place and in the home, both (men and women) use different conflict resolution behaviors in each role. However, Hendel, Fish and Galon (2005) investigated that compromising conflict management styles are one's used more frequently by the head nurses of different general hospitals in Israil. In particular institutions, principals and teachers are dealing with various conflict conditions and circumstances at their work places on hourly and daily basis. In any situation and at any place conflicts cannot be avoided. In educational institutions, instructors, educators and teachers should be able to know the both sides (constructive and destructive potential) of conflict. Finally, they will learn how to cope problems, issues and conflicts, as well as how to apply practically conflict management approaches in a grass root level.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study was designed to investigate/analyses the conflict management styles used by teachers of postgraduate level while resolving conflicts with their peers and students. Thus, the aim of the study is to know the conflict management styles of a sample of Pakistani university teachers. Knowing the conflict management styles of the members of an organization may play an important role in its smooth working and growth because these skills are important for individuals to work effectively at any level within the organization. To achieve this aim, the peaceful environment of an institution is necessary. An educational setting is considered to be a better place in which teachers and students may be expected to show and practice good moral manner. The students of post graduate level play a significant role in the progress of any country and in resolving the moral vices from society. Learning to deal with conflict is a life skill, which is the need of teachers. Some types of conflicts demand new solutions and therefore enhance the creativity of people in an organization. To run an institution in a proper way, it seems necessary for the teachers to know various styles of conflict management so that they may handle conflicts in their organizations properly. Objectives of the study were to find out the types of conflict management styles which are adopted by the teachers of different designations at post graduate level. Second is to identify the conflict management techniques used by the teachers who have different level of education (qualification).

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the conflict management styles of a sample of Pakistani Teachers, having different qualification at post graduate level?
2. What are the conflict management styles of a sample of Pakistani Teachers, having different designations at post graduate level?

5. METHODOLOGY

This study is survey in nature and quantitative by method.

a. Population and Sample of the study

All teachers of public universities in Lahore District were population of the study. All Male and female teachers of postgraduate level were selected from five public universities of Lahore.

b. Instrument

Questionnaire was constructed on the bases of the standardized instrument of Thomas-killmann (Thomas & Killmann, 2006). Its purpose is to measure the differences among teachers of different universities regarding use of the conflict management styles such as competing, collaborating, avoiding, accommodating and compromising.

c. Data collection Procedure

Male and female teachers in educational institutions are asked to complete a questionnaire. Data were collected via questionnaire distribution to 300 teachers from five institutions, having different educational level and different designation. Convenience sampling technique was used to recruit the teachers of post-graduate level from different institutions. Questionnaire was distributed among teachers and collected from the each teacher

First of all respondents were informed about the purpose of study to examine the conflict management styles of the teachers that how teachers manage their conflicts in the different universities at post graduate level, according to their educational level and designation. Conflict management styles were assessed using by the self-made questionnaire which contain 33 items related to conflict management styles. Questionnaire was designed to measure the styles of conflict management: competing (6 items), collaborating (9 items), avoiding (7 items), collaborating (5 items) and compromising (6 items). Teachers responded before the each statement on a five-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Responses of each style were calculated. In addition, ANOVA was used in statistical analysis.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1: ANOVA Summary: Effect of Qualification on Competing Conflict Management Style

Groups	SS	Df	MS	F	P
Between	85.54	3	28.51	3.69	.012*
Within	2285.11	296	7.72		
Total	2370.68	299			

$p < 0.05$

Above table.1 shows the significant difference between the means as the p value is 0.012 that is less than 0.05 therefore, that indicates the significant difference in the mean of the subscale competing of the conflict management styles of teachers.

Table 2: Post Hoc: Mean Difference between Groups Regarding Competing Conflict Management Style

Qualification	Mean of difference	P
Masters vs M.Phil holders	-.21	.00*
Masters vs Ph.D holders	-.13	.21
Masters vs Post Doc holders	-.16	.93
M.Phil vs Ph.D holders	.09	.56
M.Phil vs Post Doc holders	.05	.10
Ph.D vs Post Doc holders	-.03	.10

* $p < 0.05$

Mean difference of groups are showing in above table regarding use of competing conflict management style. Therefore, it indicates the significant difference in the mean of competing conflict management styles of Masters and M.Phil holders.

Table 3: ANOVA Summary: Effect of Qualification on Compromising Conflict Management Style

Groups	SS	Df	MS	F	P
Between	91.014	3	30.34	2.13	.09*
Within	4206.77	296	14.21		
Total	4297.79	299			

* $p < 0.05$

Above table 3 shows that there is no significant difference between the means as the p value is 0.09 that is high than 0.05 therefore, that indicates no significant difference in the mean of the subscale compromising of the conflict management styles of teachers

Table 4: Post Hoc: Mean Difference between Groups Regarding Compromising Conflict Management Style

Qualification	Mean of difference	P
Masters vs M.Phil holders	-.14	.37
Masters vs Ph.D holders	.05	.92
Masters vs Post Doc holders	-.42	.67
M.Phil vs Ph.D holders	.20	.12
M.Phil vs Post Doc holders	-.27	.88
Ph.D vs Post Doc holders	-.47	.58

Table shows that mean difference of groups regarding compromising conflict management style. There is no statistically significant difference regarding compromising style between the mean difference of Masters and M.Phil degree holders.

Table 5: ANOVA Summary: Effect of Designation on Competing Conflict Management Style

Groups	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between	3.20	3	1.07	5.04	.00*
Within	62.65	296	.21		
Total	65.85	299			

* $p < 0.05$

Above table 5 shows that there is significant difference between the means as the p value is 0.00. Therefore, that indicates the significant difference in the mean of the subscale competing of the conflict management styles of teachers. The significance level is high as $p < 0.05$.

Table 6: Post Hoc: Mean Difference between Groups Regarding Competing Conflict Management Style

Designation	Mean of difference	p
Lecturer vs Assistant Professor	-.09	.51
Lecturer vs Associate Professor	-.02	.10
Lecturer vs professor	-.33	.00*
Assistant Professor vs Associate Professor	.07	.90
Assistant Professor vs Professor	-.24	.04*
Associate Professor vs Professor	-.31	.03*

* $p < 0.05$

Table 6 shows that mean difference of groups regarding competing conflict management style. Therefore, it indicates the statistically significant difference regarding competing style between the mean difference of Lecturer and professors, assistant professor and professor, and between associate professor and professor. The significance level is high as $p < 0.05$.

Table 7: ANOVA Summary: Effect of Designation on Accommodating Conflict Management Style

Groups	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between	5.2	3	1.75	4.55	.00*
Within	113.61	296	.38		
Total	118.85	299			

* $p < 0.05$

Above table 7 shows that there is significant difference between the means as the p value is 0.00. Therefore, that indicates the significant difference in the mean of the subscale accommodating of the conflict management styles of teachers. The significance level is high as $p < 0.05$.

Table 8: Post Hoc: Mean Difference between Groups Regarding Accommodating Conflict Management Style

Designation	Mean of difference	p
Lecturer vs assistant professor	-.19	.10
Lecturer vs associate professor	-.41	.00*
Lecturer vs professor	-.07	.93
assistant professor vs associate professor	-.22	.32
assistant professor vs professor	.12	.76
associate professor vs professor	.34	.11

* $p < 0.05$

Table 8 shows that mean difference of groups regarding accommodating conflict management style. There is no statistically significant difference regarding accommodating style between the mean differences of designations. The significance level is $p > 0.05$.

Table 9: ANOVA Summary: Effect of Designation on Compromising Conflict Management Style

Groups	SS	Df	MS	F	p
Between	5.10	3	1.70	4.40	.00*
Within	114.28	296	.39		
Total	119.38	299			

* $p < 0.05$

Above table 9 shows that there is significant difference between the means as the p value is 0.00. Therefore, it indicates the significant difference in the mean of the subscale compromising of the conflict management styles of teachers. The significance level is high as $p < 0.05$.

Table 10: Post Hoc: Mean Difference between Groups Regarding Compromising Conflict Management Style

Designation	Mean of difference	p
Lecturer vs assistant professor	-.21	.06
Lecturer vs associate professor	-.39	.00*
Lecturer vs professor	-.12	.73
Assistant professor vs associate professor	-.18	.51
Assistant professor vs professor	.09	.89
Associate professor vs professor	.27	.30

* $p < 0.05$

Table 10 shows that mean difference of groups regarding compromising conflict management style. Therefore, it indicated the statistically significant difference between the means about compromising style of Lecturer and professors. The significance level is high as $p < 0.05$.

7. DISCUSSION

This study found difference regarding use of competing style for conflict management between Masters and M.Phil holder teachers. Similarly, Nischal's (2013) findings found the significant difference among Indian bankers in relation to education for managing the conflict. In contrast, Sontor (2009) and Kartal, Yirci & Ozdemir (2016) did not find the difference between the educational level and conflict management styles. In the same way, Jubran's (2016) research proved that there is no significant difference is found among teachers use of conflict management styles according to their qualifications in Jordan. In addition, study of Farooqi, Khan, Akram & Iqbal (2015) pointed out that no significant difference exists on the base of teacher's educational qualification regarding use of conflict management styles in Pakistan.

According to finding of our study, professors mostly used competing strategies as compared to associate professor and lecturer for resolving the conflicts. On the other hand, Sontor (2009) and Kartal, Yirci & Ozdemir (2016) reported insignificant difference in using the conflict management styles between teachers regarding designations. He further argued that no difference found in using the accommodating style between teachers in relation to designations. On the other side, findings of Cetin and Hacifazlioglu (2004) showed that research assistants use accommodation approach more than professors. They continue their views that associate professors use this technique more than research assistants. In addition, study of Farooqi, Khan, Akram & Iqbal (2015) proved that there is no significant difference on the base on designations of teachers regarding use of conflict management styles in Pakistan. In the same way, findings of another Pakistani study showed that most of the teachers are using avoiding conflict management style. Next, compromising conflict management style is using by professors and associate professors. But the assistant professor are using accommodating and lecturers are using the avoiding conflict management style (Madiha & Shazia, 2015). In line with previous studies, findings of Jubran's (2016) study also revealed that there is no significant difference found among teachers use of conflict management styles according to their different designations in Jordan.

This study found the difference regarding use of conflict management strategies such as, competing, compromising, collaborating style between different public universities of Lahore. This study supports to the findings of Thomas (2006); Slabbert (2004) in which differences are found among different level organizations in using the conflict management styles. This seems to be the Brewer's (2002) findings which indicate upper organizational status individuals are higher on integrating style.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, conflict management strategies and styles seem to be significant as a method used to simplify a definite view of conflict, but it does not mean that these methods can be used as a technique to specify the "right" or "wrong" of a conflict. All ways of conflict resolution are significant as guiding principle. After reviewing many studies it is concluded that those studies focus on classifying those styles in a conflict which are: competitive, collaborative, compromising, avoiding and accommodating.

On the basis of this study it is recommending that use the multiple conflict management styles which are more effective than using the single style of conflict management. It might be possible to motivate employees for adopting the compromising style in order to resolve conflict. During conflict handling situation, there is need to avoid competitive approach. Teacher might adopt the most relevant style according to the situation and person involved. Teachers need to use the compromising style for conflict management. There is need to conduct workshops/seminars for awareness about conflict management styles to solve their problems.

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