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Conflict Management Practices of University Teachers

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Abstract: *This study was conducted to explore the conflict management practices of the University of Sargodha. All the teachers of the University of Sargodha teaching undergraduate programs were the population of the study. Twelve departments were randomly selected, and 120 teachers teaching undergraduates were selected for the sample. A self-developed conflict management practices scale discussed with five Ph.D. experts and pilot tested on 50 teachers showing reliability coefficient Cronbach's alpha value 0.763 was used. Mean, standard deviations, frequencies, percentage, person correlation, regression, t-test, and ANOVA were applied to analyze the data. The major findings were; Majority of the teachers use all types of high and moderate levels of conflict management practices, and female teachers use better conflict management practices as compared to males. It is recommended that university teachers may be given conflict management training for better management of student-teacher conflicts.*

Key Words: Student-teacher Conflict, Conflict Management Practices, University Teachers

Introduction

Conflict is a common problem and harms positive outcomes due to differences in thoughts, feelings, and behavior of individuals. [Mukhtar, Islam & Siengthai \(2011\)](#) expressed that conflict is observed in public universities more frequently than in the past and has the greatest impact on educational outcomes. Conflict is a state of differences experienced during mismatched interests, ideas, goals, cognitions, or emotions, which lead to confrontation or aggressive relations in two or more groups of persons characterized by their dislike ([Corr. & Krupić, 2017](#)). It is an unavoidable social phenomenon, and researchers are exploring the way to handle it for the help of the involved persons ([Ejaz, Iqbal, & Ara, 2012](#)). However, different teachers use different styles of managing such conflicts because conflict is a normal, natural, and inseparable aspect of life. If the useful technique does not practice to cope with such conflicts and disagreements, it can avert the university from reaching its goal as well as its

purposes and will create a negative impact on university functioning.

According to [Göksoy & Argon \(2016\)](#), negative conflict arises when diverse ideas and thoughts are not productive. This is usually for the reason that conflict is not communicated and copes with efficiently; that's why it causes emotional states and behaviors intended to be overcome. Despite the fact, when conflict is managed fruitlessly, it may result in frustration, competition between members, increased stress levels and low morale, inability to work together effectively, communication gap, etc. Effective communication between individuals provides a base for avoiding and solving conflicts in a friendly, easy, and informal method ([Janet, 2015](#)).

As conflict can be used to gain a balanced outlook where managing conflict would be helpful to enhance positive aspects rather than going toward the negative aspect of it ([Ejaz, Iqbal, & Ara,](#)

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2012). The important consideration is that conflict does not just affect the students' even affect the teachers as well, and it's very stressful and exhausting for them. For that reason, teachers spend their noteworthy time and energy in managing such problematic student conflicts (Ozgan, 2016).

Therefore, to attain the goals of institutions, it is necessary to manage such conflicts and coordinate all resources through skillful planning and controlling disagreements. These conflict management resolutions should cause changes from destructive to constructive mode. However, the practices of managing such conflicts are different from one institute to the other. Conflict management refers to the ways to control the negative outcomes and resolve the conflict between two or more persons as a positive outcome (Nicolaidis, 2018).

According to Ciuladiene & Kairiene (2017), the main concern is related to how teachers manage such confrontations and unravel such conflicts with students properly and efficiently without any destructive rapport and losing cooperation with students. Conflict management practices refer to how practical implementation of conflict managing techniques are used to control and resolve the conflict between two or more persons (Van, Crowther, Dickman, Macdonald, Ripple, Ritchie, & Newsome, 2018). Whereas Ozgan, 2016 argued that unsuitable conflict resolving techniques cause negative effects on students' minds, their social behavior, attitude, ability to concentrate, stay on task as well as their academic achievement.

Janet (2015) & Shahmohammadi (2014) discussed that managing conflict and developing effective conflict resolution techniques stimulates progressing values, attitudes, and knowledge between people and institutions. Many traits of teachers may influence negative or positive on students' academic achievement, such as teachers' personal and professional life, which needs teachers to focus on their actions for positive student interaction (Ozgan, 2016).

Hence conflict is an important emotional factor whose full understanding is essential concerning a student's academic achievement. So, it is essential to resolve such conflicts to help the students for achieving their excellence in any field they are involved in. For this, proper conflict

management practices are very significant in helping the students to manage their difficulties constructively. In this regard, teachers' conflict management practices to train their students on a daily basis may be effective when problems arise (Valente & Lourenço, 2020).

These conflicts may resolve with peace and harmony between students and teachers in a dynamic and applied manner. The institution needs to promote students' academic achievement on the basis of controlling student-teacher conflicts in an institution because inadequate conflicts resolution practices do not positively impact on students' minds, their behavior as well as their educational achievement. As the conflicts between teachers and students are prone to arise and students coming from college environment and feeling free in a university environment and not knowing the requirements of semester system cannot cope with such conflicts (Ozgan, 2016). However, it rests upon teachers' shoulders to practice and use different techniques to manage such conflicts. If the useful technique does not practice to cope with such conflicts and disagreements constructively, it can avert the university from reaching its goal as well as its purposes and will create a negative impact on university functioning (Ozgan, 2016). Therefore, it is necessary to study the teachers' conflict management practices for the smooth running of the educational process and a positive learning environment.

Objective of the Study

The prime focus of the research was to find out the nature of conflict management practices of University teachers.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study were:

- i. What are the conflict management practices of university teachers?
- ii. What is the gender-based difference of conflict management practices of University teachers?
- iii. What are the department-wise conflict management practices of University teachers?

Review of Literature

Man is a social animal; get affected by the conduct and performance of others. Here the dissimilarities, feelings, and sentiments of individuals, there may be any dislike or conflict ([Idris, Ali, & Ghaffar, 2017](#)).

Nature of Conflict

The term 'conflict' is similar to individual/group discrepancies, stress, social disorder, destruction, and violence due to personality and value differences ([Salleh & Adulpakdee, 2012](#); [Shahmohammadi, 2014](#)). Conflict happens everywhere and is common in all cultures as well as societies and may arise when issues and interests of people are changed or fail to manage due to social, political, or economic forces in the environment ([Trudel & Reio, 2011](#)).

Positive and Negative Conflicts

According to [Jokanovic, Tomic & Dudak, \(2017\)](#), conflict can be positive or negative as well as the function dysfunctional because it is very common in organizational situations. Positive conflict can raise spirits, innovative solutions to problems, and generate novelty, diversity, and increased communication. It can also clear the situation between groups, raise concerns for clearing up and resolving conflicts because the difference between thinking and views can be dynamic in a social setting ([Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019](#)). According to [Waithaka, Moor, Gitimu, \(2015\)](#), the conflict has positive characteristics: it helps the persons to know themselves, enhances their awareness of others' personality traits, and stimulates them for solving problems that could increase into big issues.

According to [Göksoy & Argon \(2016\)](#), negative conflict arises when diverse ideas and thoughts are not productive. This is usually for the reason that conflict is not communicated and copes with efficiently; that's; that's why it causes emotional states and behaviors intended to be overcome.

Cognitive Conflict

According to [Greer & Dannals \(2017\)](#), the difference between effective and cognitive conflict, that cognitive conflicts are focused on the task and may rise from dissimilarities in thoughts or perception of individuals, whereas affective conflict depends on emotional state and may rise

as of personal differences and disputes of individuals. However, cognitive conflict refers to individuals desired end situations or ideal results that look like to be challenging ([Feldman, & Halali, 2019](#)).

Conflicts are unavoidable phenomena and harm positive outcomes due to differences in thoughts, feelings, and behavior. It arises between students and teachers in Universities when students fail to cope with conflicts due to social or economic barriers in the environment, which may cause to disturb the students' performance in the institution. Then it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to resolve the conflict in such a way that the teaching-learning process can be run smoothly and students' success does not become doubtful.

Conflict Management Practices

Many scholars practice a five-strategy TKI approach described by [Kilmann & Thomas, \(1977\)](#) to evaluate the persons' behavior in conflicting conditions in which uncertainties between persons and among persons are managed that are avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising, and collaborating. Moreover, in the literature, several ways are characterized about these five practices through linking with two areas, like intra-awareness vs. inter-awareness ([Rahim, 2011](#)); activity vs. passivity; cooperativeness vs. assertiveness ([Wilmot & Hocker, 2001](#)); appropriateness and effectiveness and distributivism and integrity (Gross & Guerrero, 2000). In conflict circumstances, it may describe the person's behavior besides with dual crucial dimensions assertiveness and cooperativeness. Assertiveness is a level in which individuals accomplish their activities as per their interests, whereas cooperativeness is a level in which the individuals accomplish other personal concerns (Gross & Guerrero, 2000). These two dimensions of behavior can be utilized to characterize five practices for managing conflicts. These five conflicts dealing with modes are demonstrated by ([Ciuladiene & Kairiene, 2019](#)) are as follows:

Avoiding (Withdrawing)

It is a non-confrontational approach that includes low degrees of both assertiveness and cooperativeness simultaneously. It might employ physical or emotional bullying. This style of

contention dealing with speaks to an "I lose, you lose" point of view ([Sullivan, 2019](#)).

Accommodating (Smoothing, Obliging)

It is an appealing and high approach of emphasizing the area of the agreement to maintain relationships while avoiding points of disagreement. It includes an elevated level of helpfulness and a low degree of self-assuredness as one group places the enthusiasm of the other over its own. It also engages the other party by surrendering control and shows the viewpoint of, "I lose, and you win" ([Ciuladiene & Kairiene, 2019](#)).

Competing (Dominating)

Competing is used to manage conflicts through authority, power, force as well as supremacy. It is a goal-oriented, quick and authoritarian approach but may breed hostility. It includes a high level of decisiveness by one gathering to the detriment of the other party. This style of contention engages one group and persecutes the other with restricted probabilities of adaptability. This style speaks to the idea of an "I win, you lose" point of view ([Ciuladiene & Kairiene, 2019](#)).

Compromising (Sharing)

It is a compromising style of conflict to direct the degree of both assertiveness and cooperativeness while looking for compromise. The individuals who utilize this style search for an answer that fulfills a few worries for every single included party. It includes numerous matters, haggling, by adjustment of the negotiation as well as penetrating instead of resolutions that acquire more or less mutually neck and neck gratification between parties ([Ciuladiene & Kairiene, 2019](#)).

Collaborating (Problem-Solving)

The collaborating style includes both significant levels of assertiveness and cooperativeness (self-assuredness and helpfulness). This style tries to fulfill the necessities of all groups included completely. It incorporates distinguishing the basic concerns of the adversaries and finding an elective that encounters the concern groups. It enables all groups required as they rethink their purposes to be progressively reachable. It speaks to the point of view of "I win, you win" ([Ciuladiene & Kairiene, 2019](#)).

Conclusively it can be said that conflicts are described by outward dissimilarities and negative

passionate conditions. Moreover, problems in contention are supposed to be unmistakable, impalpable, and as per needs or beliefs ([Rahim, 2011](#)). It can frequently result in damaging finishes; however, it doesn't need to. Coordinated efforts reduce the accessibility in conflicting conditions. On the lookout for conclusions in conflicts are known as compromising ([Maccoby & Scudder, 2011](#)). To oversee conflict effectively, the undesirable emotional states which lead towards conflicts overseen as key an application of intellectual practices. The dissimilarities in desires are the cause of the conflict to be able to superlative coped by conspiracy based on management practices. Furthermore, conflict management practices used while conflicting groups low the passion due to the situations.

Research Methodology

The study is exploratory, and a survey technique was used to collect the data from a teacher of Sargodha University to find out conflict management practices of the teacher.

This study comprised all the male and female teachers teaching undergraduate students of all the departments of the University of Sargodha. Random sampling technique was used to select the representative sample for the study. UOS main campus has seven faculties, out of which 6 faculties were selected because in one faculty (Faculty of Medical & Health Sciences), students were studying under the annual system. Overall 12 departments were selected randomly; three (3) departments from large faculties and one (1) department from small faculty. From these selected departments, 120 teachers teaching undergraduate programs, ten from each department were taken as samples.

A self-developed conflict management practices scale (CMPS) contained 25 items under five approaches (factors) was used. The five-strategy approach of [Kilmann and Thomas \(1977\)](#), i.e. competing, collaboration, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating, was followed. The scale was discussed with the experts' Ph.D. in the subject of Education with plenty of academic and research experience for content validation. To ensure the reliability of the self-developed scales, the researcher carried out the pilot study on 50 teachers not included in the actual sample. The reliability coefficient Cronbach Alpha value was 0.763. The questionnaires were administered

through personal visits of the selected departments. The data collected through questionnaires were tabulated and analyzed by applying descriptive statistics i.e., frequency, percentage, mean & standard deviation, and inferential statistics, i.e., correlation, regression, t-test, ANOVA was used.

Data Analysis and Results

Following were the data analysis to determine the Conflict Management Practices of University teachers.

Table 1. Factors wise Analysis Conflict Management Practices of University Teachers

S. No	Factors	SDA f (%)	SD f (%)	UN f (%)	A f (%)	SA f (%)	Total f (%)	Mean	SD
1.	Competing with students or forcing the students	60 10%	86 14.34%	134 22.28%	158 26.34%	162 27%	600 100%	3.642	6.481
2.	Collaborative with students to solve problems	59 9.82%	69 11.5%	133 22.18%	163 27.16%	176 29.34%	600 100%	3.548	6.416
3.	Compromising through sharing	59 9.84%	79 13.18%	130 21.6%	143 23.84%	189 31.38%	600 100%	3.54	6.573
4.	Avoiding and withdrawing	42 7%	78 13.02%	152 25.34%	146 24.34%	182 30.36%	600 100%	3.54	6.186
5.	Accommodating students for smooth functioning	38 6.32%	91 15.16%	135 22.5%	132 22%	204 34.02%	600 100%	3.62	6.306

Table 1 shows that overall, 53.34% of teachers teaching undergraduates with supporting mean 3.642 and SD = 6.481 agreed that Competing with students or forcing the students is normally used for conflict management practices. Regarding second factor, overall, 56.5% of teachers teaching undergraduates with supporting mean 3.548 and SD = 6.416 agreed that collaboration with students to solve problems is normally used for conflict management practices. Similarly, overall, 55.22% of teachers teaching undergraduates with a supporting mean 3.54 and SD = 6.573 agreed that the Compromising through sharing technique is usually used for conflict management practices. Whereas overall, 54.7% of teachers teaching undergraduates with a supporting mean 3.54 and SD = 6.186 agreed that the Avoiding and withdrawing technique is frequently used for conflict management practices. Moreover, overall 56.02% of teachers teaching undergraduates with a supporting mean 3.62 and SD = 6.306 agreed that the technique of accommodating students for

smooth functioning is most commonly used for conflict management practices.

Categorization of Conflict Management Practices

An index score for the mediating role of conflict management practices of each teacher was created by summing up all the scores of the mediating role of conflict management practices. The minimum score in this index was 23, indicating the lowest overall nature of student-teacher conflicts level, and 115, indicating the highest overall nature of student-teacher conflicts level. This index was divided into three categories, i.e., low, moderate, and high, by applying the following procedure.

- An index score of the first category was formed, i.e. low level (25-58).
- An index score of the second category was formed, i.e. moderate level (59-91).
- Mean index score (92-125) were considered the high level of mediating role of conflict management practices level.

Table 2. Categorization of Conflict Management Practices of University Teachers

S. No	Levels (Index Value)	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
1.	Low (25-58)	1	0.8%		
2.	Moderate (59-91)	68	56.7%	2.42	.512
3.	High (92-125)	51	42.5%		
4.	Total	120	100.0%		

The table 2 shows that 42.5% University teachers, teaching undergraduates have a high level, whereas 56.7% teachers have moderate level

whereas remaining 0.8% University teachers have a low level of conflict management practices with the favor of mean score (M = 2.42; SD = 0.512).

Table 3. Gender wise levels of Mediating Role of Conflict Management Practices of University Teachers

Level (Index Value)	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Low (25-58)	1	0.8%	0	0.0%	1	0.8%
Moderate (59-91)	22	18.3%	46	38.3%	68	56.7%
High (92-125)	23	19.2%	28	23.3%	51	42.5%
Total	46	38.3%	74	61.7%	120	100.0%

The table 3 shows the gender-wise level of conflict management practices of University teachers. Three levels of conflict management practices were considered, i.e. low, moderate and high. For a low level, the value taken were (25-58), moderate value ranging from (59-91) and for high level values were (92-125). According to data analysis given above; there were 0.3% male teachers (1) and 0.0% female teachers (0) use low level of conflict

management practices, while 18.3% male teachers (22) and 38.3% female teachers (68) use moderate level of conflict management practices. The remaining 19.2% male teachers (46) and 23.3% female teachers (28) use high level of conflict management practices. The majority of teachers, teaching undergraduates 56.7% (207) use the moderate level of conflict management practices.

Table 4. Gender-based Comparison of Conflict Management Practices of University Teachers

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p-value
Male	46	88.85	11.802			
Female	74	88.66	9.289	0.096	118	0.024

Table 4 indicates the gender-based comparison of conflict management practices of male and female University teachers teaching undergraduates'. There was statistically significant difference in conflict management practices of male and female

University teachers as t = 0.096, df = 118 and p = 0.024 < α = 0.05. It also shows that female teachers (with higher mean M = 88.66, SD = 9.289) use higher level of conflict management practices than male teachers (M = 88.85, SD = 11.802).

Table 5. One-Way ANOVA for Comparison of Conflict Management Practices of University Teachers

Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. p-value
Between Groups	852.164	11	77.461		
Within Groups	11715.400	108	108.476	0.714	0.924
Total	12567.467	119			

Table 5 indicates the One Way ANOVA of the conflict management practices of University teachers, teaching undergraduates'. The results

revealed that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean scores conflict management practices of University teachers,

teaching undergraduates' belonging to different departments (from selected departments i.e. Chemistry, CS & IT, Physics, Social Work, History & Pak Studies, Economics, English, Library & Information Sciences, Food Science & Technology, Communication & Media Studies, Pharmaceutics, and Mechanical Engineering) of the University of Sargodha, as indicated by F -value = 0.714, p = 0.924 < α = 0.05.

Conclusions and Discussion

The majority of the teachers use all types of conflict management practices such as Competing with students or forcing the students, collaboration with students to solve problems, compromising through sharing, avoiding and withdrawing and accommodating students for smooth functioning. Similarly, [Rahim \(2001\)](#) and [Akhtar \(2014\)](#) explained that according to the situation, any of the five conflict management strategies can be used. That's why all the university teachers irrespective of departments use similar conflict management practices.

The majority of the teachers care for students' teachers conflict and their conflict management

practices are of high and moderate level, not lower level. Similarly, the majority of male and female teachers uses moderate and high level of conflict management practices, but female teachers use better conflict management practices as compared to their male counterparts. Opposite to this [Bazezew & Neka, \(2017\)](#) found that male teachers more avoid conflicts in class than the female teachers; they used accommodating conflict management strategy in class that enhanced teaching and learning processes. This difference may be due to the university environment and students background as most of the students of the University of Sargodha are from rural areas.

Recommendations

It is found that University teachers use different conflict management techniques but a handsome number of teachers are at moderate or low level in managing conflict. So it is recommended that it is recommended that University teachers may be given the conflict management training for better management of student-teacher conflicts to enhance the academic achievement of students.

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