

Conflict Management Styles Used by Secondary School Heads in Public and Private Sector; a Comparative Study

Ayesha Abdullah*
Bareera Khushbakht**

Abstract

When there is disagreement inside an organization, conflict arises. The heads of the schools have a crucial role in effectively handling the conflict. The purpose of this study is to examine secondary school heads' styles of handling conflict in the public and private sectors. A questionnaire was used in this study to gather data. A multistage random sample technique was employed to collect data from 100 teachers in public schools and 100 teachers in private schools. To gather data an adapted questionnaire was used. The opinion of experts was used to validate the instrument. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach alpha, and its internal consistency score was 0.74. The findings of the research showed that conflict management styles are influenced by demographic characteristics. On the other hand, the preferred styles of school heads are not greatly affected by the type of school (private versus public). There was a minor difference in the accommodating style, heads of public schools showing a little higher inclination for this style than heads of private schools. It is advised that male heads should receive specific training in order to enhance their capacity for compromising and collaborating styles in both the public and private sectors. It is also advised that courses be held to improve the abilities of female heads in the public and private sectors to compromise and work together.

Key words: *conflict management styles, public heads, private heads.*

* Lecturer, University of Jhang. ayesha4edu@gmail.com

** Researcher at IER university of the Punjab, Lahore

Introduction

Each conflict we face in life has the ability to be both useful and harmful. It may either nourish anger, fear, guilt, entrapment, and resistance or it can be a source of inspiration, insight, learning, transformation, and progress. The choice of how to react rests with us and our willingness to face and overcome these obstacles, not with our opponents. Diverse interpretations of the term "conflict" have been offered by experts in related domains. The meaning of conflict has never been standardized; instead, it is defined variously based on the discipline and viewpoint of the individual. It's critical for school heads to handle conflicts effectively. In order for the school heads to efficiently connect with all departments and handle crises, it is imperative that heads foster a culture of open communication. It is required of heads and staff that they collaborate well as a team for the schools. This research compares the styles used by heads in the public and private sectors to handle conflicts. (Ahmad, Dilshad 2016).

This study also fills a major gap in literature and establishes the groundwork for future research. Human contact will certainly lead to conflict in a variety of settings, including classrooms. Disparities in objectives, beliefs, perspectives, and resources can give rise to conflicts between teachers, parents, and students in secondary schools. Ineffective conflict management styles can result in low output, a hostile learning environment, and a high staff turnover rate (Johnson, 2018).

If these conflicts are not handled properly, they may intensify and have detrimental effects on relationships, morale, and academic performance. There are numerous academic fields in which conflict management is applicable, not just in schools. A substantial amount of educational research relates conflict management to the duties of secondary school heads. A greater understanding of the value of conflict management in educational settings has emerged in recent years. In addition to settling conflicts, effective conflict management fosters collaboration and improves communication while also establishing healthy learning environments in schools, all of which are critical to the growth and wellbeing of children.

Despite extensive research on conflict management in a range of secondary schools, there remains a substantial data gap regarding the management of conflicts in secondary schools, particularly in Lahore, Pakistan. The duties of a school head are broad and include overseeing student welfare, managing staff, supervising the curriculum, and doing administrative work. The importance of conflict management in performing these tasks cannot be overstated.

Rahim (2011) asserts that efficient conflict management enhances organizational outcomes, including staff productivity and student

advancement. Effective communication is crucial for a school head to foster openness and a team-oriented environment. These might lessen the likelihood of disputes in secondary school. The following traits are acknowledged as sources of conflict variables. These include making poor decisions, acting basely, not having enough resources, allocating the workload unevenly, and not being transparent.

Conflict management in schools is evolving as outcome of changing public dynamics, educational policies, and technological advancements, according to recent studies. For instance, because of the increasing diversity of their student bodies, school heads need to be skilled at resolving conflicts arising from social and cultural differences (Spillane & Kenney, 2012). School heads need to be informed about these changes and their implications since conflict management has taken on new dimensions due to the introduction of social media and digital communication (Johnson, 2018).

It is important for heads to actively participate in real-world scenarios in order to get familiarity with the conflict resolution techniques required by schools. Additionally, wherever feasible, the consensus should take precedence over individual judgment. Heads should examine the resources of both parties when a disagreement escalates beyond reasonable negotiation. They should also develop a plan of action, carry it out, persuade their superiors of the plan's viability, and combine their forces to resolve the problem. Finally, heads need to keep a realistic perspective of their own limits when it comes to handling disagreement. The demands and expectations placed on school heads by parents, teachers, students, and the community also influence how they handle conflict. More open and collaborative conflict management styles may be required in public schools due to their obligation to the public and governmental entities (Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Private schools promote more students-oriented tactics, emphasizing quick and pleasant conflict management styles to retain their reputation and enrollment numbers. These schools are reliant on tuition payments and parental satisfaction (Kowalski, 2010).

Their approaches are problem-solving, smoothing, compromising, complying, and retreating. There are five different approaches to managing conflicts: integrating (solving problems), dominating, accommodating or conforming, avoiding, and compromise. An amicable result is reached via the use of an integrated conflict resolution process.

Information sharing serves as a style symbol. The authoritative method conveys the idea that one side is losing and the other is gaining. One side assertively states how its perspective differs from the others. The accommodating approach prioritizes the needs of others before one's own.

When it comes to avoiding style, there aren't many disagreements on either side. Someone makes a choice when they wish to reject something and keep their distance from a quarrel. Middle is found by means of compromise.

According to Rahim (2011), the five primary approaches to conflict management are cooperation, rivalry, avoidance, accommodation, and compromise. These styles are further classified as care for oneself and others by specialists worldwide. The purpose of the research is to ascertain how these conflict resolution techniques affect secondary school administrators in Lahore, Pakistan, who oversee both public and private schools, in order to close a gap in the academic context's comparative research. The existence of regulatory agencies and teacher unions in public schools might make resolving conflicts more difficult. These schools frequently have to follow state laws and collective bargaining agreements, which might make it more difficult for the head of the school to quickly and flexibly implement solutions (Ingersoll, 2013).

Several different things can lead to conflict, including communication problems, and structural challenges. Competition, hierarchical dynamics, demanding work conditions, and organizational changes within the institution and its components are examples of structural factors (Barsky, 2002). Additional common reasons include judgments about faculty employment, space limitations, disputes between personalities, faculty views, resource limitations, faculty retention, and diversity issues (Stanley & Algert, 2007). Additional broad sources include tenure systems, yearly assessments, recruiting choices for professors, merit and promotion procedures, and agreements (Barsky, 2002). Schools are no longer seen as calm havens free of charge from the tensions inborn in hierarchical institutions, in accordance with Shubert and Folger (1995). Conflicts may arise from differences in goals or approaches to resource distribution, misunderstandings of institutional policies, breaking formal or informal agreements, power battles, and personal grudges. It's essential to comprehend these sources for efficiency.

Theoretical Framework

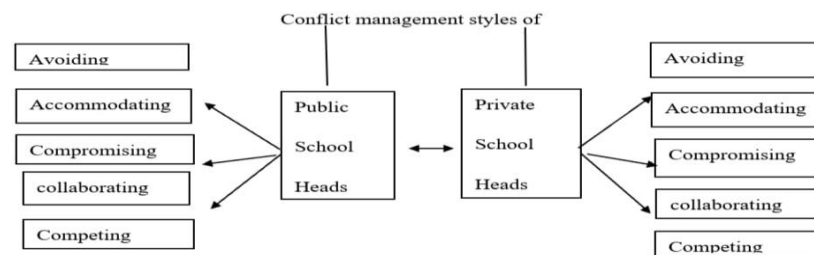
Dual Worry Theory offers a conceptual framework for comprehending how individuals' approach and settle conflicts based on their degrees of care for both their own and other people's outcomes. Peter J. Carnevale and Dean G. Pruitt invented it. According to this theory, the two primary characteristics that distinguish conflict management styles are self- and other care. In a conflict scenario, concern for self refers to the degree to which a person puts their own needs, wants, and interests ahead of those of others. Alternatively, empathy shows how much one appreciates and

considers the needs, wants, and interests of other parties to the dispute. Five distinct conflict management styles have been discovered under the Dual Concern Theory.

Research Design

This study was quantitative in nature. Survey research was conducted. The study's participants are secondary school teachers from both the public and private sectors in Lahore, Pakistan. There are 3369 male and 5718 female teachers in the Lahore district (School Education Department, 2018). The 9087 secondary school teachers made up the population under study. Including teachers from the public and private sectors ensures a comprehensive analysis of the many styles of conflict management in secondary schools. Two hundred teachers from Lahore's public and private secondary schools make up the study's sample. To produce the sample, multistage random sampling was used. The information was gathered from three randomly chosen Lahore Tehsils: Model Town, Lahore City, and Lahore Cantt.

Conceptual Framework



Statement of the Problem

The aim of this study was to examine and distinguish between the conflict management styles used by secondary school heads in the public and private sectors, emphasizing significant differences and similarities.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the conflict management styles used by heads of public secondary schools.
2. To discover the styles of managing conflicts that heads of private secondary schools use.
3. To find out the styles for managing conflicts that heads of private and public secondary schools use.

Research Questions

1. Which conflict management styles do heads of public secondary schools use?
2. How do heads of private secondary schools handle conflicts?
3. How do heads of secondary schools in public and private sectors handle conflicts differently?

Instrumentation

Data for this study were gathered using an adapted conflict management styles questionnaire. Five conflict management styles were covered in the questionnaire: accommodating, avoiding, compromising, competing, and collaborating. Each style was assessed using four specific questions. In addition, demographic inquiries were included to gather background data on the participants. The instrument's reliability was assessed in pilot research by having a small, representative sample of secondary school teachers complete the questionnaire. To assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire, Cronbach alpha was used. This yielded values of 0.74.

Table 1

The gender based mean and standard deviation of public school heads' conflict management styles.

Styles	Gender	N	Mean	SD
COLLABORATING_1	Male	44	16.22	.377
	Fe male	56	15.83	.305
COMPETING_2	Male	44	7.77	.366
	Fe male	56	9.42	.359
AVOIDING_3	Male	44	7.68	.378
	Fe male	56	9.42	.359
COMPROMISING_4	Male	44	16.00	.391
	Fe male	56	15.92	.361
ACCOMODATING_5	Male	44	16.61	.274
	Fe male	56	15.98	.259

In public schools, male teachers have a higher mean for their heads when it comes to the Collaborating style. However, female teachers revealed that their heads more often used the competing style; female heads gave competitiveness a higher priority. In the same way, female heads prioritized avoiding conflicts more when it came to the Avoiding style. On the other hand, there was very little gender difference in the Compromising style, with male teachers scoring slightly higher and female teachers slightly lower for their heads, indicating that both genders value compromise style.

Table 2

The gender based mean and standard deviation of private school heads conflict management styles.

Styles	Gender	N	Mean	SD
COLLABORATING_1	Male	53	15.66	.384
	Fe male	47	16.29	.310
COMPETING_2	Male	53	8.83	.422
	Fe male	47	8.04	.387
AVOIDING_3	Male	53	8.83	.422
	Fe male	47	8.04	.387
COMPROMISING_4	Male	53	15.38	.408
	Fe male	47	16.38	.304
ACCOMODATING_5	Male	53	15.77	.330
	Fe male	47	15.25	.424

In private schools, Female teachers have a higher mean for their heads when it comes to the Collaborating style. However, male scored higher than female in the Competing style. When female heads comes to avoiding style prioritized avoiding conflicts more. Similarly female had a greater tendency for compromise in the Compromising style.

Table 3

Variations in conflict management styles used in private and public secondary schools Heads

Styles	Type	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Collaborating	Public	100	16.01	2.380	.144	198	.885
	Private	100	15.96	2.514	.144	198	.885
Competing	Public	100	8.70	2.694	.607	198	.545
	Private	100	8.46	2.896	.607	198	.545
Avoiding	Public	100	8.66	2.742	.501	198	.617
	Private	100	8.46	2.896	.501	198	.617
Compromising	Public	100	15.96	2.643	.375	198	.708
	Private	100	15.82	2.637	.375	198	.708
Accommodating	Public	100	16.26	1.904	2.235	198	.027
	Private	100	15.53	2.653	2.235	198	0.27

All of the styles t-values show that there is no noticeable difference between the styles. This demonstrates that there are no statistically significant differences between secondary school heads from public and private sectors in conflict management styles.

Discussion

This research looked at the ways in which public and private secondary school heads resolved conflicts. The study's methodology was

quantitative in nature. Through a survey questionnaire, data were collected from 200 teachers, half of whom were employed by public secondary schools and the other half by private ones. Based on demographic variables, including gender, these findings differ. Female teachers in public schools employ avoidance and competition styles for their heads. When it came to cooperating and being accommodating, male teachers performed somewhat better for their heads.

The results of this study, which show that gender affects conflict management styles, are supported by earlier studies. According to research by Euwema and Van Emmerik (2007), male heads are more prone to adopt accommodating and collaborative approaches, whereas female heads frequently choose avoiding and competitive styles. According to Yukl (2012), leaders in highly bureaucratic organizations, like public schools, may choose to adopt more accommodating style in order to navigate the difficult web of rules and expectations. This might account for the notable preference for this style among heads of public schools. Gender differences are important in conflict management, as well; Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber (2002) pointed out that female tend to avoid conflict more than males do. Comparably, gender plays a significant role in determining conflict resolution strategies, particularly in terms of how male and female handle. Our results on the accommodating style, however, are marginally different from those of Rahim (2011), who discovered that male heads are just as likely as female heads to adopt competitive styles in educational settings. Female heads at private schools performed better when it came to compromise and working together. The inclination for competitive and avoidant styles was stronger among male heads.

A comparison study utilizing an independent sample t-test revealed no differences between the conflict management approaches of competing, avoiding, and compromising between the heads of public and private schools. Results show that female heads are more prone to avoid confrontation. The previously mentioned avoidance may be explained by a need to maintain peace and avoid interpersonal conflicts, which is a trait that is often associated with female leadership, as noted by Northouse (2018) in his analysis of leadership theories. Previous research on conflict management styles has clarified their preferred methods of resolving conflicts. Dillard (2005) found that the integrated style was the most frequently preferred style for resolving conflicts at work in a study of secondary school heads. However, at private schools, especially among female heads, giving in is valued. This is in line with study by De Dreu and Van Vianen (2001), who discovered that in situations when quick decisions are necessary to maintain discipline, compromise is usually viewed as a workable alternative. This style is likely motivated by the

competitive environment of the private sector, where results and productivity are highly valued (Tjosvold, 2008).

These results suggest that, although secondary schools tend to encourage cooperation and compromise when managing disputes, Particular preferences between the public and private sectors could differ significantly. The private sector's propensity for compromise may reflect a practical approach to conflict management intended to swiftly and successfully balance conflicting interests, while the public sector's propensity for integration may reflect a greater emphasis on inclusive and comprehensive conflict resolution strategies.

Conclusion

The research shows that although school type (private vs. public) has no discernible impact on the preferred approach used by school heads, demographic considerations do influence conflict management techniques. The accommodating approach's marginal relevance suggests a possible direction for further research. It was evident that female heads at public schools favored noncompetitive methods. Male teachers preferred styles that were accommodating, cooperative, and forgiving. Female heads favored compromise in private schools. When it comes to avoidance and competition, male heads fared better. This study investigated secondary school heads styles for managing conflicts in public as well as private sectors. The results provided some important insights. Male heads were more likely to adopt accommodating, and compromise methods.

The pattern was slightly different in private schools. Female educators prioritized middle ground and collaboration, promoting compromise and teamwork. Like their colleagues in public schools, male instructors at private schools tended toward competitive and avoiding methods. There were no variations seen in the conflict management strategies of heads of private and public schools when it came to cooperating, competing, avoiding, and compromising. A discernible distinction was noticed in the accommodating manner, as public school heads showed a little greater inclination towards this methodology in contrast to their private school counterparts. This suggests that in situations where there is disagreement, public school administrators would be more likely to make concessions on their own demands in order to meet those of others.

Recommendations

1. School heads should include teachers in the conflict management process; from this a collaborative decision-making culture can be fostered.

2. It may be possible to create extensive mentoring programs for heads with less expertise in conflict management.
3. To improve the collaborative and compromising conflict management style in private schools female heads may participate in orientation programs.
4. It is possible to set up a system of routine evaluation for the heads' conflict management styles.
5. Private school heads may attend training to improve their accommodating conflict management style.

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