

Fit or Being Fitted: Academic Institutional Managers' Conflict Management Styles

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Abstract

The beauty of society lies in the differences of opinions, and if this difference of opinion is constructive, society booms. The difference of opinions is also known as conflict of opinions. The study aimed to explore the practices and perceptions of different conflict management styles adopted by the different academic managers in the area of Southern Punjab. As the research problem is a current phenomenon and survey research design is most appropriate to achieve such kind of study. All Principals/ Vice Principals and teachers of all public and private colleges of the Southern Punjab region were the populations of the study. By adopting a multistage sampling technique, the targeted sample was selected. Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI), designed by Rahim in 1983, was adopted to measure the conflict management styles of administrators and cross-check them with their subordinates. Data collection was done by the researcher personally. Collected data was fed in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 and got the results by the test of ANOVA. Based on the findings of the study in a tabulated form, observable suggestions were also designed.

Key Words: Conflict Management Styles, Win-Lose Position, Integrating Style in Conflict Management, Public and Private Colleges, Southern Punjab.

Introduction

The beauty of society lies in the differences of opinions, and if this difference of opinions is constructive, society booms. The difference of opinions is also known as conflict of opinions. There is a group that takes conflict in the negative sense. But conflict is generally defined as a series of divergence with interest or idea. And this general definition is shown that conflict is more positive as compared to negative. Man is a creation with an individual difference, so the conflicts with other fellows, colleagues and family or /and society members are a necessary part of daily routine life. In a routine, if two or more two individuals or groups or parties have some contradiction over any matter unconsciously or consciously is acknowledges as conflict. Different educationists defined conflict management in different ways as to meet the discordant aims of two or more two individuals, or clusters of individuals who are independent and have rare possessions of powers or authorities are called conflict management ([Wilmot and Hocker, 2001](#)). At the same time, positive conflict is functional and supports any individual or institutional goals ([Wertheim, 2002](#)). ([Whetten, & Cameron 2012](#)) opined that creating or developing hurdles in the working of any individual or institutional goals is considered as a negative conflict. The word “conflict” can be summarized in different contexts, but in terms of sociology, malfunctioning the social process between any two or more two individuals or institutions is considered a sociological conflict, and to handle it is called sociological or institutional conflict management. Humans without human differences are imaginable only and where differences are different in nature as per age, culture, gender, lingual, religion, customs, norms, and even on thinking styles. The same is the case, according to [Van Gramberg \(2006\)](#), in

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institutions in general and specifically in educational institutes, and they are of like intra and interpersonal or group or institutions etc.

(Tillett & French 2006) briefly describe that reticence, lack of communication, communication gap, such kind of expectations which are indistinct and concealed, communication problems, different points of view on the same societal customs, managerial and organizational problems, performance issues, and defying legislative patterns etc. in this regard, (Spector & Bruk-lee 2008) opined that there are many essential elements of any institution, but the most prominent of the element is conflict management. No discrimination to it that whether this conflict is positive or negative or neutral. (Schuran 2013) further added in it that conflict management has directly on the performance of any institutions' labor.



Figure1: Conflict Processing in General Context

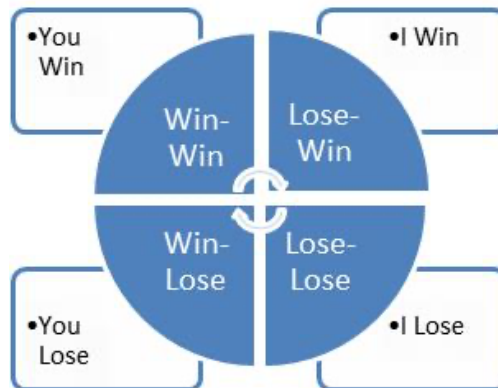


Figure 2: Conflict Table

The educational manager plays its role as a bridge between administration and labor/worker. The manager must achieve the set targets by the administration. Now, it's the responsibility and obligation of the manager that how s/he will be able to achieve the set targets while s/he must face the conflicts in the organization. At this stage, the manager applies a different kinds of styles to move with those conflicts. They are commonly known as

conflict management styles. Different management styles are described by different researchers. Some major conflicting styles are as under:

- (a) Obliging style – targeted as own selflessness and prioritize to others. Managers who try to adopt this style try their best to work on the common points and negate the common differences among subordinates.
- (b) Avoiding style – targeted as own and others' selflessness. Managers who try to adopt this style try their best to get work from the subordinates while overlooking the seriousness of matters.
- (c) Dominating style – targeted as prioritizing to own self and selflessness to others' views. Managers who try to adopt this style try their best to work in an autocratic manner or way.
- (d) Integrating style – targeted as giving equal chance to own self and others' views too. Managers who try to adopt this style try their best to work in a situation where they put the positive edges of obliging and dominating styles and negate the negative edges of obliging and dominating styles.
- (e) Compromising style – targeted as transitional patterns of own selflessness and others' too. Managers who try to adopt this style try their best to negotiate the issues and problems of workers and ends them on the rule "give and take".

Study Aim

Conflict management is an issue in all educational institutes, and it is not bad if the issue is addressed at their meaningful results. Keeping in mind the same gestures, the aim of this study is that whether the educational managers are fit or being fitted in facing and resolving the conflict issues at their institutions. This study is confined to the Southern Punjab region of the Punjab province.

Research Design

To highlight any kind of research problem or the current status of the population, the survey research method is most appropriate (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Gay & Airasian, 2003). To study a single variable is most convenient and feasible by adopting a descriptive research design, likely to be used by the researchers. So, to handle and complete this same study, patterns were adopted while keeping in mind the survey method. This study was delimited to the divisional headquarters of the Southern Punjab region. The population of the study was based on all Principals or their vices with all teaching staff members of urban colleges (Public/Private) from the divisional headquarters of Southern Punjab. By adopting a multistage sampling technique, the targeted sample was selected. The distribution of the sample is given in Table No. 1. Inventory designed in 1983 and famous as RoCI (Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory) was adopted as the research tool here for the heads of the educational institutes and crisscross check it with their subordinates (Rahim & Magner, 1995). ROC inventory contains 34 items, and these items are based on Likert Scale. ROC inventory is based on five different conflict management styles. Detail is given in table No. 2. Data collection was done by the researcher personally. Collected data was feed in the MS Excel sheet, exported to SPSS and applied ANOVA test for obtaining the required outcomes.

Table 1. Sample of the Study

Southern Punjab Region						
Divisions	Districts	College Distribution				Total
		Public		Private		
		Male	Female	Male	Female	
Multan	Multan	10	10	10	10	40
Bahawalpur	Bahawalpur	10	10	10	10	40
D. G. Khan	D. G. Khan	10	10	10	10	40
Total		30	30	30	30	120
Grand Total				120		120

Table 2. Questionnaire Items

S. No	Conflict Management Styles	No. of Items
1	Integrating Style (InS)	07
2	Obliging Style (ObS)	07
3	Dominating Style (DoS)	07
4	Avoiding Style (AvS)	07
5	Compromising Style (CoS)	06
Total		34

Results and Discussion

ROC inventory has five conflict management styles/strategies. Collected data on the inventory was analyzed by adopting the factor analysis technique. Each factor with its three demographic variables, e.g. Gender, College sector and qualification of the teachers, was analyzed by applying.

Table 3. Analysis

Integrating Style with ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares'	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Gender (Male & Female)	Between Groups	18.07	4	1.89		
	Within Groups	72.56	115	0.21	9.77	.000
	Total	90.63	119			
Sector (Public & Private)	Between Groups	16.32	4	1.9		
	Within Groups	72.22	115	0.18	9.88	.000
	Total	88.54	119			
Academic Level	Between Groups	9.76	4	1.7		
	Within Groups	82.89	115	0.25	6.89	.000
	Total	92.65	119			
Obliging Style with ANOVA						
Gender (Male & Female)	Between Groups	17.47	4	.324		
	Within Groups	72.73	115	.248	1.307	.219
	Total	90.02	119			
Sector (Public & Private)	Between Groups	34.56	4	1.316		
	Within Groups	50.73	115	.202	6.531	.000
	Total	85.29	119			
Academic Level	Between Groups	28.33	4	.408		
	Within Groups	60.43	115	.243	1.677	.077
	Total	88.76	119			
Dominating Style with ANOVA						
Gender (Male & Female)	Between Groups	13.41	4	1.205		
	Within Groups	75.44	115	.194	6.222	.000
	Total	88.85	119			
Sector (Public & Private)	Between Groups	14.16	4	2.084		
	Within Groups	77.14	115	.127	16.445	.000
	Total	91.30	119			
Academic Level	Between Groups	18.24	4	.720		
	Within Groups	71.91	115	.221	3.265	.000
	Total	90.15	119			

Integrating Style with ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares'	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Avoiding Style with ANOVA						
Gender (Male & Female)	Between Groups	24.70	4	.934		
	Within Groups	64.44	115	.212	4.406	.000
	Total	89.14	119			
Sector (Public & Private)	Between Groups	42.51	4	1.803		
	Within Groups	45.96	115	.148	12.176	.000
	Total	89.47	119			
Academic Level	Between Groups	16.08	4	1.518		
	Within Groups	76.19	115	.178	8.548	.000
	Total	92.27	119			
Compromising Style with ANOVA						
Gender (Male & Female)	Between Groups	13.61	4	.958		
	Within Groups	76.14	115	.221	4.328	.000
	Total	89.75	119			
Sector (Public & Private)	Between Groups	16.80	4	1.014		
	Within Groups	72.12	115	.204	4.968	.000
	Total	88.92	119			
Academic Level	Between Groups	14.91	4	1.232		
	Within Groups	84.70	115	.209	5.907	.000
	Total	89.31	119			

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) technique. Integrating style is the first conflict management style, and Table No.3 describes that Principals or Vice Principals' opinions have shown significant difference based on gender (Male & Female); sector (Public and Private), and academic level (Masters in Sciences or Arts. Masters in the Philosophy & Doctor of Philosophy). Obliging style is the second conflict management style, and Table No.3 describes that Principals or Vice Principals' opinions have shown significant differences based on sector (Public and Private). But Principals or Vice Principals' opinions have shown no significant difference based on gender (Male & Female) and academic qualification (Masters in Sciences or Arts. Masters in the Philosophy & Doctor of Philosophy). Dominating style is a third conflict management style, and Table No.3 describes that Principals or Vice Principals' opinions have shown significant difference based on gender (Male & Female); sector (Public and Private) and academic qualification (Masters in Sciences or Arts. Masters in the Philosophy & Doctor of Philosophy). Avoiding style is the fourth conflict management style, and Table No.3 describes that Principals or Vice Principals' opinions have shown significant difference based on gender (Male & Female); sector (Public and Private) and academic qualification (Masters in Sciences or Arts. Masters in the Philosophy & Doctor of Philosophy). And the last one is compromising style in conflict management style, and Table No.3 describes that Principals or Vice Principals' opinions have shown significant difference based on gender (Male & Female); sector (Public and Private), and academic qualification (Masters in Sciences or Arts. Masters in the Philosophy & Doctor of Philosophy).

The findings of the study indicated that several academic managers resolve the conflicts raised at their institutions by applying integrating styles of conflict management style. The other styles like dominating, obliging, compromising and avoiding are also used by the managers, but they are very less in numbers. It can also be shown from the findings that male and female managers from public and private sectors have shown additional competency levels in resolving the conflicting issues in their institutions. Finding also depicting that highly qualifies managers have shown different attitudes in integrating, obliging and compromising. They adopt dominating or avoiding styles to resolve their academic institutions' conflicts. At the same time, the following steps are recommended to the Principals and Vice and Principals to resolve the conflicts;

1. A key skill in solving conflicts for an academic manager is equity.
 2. Academic managers don't blame anyone for any conflict but try to resolve the conflict while taking a piloting position.
 3. Managers assure privacy regarding discussion on conflicts with their subordinates as well as in the documentation of the conflicts.
 4. Managers try their best not to sympathize with conflicts or conflict arousees but are synthesized.
 5. Managers should listen actively and not only listen actively but also listen actively for understanding. In such context, if s/he has the puzzle-solving skills, it would benefit him/her extraordinarily.
 6. The manager should focus on issues or conflicts and don't on personality. Institutions always get their progress by-laws, not by personalities.
 7. Managers also identify and restate the themes of conflict rapidly so that conflict arousees may not be able to pressurize or politicize the conflict.
 8. Managers should have alternative solutions and plans to resolve the conflicts.
 9. Managers should have the skills to give action plans and be ready to agree on the action plans for solving conflicts.
 10. Managers should give feedback on the conflicts. Otherwise, conflicts may become more serious.
- In the end, findings and discussion can be summarized in diagram No. 3.

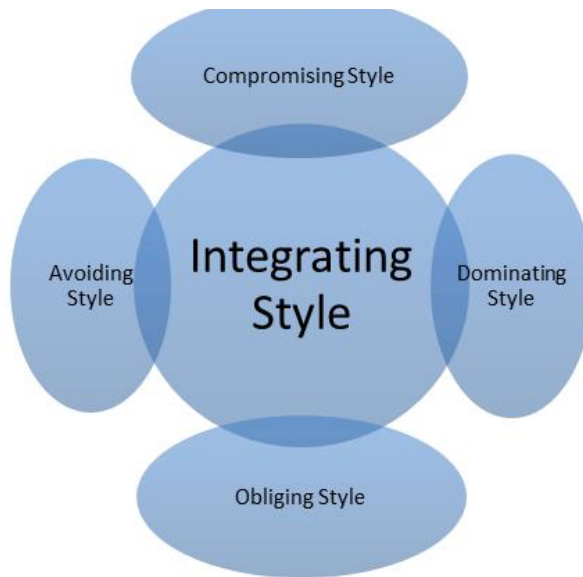


Figure 3: Integrating Style as Key adopted Conflict Management Style

Suggestions

Based on the findings, the following suggestions were drawn that this study was exploratory by nature, and it shows that academic managers are using integrating conflict management style but why they are using it and why not others should be explored by another study. Another important thing highlighted through the study that there are different conflict management styles were adopted by male, female and public, private college principals. So, it is also recommended that the reason behind it is also explorable.

Furthermore, Table No.4 is recommended based on reviewed literature and findings of the study:

Table 4. Recommendation methods to overcome the academic institutions' conflicts

S. No	Method	Situation
1	Integrating Style	Win - Win Institution
2	Obliging Style	Win - Lose Institution

S. No	Method	Situation
3	Dominating Style	Win - Lose Institution
4	Compromising Style	Win - Lose Institution
5	Avoiding Style	Lose - Lose Institution

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