

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES AND JOB PERFORMANCE OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

Hafiza Afia Nazeer

PhD Scholar ,STEM Education Department,Lahore College For Women University.

mysterious.afia@gmail.com

Dr Mahvish Fatima Kashif

(Assistant Professor), Faculty of Education,Uni: Lahore College For Women University.

mahvishfatima79@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between conflict management styles and job performance of university teachers. Conflict is a natural and unavoidable aspect of organizational life, particularly in higher education institutions where individuals work in diverse academic and administrative settings. The way teachers manage conflict may significantly influence their professional effectiveness and overall job performance.

The study adopts a quantitative research design within the positivist paradigm. Data were collected from university teachers through a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyze the data and examine the association between different conflict management styles and job performance.

The findings reveal that constructive conflict management styles, such as integrating and compromising, are positively associated with job performance. In contrast, dominating and avoiding styles show weaker or negative relationships with performance outcomes. The results suggest that effective conflict handling strategies enhance collaboration, communication, and productivity among university teachers.

This study provides valuable insights for higher education institutions by emphasizing the importance of promoting appropriate conflict management styles to improve teachers' job performance and overall institutional effectiveness.

Introduction

Conflict is an unavoidable phenomenon in educational institutions, as teachers, students, and administrators frequently interact with diverse goals, perspectives, and expectations (Rahim, 2002). Within universities, conflicts may occur among colleagues or between teachers and students, and if left unresolved, these disputes can negatively affect the overall teaching-learning environment. Poorly managed conflicts can result in stress, dissatisfaction, and ultimately a decline in teachers' job performance (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001).

Teachers occupy a central role in higher education, as they are responsible not only for imparting knowledge but also for mentoring students and contributing to academic excellence. Their ability to manage conflicts effectively is therefore crucial to their performance and professional responsibilities. Conflict management, understood as the process of addressing disagreements in a fair and constructive way, enables teachers to sustain positive relationships and focus on their core academic tasks (Rahim, 2002).

Conflict management styles represent the strategies individuals use when confronted with disagreements. According to Rahim (2002), these include avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising, and collaborating. Each of these approaches has its own implications for interpersonal relations and work performance, highlighting the need for teachers to select the most effective style depending on the situation.

The avoiding style involves ignoring or withdrawing from conflict. While it may provide short-term peace, unresolved issues tend to resurface, causing long-term disruptions that can hinder teachers' efficiency and job outcomes (Ghaffar, 2010). Thus, avoidance may reduce immediate stress but often undermines professional effectiveness in the long run.

Accommodating, another style, occurs when teachers prioritize others' needs over their own. Although this may help preserve harmony, continuous accommodation can generate

frustration and diminish job satisfaction if personal concerns are consistently overlooked (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). This imbalance may gradually reduce teachers' motivation and affect their performance.

The competing style is characterized by assertiveness and prioritizing personal goals at the expense of others. In university settings, this approach may produce a win-lose outcome, where one party's success translates into another's dissatisfaction. Such an atmosphere can create strained relationships and reduce collaborative efforts, leading to lowered overall job performance (Rahim, 2002).

Compromising and collaborating are generally regarded as more constructive approaches. Compromising requires both parties to give up certain demands to reach a balanced outcome. Though it may not satisfy everyone completely, it helps reduce tensions and maintain workflow (Thomas, 1992). Collaboration, on the other hand, is often seen as the most effective style, as it seeks solutions that benefit all parties. Teachers adopting this style are more likely to experience enhanced job satisfaction, reduced stress, and improved performance (Alzawahreh & Khasawneh, 2011).

In higher education, teachers who adopt constructive conflict management styles are better able to handle professional challenges and fulfill their multiple responsibilities, including teaching, research, and student mentoring. Studies suggest that effective conflict management contributes to improved job satisfaction, stronger collegial relationships, and higher overall performance (Ghaffar, 2010; Thomas, 1992). Therefore, understanding and applying appropriate conflict management styles is essential for enhancing teachers' effectiveness and achieving institutional goals.

Literature Review

Conflict is a natural phenomenon that emerges when individuals with diverse goals, values, and interests interact in academic institutions. According to Salleh and Adulpakdee (2012), conflict stems from differences in perceptions or expectations, and in educational settings, it often arises among teachers or between teachers and students. Valente et al. (2020) highlighted that conflict becomes evident when divergent opinions exist, making it inevitable in university life.

Scholars agree that conflict is unavoidable in the teaching profession, as teachers frequently face contrasting demands and expectations. Poorly managed conflict can lead to stress, reduced job satisfaction, and lower performance (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). However, when addressed effectively, conflict can stimulate new ideas, collaboration, and professional growth, ultimately benefiting both teachers and students (Ghaffar, 2010).

Rahim (2002) proposed five conflict management styles: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising. Each style differs in its focus on personal versus collective concerns and produces varied outcomes. Teachers' choice of conflict style can determine whether disputes enhance cooperation or create dissatisfaction, directly influencing job performance.

The integrating style emphasizes collaboration and problem-solving, where both parties aim for a win-win outcome. Research suggests that teachers who adopt this approach foster trust, stronger collegial relationships, and more effective classroom environments (Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Such outcomes are positively associated with higher levels of job performance and student achievement.

The obliging style, characterized by prioritizing others' needs over one's own, is often adopted to maintain harmony. While it may reduce immediate tension, repeated use can cause frustration and decreased job satisfaction for teachers whose own needs remain unaddressed (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). This, in turn, may negatively impact their teaching performance.

Teachers adopting the dominating style, which focuses on imposing personal goals, may secure short-term control but risk damaging professional relationships. Rahim (2002) argues that this win-lose approach can lead to resentment, reduced motivation, and strained communication, ultimately harming job performance within the academic context.

The avoiding style reflects withdrawal from addressing disputes. Though it provides temporary relief, unresolved issues often resurface, increasing tension in the long run. Studies show that avoidance among teachers can reduce cooperation, increase stress, and negatively influence both instructional delivery and overall job performance (Ghaffar, 2010).

Compromising involves mutual concessions, offering balanced but incomplete satisfaction for both parties. Thomas (1992) noted that while this style prevents escalation, it may leave lingering dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, when applied constructively, compromising helps teachers sustain professional relationships, manage classroom challenges, and maintain moderate job performance.

Objectives of the study

1. To explore relationship between conflict management styles and job performance of university teachers.
2. To investigate the difference between conflict management styles of male and female university teachers.

Research hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between conflict management styles and job performance of university teachers.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference among conflict management styles of male or female teachers.

Methodology

The study was quantitative in nature. Correlational research design was utilized to conduct the research. The use of a correlation research design is proposed to explore relationships between variables, as it investigates these connections without the researcher manipulating them (Bhandari, 2021).

Population

According to Gay (2005) population may be of any dimension and may cover any geographical area. In this study, all the teachers of the public universities were the population of the study. There are 51 public sector universities in Punjab according to Punjab Higher Education Commission (PHEC).

Sample

A multistage sampling technique was used to select the participants for the study. Multistage sampling involves selecting successively smaller groups at each stage when drawing a sample from a population. This approach is commonly employed to gather data from a widely dispersed and large group of individuals in national surveys. The sample was selected by using proportionate stratified random sampling.

Stage I

According to Government of Punjab (GoP), Punjab has three zones (South Western, Central and Eastern). South western zone has 10 public sector universities. Central zone has 23 universities. Eastern zone has 7 universities. At stage I, 30% of the total number of universities will be selected from each zone of province, Punjab. Therefore, 3 universities from south western zone, 7 universities from central zone and 3 universities will be selected from eastern zone of the Punjab.

Stage II

Common faculties (faculty of science and technology, faculty of arts and social sciences, faculty of management and administrative sciences and faculty of education) from the selected universities were identified and selected to select the sample. Strata were

established on the basis of the designation of the teachers (Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant professor and Lecturer) from the common faculties of public sector universities of Punjab. Finally, 30% teachers were selected from each stratum randomly.

Table 1

Accessible Population

South Western Zone	N
Universities	
Baha-ud-din Zakriya University, Multan	97
University of Jhang	94
University of Okara	86
Central Zone	
Universities	
Lahore College for Women University, Lahore	397
University of the Punjab	527
University of Education	267
Government College University, Faisalabad	43
Kohsar University, Murree	23
University of Sargohda	40
University of Sahiwal	56
Eastern Zone	
Universities	
The university of Narowal	28
Government College Women University, Sailkot	57
University of Chakwal	32
Total	1747 (n=524)

Instrumentation

The data for demographic characteristics such as gender was collected using a demographic information sheet. Conflict management styles (CMS) of university teachers were measured by a questionnaire developed by Adkins, (2011) and Job performance (JP) was measured by the questionnaire developed by Goodman and Svyantek (1999).

Table 2

Distribution of Items of Conflict Management Styles Scale

Sr. No.	Factors	Item No.
1	Collaborating style	1, 5,7
2	Competing style	4,9,12
3	Avoiding style	6,10,15
4	Accommodating style	3,11,14
5	Compromising style	2,8,13

Table 3
Distribution of Items of Job Performance

Sr. No.	Factors	Total items
1	Contextual performance	7
2	Conscientiousness	9
3	Task performance	9

Results and Discussion

Table 4
Relationship between Conflict Management Styles and Job performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.982 ^a	.964	.963	2.33706

a. Predictors: (Constant), Collaborating, Competing, Avoiding, Accommodating, Compromising

The effect of conflict management styles on job performance was checked by using multiple regression. The dependent variable's (Job performance) variance is defined 96.4% (R square = .964*100=96.4) by the independent variable (conflict management styles).

Table 5
Regression Analysis

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean	F	Sig.
1 Regression	75414.170	5	15082.834	2761.484	.000 ^b
Residual	2829.242	518	5.462		
Total	78243.412	523			

a. Dependent Variable: JP

b. Predictors: (Constant), Collaborating, Competing, Avoiding, Accommodating, Compromising

The F ratio is used to assess how reliable procedures are in producing a model that fits the data well. A good match for the model may be seen by the significance (p) value, which is .000 and less than .05.

Table 6
Beta Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized	Coefficients	Standardized	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	11.892	.742		16.037	.000
Collaborating	1.520	.060	.251	25.358	.000
Competing	1.478	.060	.249	24.619	.000
Avoiding	1.631	.057	.312	28.397	.000
Accommodating	1.184	.065	.205	18.217	.000
Compromising	1.625	.056	.297	28.818	.000

a. Dependent Variable: JP

Table 5 shows the statistical significance and beta weights. Collaborating = 0.251(p=.000), Competing = 0.249(p=.000), Avoiding = 0.312(p=.000), Accommodating = 0.205(p=.000) and Compromise = 0.297(p= .000) were the beta weights and p-values for the five predictive variables.

The p values demonstrate that all components of conflict management (collaborating, competing, avoiding, accommodating and compromising conflicts) have positive effect on Job performance.

Table 7
Difference between Conflict Management Styles on the basis of Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	T	Sig.	Sig. (2- tailed)
Collaborating style	Male	232	11.2371	2.03430	522	-1.848	.813	.065
	Female	292	11.5651	2.00495	492.352			
Competing style	Male	232	11.1897	2.11535	522	-2.542	.295	.011
	Female	292	11.6473	1.99024	481.235			
Avoiding style	Male	232	10.8922	2.46912	522	-0.257	.095	.797
	Female	292	10.9452	2.23923	471.661			
Accommodating style	Male	232	10.9009	1.91905	522	-0.093	.005	.926
	Female	292	10.89178	2.25978	519.667			
Compromising style	Male	232	10.9138	2.09749	522	-0.303	.008	.762

Table 7 displays the finding of the independent samples t-test, which was performed to test gender differences in conflict management styles of teachers. The results indicate that the t-value of collaborating style = -1.848 and $p = .065$, avoiding style $t = -0.257$ $p = .797$, accommodating style $t = -0.093$ $p = .926$, and compromising style $t = -0.303$ $p = .762$ shows that no significant differences were established as the p-values of these four styles exceeded .05. Nonetheless, the competing style had a statistically significant difference with $t = -2.542$ and $p = .011$, which is lower than 0.05. Hence, it was found that the null hypothesis was accepted on collaborating style, avoiding style, accommodating style and compromising style but not on competing style. To shed more light on this, the average scores have shown that female teachers ($M = 11.647$) are using more competing style than male teachers ($M = 11.189$).

Discussion

The present quantitative research aimed to examine the relationship between conflict management styles and job performance. Findings revealed that different styles of conflict management (collaborating, competing, avoiding, accommodating, and compromising) significantly and positively influence job performance. Faculty members who adopted these styles were observed to be more dedicated to their institutions, as they encouraged cooperation and mutual support, which further enhanced teamwork and decision-making. Moreover, the results indicated that there was no significant variation in the conflict management styles of male and female university teachers. This outcome is consistent with the findings of Kiss (2013), who also reported no significant gender-based difference among teachers regarding conflict management styles. Similarly, the research by Asyraf, Ibrahim, and Kassim (2014) supported the same conclusion, highlighting no notable difference on the basis of gender.

Conclusion

This study was an attempt to determine the relationship of conflict management styles on job performance of university teachers. Results of this study showed that the factors of conflict management styles (Collaborating, Competing, Avoiding, Accommodating and Compromising) are significantly and positively effecting Job performance. The results also indicated no significant difference exists between conflict management styles of female and male university teachers.

Recommendations

It is suggested that universities arrange regular workshops and training sessions to enhance teachers' awareness and practical use of conflict management styles, as effective handling of conflicts can directly improve their job performance. Teachers should also be encouraged to adopt constructive conflict management strategies, such as collaboration and compromise, to strengthen teamwork and decision-making in academic settings. Furthermore, future research may be conducted to examine other factors influencing the relationship between conflict management styles and teachers' job performance, particularly by considering diverse cultural and institutional contexts.

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