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Types of conflict and conflict resolution strategies among the university students

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ABSTRACT

Students can experience conflict in educational institutions. This study aimed at exploring various types of conflict and conflict resolution strategies among the university students. For this exploration two research instruments (TOCQ and CRI) were used. The population of the study was all the university level students of Islamabad. Sample of 75 students was selected randomly (25 were males and 50 were females) from the target population, who's ages ranged from 20-50 years, family income levels ranged from Rs.25,000-Rs.100,000 per month. After data collection it was analyzed with statistical package of social sciences (SPSS), various statistical analyses were performed to achieve the research objective such as mean, standard deviation, correlation. The results of the study revealed that male students experience more inter-individual and intra-individual conflicts than the female students. On the other hand female students experience more Goal-conflict than their male counterparts. Male preferred conflict resolution style is confrontation whereas female use compromising and withdrawing as a strategy of conflict resolution. Older students experience more conflict than the younger ones. Moreover stressed, work overload, personality differences, attitudinal differences and frustration were underlying causes of student conflict at university level.

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Introduction

Conflict exists in everyday life of every individual at all levels and in all situations. Conflict happens when the two people or groups have different views, opinions and lack of respect for each other's opinions and views. Conflict happens when a person or a group have incompatible goals. Every individual has different opinions and views from those of others, and conflict occurs due to the lack of respect to others need and views (Tearfund, 2003). Conflict also occurs when a person think that an individual is disturbing something he cares about. In a workplace, conflict does not occur among individual due to the sharing of common goals but disagreement over the way to achieve those goals can cause conflict (Wood, 2001).

Conflict is a mental struggle resulting from unsuited or opposing needs, wishes or demands. These demands can be internal or external (Merriam-webster, 2012). In psychology conflict is a psychological struggle resulting from the opposition of mutually exclusive impulses (Free Dictionary, 2012). Conflict is not bad every time. Sometimes it can be creative. In some cases it is essential to create conflict to bring justice in situation. It provides an opportunity to new system to shape better future. If the conflict becomes violent then it is more harmful than good (Tearfund, 2003).

In most of the cases people try to resolve conflict, and the best way to solve conflict is communication at personal or international level. Communication is used to reach an agreement before happening something unpleasant. Sometimes we do not realize that we are overcoming the conflict or differences. Conflict starts due to disagreement, and usually there is a background factor which causes conflict for example power is one of the most important factors, others are culture, identity and rights (Tearfund, 2003).

There are many types of conflict all over the world; two main categories of conflict are internal conflict and external conflict. Internal conflict or intra-personal conflict is the conflict between person and him/herself. It is also called person verses self-conflict. External conflict can be divided in two three basic categories person verses person (inter-personal conflict), Person V.s. Society/world and Person V.s. Nature (wikianswer, 2012). Other types are role conflict and goal conflict etc.

Intra-personal conflict:

Person vs. self also called internal conflict. A person must consider the pros and cons of a decision before taking any action. He/she is responsible for his/her action whether good or bad. Every action has its benefits and consequences. Before a person chooses to do or not do actions he has to take decision and at that time conflict begins (answer corporation, 2012). Man vs. Self-conflict occurs when a person develops an internal struggle between his/her thoughts and ideas (Steven Campbell, 2010).

Internal conflict is a struggle between competing elements within the person. There are various personality aspects of a person which may struggle for dominance. These aspects may be emotional, intellectual, or moral. For example, an "emotional" conflict would occur if a person chooses something looking beautiful instead of other thing which is beneficial. An "intellectual" conflict could occur while accepting or rejecting a marriage proposal. A "moral" conflict might occur if a person has to choose one on the basis of blood relations or humanity (mankind). Due to such type of conflict the person becomes nervous and hesitant (lisasclassroom, 2012).

Inter-individual conflict:

It is person vs. person conflict, which means fight or disagreement between two people. A struggle between two

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people is a common in an organization. However, a conflict between two people is not always aggressive. This type of conflict occurs when there is difference in the ideas of people, and there is lack of respect for each other point of view and opinion.

Person vs. society conflict:

Person verses society conflict occurs when a person is against a particular social force or a condition produced by society, likewise poverty, set of value or political revolution, or there is a corrupt legal system etc. (lisasclassroom, 2012).

Goal conflict:

Occurs when the activity of system does not match with a subsystem or with the larger (basic) system. This type of conflict also occurs among group members when they have debate in the ways to achieve specific goals of organization (Wiki answer, 2012), and when a person or group of people seeks a different outcome from another (Jones, 2005). There are three types of goal conflict: Approach-approach conflict occurs when there are two attractive goals and a person has to select one at that time he/she is facing problem in decision making. Avoidance-avoidance conflict occurs when there are two goals and both are non-attractive but a person has to select one of them. Approach-avoidance conflict occurs when there is an attractive goal but it has some negative points as well and a person has to choose that goals with those negative points.

Role conflict:

When a person has to play different roles at a time. And he try to perform each of them in best way, sometimes it become difficult which create conflict. For example, a man who is an employee, a father, a son and a friend at same time and he has to perform these entire roles in a best way, when it became difficult for him at that time role conflict occurs (Macionis, 2010).

Role conflict can be either for a short period of time, or a long period of time, it depends on situation. Role conflict occurs because of human's desire to reach success. In this conflict the pressure is on an individual by two impressive and unsuited demands against each other. The effect of role conflict is related to individual personality characteristics and interpersonal relations (Kahn & Wolfe D.M., 2010). Conflict of individual's personality characteristics occur when one aspect of a personality is in conflict with other aspect of the same person's personality (Truett, 1979).

Other types of conflicts are surface conflict, latent conflict and open conflict. Surface conflict has shallow or no roots. It is caused due to misunderstanding of ideas. This type of conflict can be solved by good communication. Latent conflict is conflict below the surface. In this type of conflict the disagreement can quickly turn into open conflict. Open conflict is visible and has deep roots. It can cause more physical, social, psychological and environmental damage than the other types. It affects people ether involved or nor involved in conflict (Tearfund, 2003).

When people do not agree about an issue at that time conflict arises. Major issue of disagreement includes land, language, religion, natural resources, ethnicity, migration and political power. Conflict at community level could be from of the above issues (Tearfund, 2003).

There are various conflict resolution strategies which people use to overcome conflict in their business and personal settings. Thomas and Kilmann's introduced five conflict resolution styles in 1972 (Kelchner, 1999-2012). The detail of each style is as under:

Competitive:

People who are always ready to take a rapid action take a firm stand, and know what they want are competitive. This style

can be useful for fast and emergency decision needs, especially when the decision is unpopular; or there is need to defend the situation there someone who is trying to exploit the situation. This is not very useful style in less urgent situations as at that time it create unsatisfied and angriness (Mind Tools, 2012).

Collaborative:

This style conflict resolution try to meet the need of all people involved in the process of conflict. People, who this style can be highly confident, cooperate effectively and accept the importance of others when resolving conflict. This style is useful when a person needs to get a best solution for a problem, for that he combines other's viewpoints to overcome the previous conflict situation (Kelchner, 1999-2012).

Compromising:

Most of the people try to find a solution of a problem to at least partially satisfy everyone, they prefer to adapt the compromising style. In this resolution style a person is expected to give up something and the other person (compromiser) himself also expects to turn down something. This style is useful when the cost of conflict is higher than the cost of the thing a person is losing (Mind Tools, 2012).

Accommodating/ Negotiating:

In this style a person is willing to fulfill the others need on the expense of his/ her own needs. In most of the cases the accommodator often knows when to give in to others, but he/she can be convinced to give in a position even at the time when it is not necessary. Accommodator is a highly cooperative person. This style is appropriate when the issues matter more to the other party, and when peace is more valuable than winning for both sides (Kelchner, 1999-2012).

Avoiding/ Withdrawal:

A person who uses this style for conflict resolution always try to avoid the conflict. In this style a person give controversial decisions, accept default decisions, and does not want to hurt anyone's feelings. This style fits the situation where victory is impossible, or when someone else can better solve the problem. However in many situations this approach is not very useful and it leads to intra individual conflict (Mind Tools, 2012). Present study chooses four conflict resolution styles such as, Confrontation, Compromise Negotiation and Withdrawal to investigate.

Students at every level face conflict; sometimes it is due to misunderstanding and can be solved by good communication, but sometimes it is deep rooted and can cause serious damages to students and institutions. Sometime students have fight with themselves and it is due to stress, frustration, work load, unawareness about their goals and the roles. Sometimes their ideas do not have match with other's ideas and opinion which can become a cause conflict.

Similarly each student has their own way to resolve the conflict. Most of the time students and university managements are not aware which type of conflict they are experiencing and why conflict, moreover they are not aware of their conflict resolution styles.

This is true that students can experience various types of conflicts and can also use various strategies to resolve it. The intent of present study was to investigate the types of conflicts and conflict resolution strategies used by male and female students in the context of university education.

Methodology

The study was designed to explore the various types of conflict and conflict resolution skills among the university level students. The present study was descriptive in nature.

Research problem

The problem under investigation was to explore various types of conflicts and conflict resolution strategies among the male and female university students.

Research Objectives

- 1. Investigate various types of conflict among the university students.
- 2. Explore conflict resolution strategies among the university students.
- 3. Investigate the causes of conflict among the university students.
- 4. Compare the causes of the conflicts, types of conflicts and conflict resolution styles due to demographic variations of the respondents such as, gender, age, disciplines and socioeconomic status.

Research hypotheses

In order to achieve these objectives following hypothesis were formulated:

- 1. University students experience more intra-individual conflicts than inter-individual conflicts.
- 2. Male university students experience more conflicts than female university students.
- 3. Male students use confrontation as a strategy than female students to solve conflict.
- 4. Female students use compromise as a strategy than male students to solve conflict.
- 5. Older students experience more conflicts than the younger students.

Population & Sample

Population of the study was all university students in Islamabad. A sample of 75 Master students was selected randomly (25 were male and 50 were female students), whose ages ranged from 20-50 years, and family income ranged from Rs.25, 000-Rs.100, 000 per month.

Research Instruments

In this research two instruments were used for data collection:

- 1. For the measurement of types of conflict experienced by the university students' no suitable test was available therefor a research questionnaire was developed through standardized procedure in this study. This questionnaire has four sub categories, such as inter-individual conflict, intra-individual conflict, role conflict and goal conflict. The questionnaire has 21 items with a five point rating scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Alpha Reliability index of research questionnaire was 0.754.
- 2. For the measurement of conflict resolution styles, Conflict Resolution Inventory (CRI) developed by (Saloni, Nisha and Shruti, 2010) was used to measure modes of resolving conflict among university level students. The CRI has 20 items measuring confrontation, compromise, negotiation and withdrawal with five point rating scale where 1 is 'rarely or never', 2 is 'occasionally', 3 is 'sometimes', 4 is 'often', and 5 is 'mostly'. Alpha reliability index of CRI was 0.516 (Pareek. Udai, 2010).

Procedure

Students were approached personally in their educational settings. After their willingness they are requested to fill the two research questionnaires honestly, according to their personal experience of a conflict situation.

Results and Discussion

This study was conducted to explore the various types of conflicts and conflict resolution strategies among the male and female university students. A sample of 75 students was selected and the data was collected through questionnaires. In order to

confirm the hypotheses, analysis was conducted by using various statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation and correlation. Differences in the means and standard types of conflict and conflict resolution strategies were explored due to demographic variation as well.

The table no. 1 shows the mean and SD scores of the types of conflict for the variable gender. The results indicate that conflict is existed in both genders. Male students experience more inter-individual and intra-individual conflicts than the female students. On the other hand female students experience more Goal-conflict than their male counterparts.

The table no. 2 shows the mean and SD scores of the types of conflict for the variable discipline. The result of this table indicates that students of English department experience more conflicts than students of other departments and students of economics department experience least conflicts. Intraindividual and inter individual conflict is higher in students of English Department whereas goal conflict is higher in Management sciences students and role conflict is higher in students of I.R department.

The table No. 3 shows the mean and SD scores of the types of conflict for the variable age. Older students experience more conflicts than the younger ones. Inter-individual, role and goal conflict is higher in older students while the intra-individual conflict is higher in the students whose age ranged from 23-25 years.

The table no. 4 shows the mean and SD scores of the students for the variable socioeconomic status. Results make it clear that students from the higher income families experience more conflict as compared to the students of less income families. Students from the higher income families experience more intra individual conflicts whereas in students from middle class families experience more inter-individual conflict.

The table no. 5 shows that students whose fathers are doing private jobs are experience more intra individual conflicts than other groups. Inter-individual and role conflict is higher in the students whose fathers belong to the teaching profession.

Table no. 6 provided information regarding differences in the types of conflict due to mothers working and non- working. The results indicate that students whose mother are nonworking experience intra individual and goal conflict more whereas students whose mother are working experience inter- individual conflicts and role conflict.

The table no. 7 shows the conflict resolution strategies of male and female university students from this table it can be seen that male preferred conflict resolution style is confrontation whereas female show more compromising and withdrawing.

Table 8 shows that the students of I.R department use confrontation, compromise and withdrawal as a strategy for conflict resolution more than students of other departments.

The table no. 9 shows that older students confrontation and compromise style more than younger students. Younger students mostly use negotiation and withdrawal style then older students.

The table no. 10 shows that students from less income families use confrontation and compromise as a strategy to resolve conflict more frequently than students from higher income families. Negotiation style is used mostly by the students of higher income. Withdrawal is used as a strategy by the students of less and average income families.

The table 11 shows that the students whose fathers' occupation is teaching use confrontation, compromise and withdrawal style of conflict resolution more frequently than students whose fathers belongs to other professions. Negotiation

is mostly used by students whose fathers are working in the private sector.

The table 12 shows that the students whose mothers are non-working use compromise, negotiation and withdrawal styles of conflict resolution more often than the students whose mother are working, whereas the confrontation styles is used by the students whose mothers are working.

Discussion

Present study was designed to achieve the research objectives. The first objective was to investigate various types of conflict among the university students, the second objective was Explore conflict resolution styles of university students, third objective was investigate the causes of conflict among the university students, and the last objective was to compare the causes of the conflicts, types of conflicts and conflict resolution styles due to demographic variations of the respondents such as, gender, age, disciples' socio-economic status. To fulfill these objectives various hypotheses were made and statistical techniques were used such as mean, standard deviation and correlation.

From the results of the study following conclusions were drawn:

- 1. Male students face inter-individual and intra-individual conflicts more than female students which support the hypothesis "Male university students face more conflict than female university students".
- 2. Hypotheses "Male students use confrontation style of conflict resolution more than female students and "Female students use compromise as a strategy to resolve the conflict are supported by the result that female students use all conflict resolutions styles more than male students.
- 3. Intra-individual conflict is commonly experienced by female university students whereas male university students experience inter-individual conflicts more.
- 4. Older university students are more prone to conflict than the younger ones. Inter-individual, role and goal conflicts are more commonly experienced by the older students whereas in older students younger students experience intra-individual conflicts more.
- 5. University students experience conflict when they are stressed due to over load of work.
- 6. Conflict arises due to personality differences and attitudinal differences
- 7. Most of the students face conflict when they become frustrated and when their demands are very high.

Recommendations

- 1. As the conflicts affect the performance of the students so there students may have proper understanding of the types of conflicts which are common in them.
- 2. University management may observe that which type of conflict is rising in the university and try to control it at the beginning for peaceful environment.
- 3. The students at university level are mature enough to manage the conflicts. So they may be taught to handle the conflicts carefully.
- 4. Findings suggests that psychological causes are also playing a role in various types of conflicts through counseling and guidance teachers and university administration can play a role to minimize the causes of conflicts, moreover they can teach conflict effective resolution strategies unique to each situation .
- 5. University students may learn how to promote positive thinking and show tolerance towards the situation that can lead towards conflict.

Significance

The purpose of the study was to explore the various types of conflict and the conflict resolution strategies among the male and female university students. This study also measures the impact of demographic variables on the type of conflict students have. This study will also determine the conflict resolution skills which students mostly use. This study provides insight to students as well as university management to locate the roots of students' conflicts and students most preferred conflict resolution styles. Knowledge of this can help management to understand the phenomena of conflict from a psychological perspective.

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Table 1: Gender Wise Comparison of the Types of Conflict Experienced by University Students

Types of Conflict	Gender						
	Male	(25)	Female	e (50)			
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D			
Inter-individual conflict	21.2	4.4	18.5	5.5			
Intra-individual conflict	19.3	4.2	14.9	5.1			
Goal conflict	10.4	2.6	12.6	2.7			
Role conflict	2.3	1.0	2.6	1.1			
Total	53.2	12.2	48.6	14.4			

Table 2: Disciplines Wise Comparison of Types of Conflict Experienced by University Students

	Disciplin	nes									-	
Types of Conflict	Education (16)		Mass (23) con	Mass (23) communication		I.R (4)		English (17)		ics (5)	Management sciences (10)	
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
Inter-individual conflict	17.9	4.0	17.5	4.8	19.5	2.4	22.3	5.8	12.2	2.8	19.7	3.8
Intra-individual conflict	17.7	5.2	16.6	4.1	14.5	3.3	18.8	5.5	13.8	1.3	16.7	5.4
Goal conflict	10.5	2.8	9.4	3.0	9.3	1.7	10.8	2.5	9.4	1.9	11.2	3.0
Role conflict	2.4	1.0	2.5	1.2	3.3	1.0	2.8	0.8	2.4	0.9	2.0	1.4
Total	48.5	13	46	13.1	46.6	8.4	54.7	14.6	37.8	6.9	49.6	13.6

Table 3: Age- Wise Comparison of Types of Conflict Experienced by University Students

	Age							
types of conflict	20-22 (36)		23-25 (23)	Above 25 (16)			
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Inter-individual conflict	18.1	4.8	18.1	6.1	21.0	3.7		
Intra-individual conflict	15.9	4.7	18.2	5.4	17.9	3.8		
Goal conflict	10.3	2.7	9.8	3.1	10.4	2.2		
Role conflict	2.3	1.1	2.4	1.1	3.0	1.0		
Total	46.6	13.3	48.5	15.7	52.3	10.7		

Table 4: Socioeconomic status Wise Comparison of types of conflict Experienced by University Students

	Socio-economic status									
types of conflict	25000-50	25000-50000 (65)		5000 (7)	Above 75000 (3)					
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D				
Inter-individual conflict	18.7	5.4	19.6	3.7	18.0	3.0				
Intra-individual conflict	17.1	4.9	15.6	4.3	22.3	3.8				
Goal conflict	10.1	2.8	10.1	1.2	11.3	3.5				
Role conflict	2.5	1.1	2.6	0.8	3.0	2.0				
Total	48.4	14.2	47.9	10.0	54.6	12.3				

Table 5

Father's occupation wise Comparison of types of conflict Experienced by University Students

	Father's occupation									
Types of conflicts	Teache	ers (2)	Profession	nals (12)	Business men (20)		Private Job (41)			
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Inter-individual conflict	21.0	2.8	17.8	8.1	18.6	3.3	18.9	5.0		
Intra-individual conflict	13.5	5.0	17.2	5.0	16.5	3.7	18.5	5.3		
Goal conflict	9.5	0.7	9.8	2.2	10.1	2.5	10.3	3.0		
Role conflict	3.0	1.7	2.4	1.2	2.5	0.9	2.5	1.2		
Total	47	10.2	47.2	16.5	47.7	10.4	50.2	14.5		

Table 6: Mother's Occupation Wise Comparison of Types of Conflict Experienced by University Students

	Mother's occupation								
Categories	Worki	ng (9)	Non-working (66)						
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D					
Inter-individual conflict	19.4	8.7	18.6	4.5					
Intra-individual conflict	16.6	5.6	19.1	4.7					
Goal conflict	9.0	2.5	10.4	2.7					
Role conflict	3.0	1.0	2.4	1.1					
Total	48	17.8	50.5	13					

Table 7

Comparison of Conflict Resolution Strategies of the Male and Female University Students

Conflict Resolution strategies	Gender					
	Male (2	25)	Female (50)			
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
Confrontation	8.9	2.1	6.0	2.2		
Compromise	21.8	5.8	25.7	4.9		
Negotiation	19.6	4.5	22.2	4.4		
Withdrawal	8.4	2.9	9.8	2.8		
Total	58.7	15.3	63.7	14.3		

Table 8: Disciplines Wise Comparison of CRI Experience by the University Students

Conflict Resolution	Discipli	nes										
	Education	on (16)	Mass (23) con	nmunication	I.R (4)		English	ı (17)	Econom	nics (5)	Management s	ciences (10)
strategies	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
Confrontation	5.7	2.2	5.8	2.2	6.8	3.3	6.2	2.0	4.8	1.6	6.4	2.4
Compromise	24.7	4.3	25.1	6.7	25.6	2.6	25.1	5.4	22.4	3.2	21.7	6.2
Negotiation	21.6	3.2	21.0	5.7	20.3	6.1	21.7	3.8	19.6	5.8	22.8	4.3
Withdrawal	9.1	2.6	9.7	3.3	10.5	2.4	9.8	2.8	9.8	2.6	7.3	2.2
Total	61.1	12.3	61.6	17.9	63.2	14.4	62.8	14	56.6	13.2	58.2	15.1

Table 9: Age Wise Comparison of CRI Experienced by the University Students

	Age					
Conflict Resolution strategies	3 20-22 (36) 2		23-25 (23)	Above 25 (16)	
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
Confrontation	5.8	2.2	5.8	2.2	6.3	2.1
Compromise	24.8	5.7	23.5	6.2	25.0	4.0
Negotiation	22.4	3.9	19.9	5.5	21.3	4.3
Withdrawal	9.7	2.8	8.7	3.1	9.4	2.8
Total	62.7	14.6	57.9	17	62	13.2

Table 10: Socioeconomic Status Wise Comparison of CRI Experienced by the University Students

	Socio-economic status								
Conflict Resolution strategies	25000-50	000 (65)	51000-75000 (7)		Above 75000 (3				
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D			
Confrontation	9.1	2.3	5.0	1.5	5.3	0.6			
Compromise	24.8	5.6	21.7	3.0	21.7	6.4			
Negotiation	20.2	4.8	22.1	1.7	24.3	3.8			
Withdrawal	10.4	3.0	9.4	2.4	8.3	3.1			
Total	64.5	15.7	58.2	8.6	59.6	13.9			

Table 11: Father's Occupation Wise Comparison of CRI Experienced by University Students

	Father'	Father's occupation										
Conflict Resolution strategi	es Teache	Teachers (2)		Professionals (12)		nen (20)	Private Job (41)					
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D				
Confrontation	7.5	2.1	6.0	2.5	5.5	2.0	6.1	2.2				
Compromise	27.5	0.7	25.8	4.0	23.7	5.9	24.2	5.9				
Negotiation	21.5	2.1	19.9	3.9	20.9	5.1	22.0	4.6				
Withdrawal	13.0	1.4	9.7	2.3	9.2	3.0	9.1	3.0				
Total	69.5	6.3	61.4	12.7	59.3	16	61.4	15.7				

Table 12: Working and non- working Mother's Wise Comparison of CRI Experienced by the University Students

	Mother's occupation						
Conflict Resolution strategies	Workin	ıg (9)	Non-working (66)				
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D			
Confrontation	9.6	1.7	4.9	2.2			
Compromise	23.7	3.9	24.5	5.7			
Negotiation	19.6	5.3	21.6	4.5			
Withdrawal	8.0	2.9	9.5	2.9			
Total	60.9	13.8	60.5	15.3			