

Original Article

Leadership Styles Predict Conflict Management Styles: Evidence from Education Sector in AJ&K

Muhammad Iqbal^{a*},  Zafar Saleem^a & Javed Mustafa^b

^a Department of Education, Mohi-ud-Din Islamic University Nerian Shrif, AJ&K

^b Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak

Abstract

This current research study aims at finding relationship between leadership styles of secondary school principals with conflict management styles. Important objective of the current research study was, to find relationship between leadership styles and principals conflict management styles. Another objective was to ascertain difference in leadership styles and styles of conflict management. All heads of both government and private educational institution at secondary school level were the population of this research. Total 155 school heads were selected as sample size of the study through Krejcie & Morgan sample selection table. Standard questionnaires were used for data collection. Significant and positive relationship was found between leadership styles and conflict management styles of school principals. Public school heads possessed autocratic styles of leadership as most opted style and laissez-fair was most favored leadership style of private school principals. There was difference in conflict management styles of school principals. All three null hypotheses were rejected.

Keywords: Leadership styles, conflict management styles, public school, private school

1. INTRODUCTION

School principal play a key role in developed a system culture's growing demands for effective school staff. To affect teachers' performance in school, the majority of secondary school administrators adopt democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles. This suggests that secondary school style of leadership were centered on the school's realistic scenario and its heterogeneous authentic leadership in exercise. It means that in the school, there is no optimal style of leadership; instead, relevant leadership patterns are utilized based on the context (Heyward, Cannon., & Sarjono2011).

As the principle, which controls the school's resources, leadership style plays an essential role in school administration, resulting in the achievement of educational objectives. Secondary school achievements are primarily based on three distinct leadership styles: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. Autocratic leadership is defined as a form of leadership in which all activities are focused on the leader and others are given minimal flexibility to develop and operate (Fullan, 2010; Hallinger & Heck, 2011, Batool et al. 2016).

Democratic style is distinguished by a departure according to perspective of a collaborative leadership style so it can be lead to mutual understanding between leadership and employees. Leaders must be able to have faith in their employees' abilities and capabilities to perform the job descriptions they assign to them. They were trusted to exercise their ability to pick judgment acts because they are regarded to get the abilities, dedication, and are encouraged to do so; the laissez-faire leadership style gave opportunity and promotes employees to undertake the initiative (Liu & Hallinger. 2018).



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Conflict is the day to day business in any organization and resolving conflict in organization is the foremost job of any manager or leaders. Every organization leader needs to have some critical skills to settle down conflicts in organization. Timely resolving conflict increase organization productivity and enhances employee performance. Competent and effective leaders settle conflicts in effective way and this further help in achieving organizational goals and objectives. Leaders who fail in perceiving and resolving conflicts also result in failure of achieving organizational goals and it diminishes organization productivity (Ghafar. 2011).

Conflict management is the process which entails resolving differences between two persons or among parties or groups. Differences in opinion or interest result in conflict. It requires skills to determine respectful and creative way to settle down dispute or disagreement. Conflict can be resolved through effective listening skills and communication skills. Conflict management can be define is the ability of individual to resolve and settle conflict efficiently, fairly and sensibly (Saleem et al. 2017). Conflict is natural in every organization and the most important thing is that there must be people who perceive and understand conflict and also have the skills how to manage it. Important reason of conflicts are personal values, personal interest, conflicting goals, perception, communication style (Ali et al. 2022)

Various researchers conducted research studies to find whether there exist relationship between leadership styles and conflict management styles in different context. Saeed et al. (2014) a research study in order to determine relationship between leadership styles and conflict management styles of manager. It was concluded that managers having transformational leadership style, exhibited integrating leadership style and obliging leadership style. It was also found in this study that transactional leadership style managers opted for compromising conflict management style. Managers with laissez-fair leadership style had avoiding conflict management styles.

For any organization, leadership is essential. In a school, leadership establishes the environment and objectives for performance and achievements and the development of a culture of continuous learning for both. Leadership refers to the process in which one person decides a segment of the population to achieve a specified goal; for example, school principals should improve their abilities to influence others and increase participation to accomplish project goals (Begley, 2010).The activity of directions teachers, students, and parents to attain educational goals is known as educational leadership (Wachira et al., 2017).

Autocratic leadership is defined as a form of leadership in which all activities are focused on the leader and others are given minimal flexibility to develop and operate. The democratic style is distinguished by a departure according to perspective of a collaborative leadership style so it can be lead to mutual understanding between leadership and employees. Leaders must be able to have faith in their employees' abilities and capabilities to perform the job descriptions they assign to them. They were trusted to exercise their ability to pick judgment acts because they are regarded to get the abilities, dedication, and are encouraged to do so; the laissez-faire leadership style gave opportunity and promotes employees to undertake the initiative (Salusu, 2000).

Conflict can arise in any institution (including schools), and the degree to which conflict management styles are effective influences the nature of effects conflict has on performance in school (Saiti, 2015). Conflict is a major issue in schools that can be addressed by employing constructive conflict management techniques. Conflict resolution is a skill that helps to maintain the workplace effective and healthy. It also contributes to the growth of an institution by enhancing its working environment (Cetin & Hacifazlioglu, 2004).Models of conflict management styles explain several conflict management methods that can be utilized to effectively handle a variety of conflicts, considering the nature and nature of conflict.

Statement of the Problem

The existence of professional and devoted school leaders is essential to quality education. Principal plays vital role in smooth running of educational institute and ensuring teaching learning environment. School administrators play an important role in meeting society's increasing needs for competent school administration. School principal may adopt different leadership styles in executing responsibilities. Principal faces different problems in effective school management. Conflict management in the institution is one problem that school principals are required to successfully tackle. School principal adopt different conflict management styles in handling conflict in the institution. This research study is designed to find association between principal leadership styles and also its conflict management styles at secondary school level in AJ&K.

Objectives of the Current Research study

- 1. To find relationship between leadership styles and conflict management styles of secondary school principals.
- 2. To determine significant difference in public and private school principal leadership styles.
- 3. To find significant difference in private and public school heads styles of conflict management.

Null Hypotheses of the Study

H01 : There is exist no significant association between leadership styles and conflict management styles of secondary school principals.

H02 : There is no difference regarding leadership styles of the princinals.

H03 : There is no significant difference in principals' conflict management styles.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Any organization needs strong leadership. In a school, leadership establishes the conditions and goals for implementation, successes, and the enhancement of a culture of continuous learning for educators. For instance, school principals should strengthen their capacity to persuade others and boost participation to achieve project goals. Leadership brings up the process in which one person elects a portion of the population to achieve a specific goal. Educational leadership is the practice of directing instructors, students, and parents to achieve educational goals. Here is the literature review on the current study about the relationship between leadership styles and conflict management styles (Schmittou. 2012).

Different factors affect principal's leadership style. School principal personality traits has positive effect on principal leadership style. Relationship with other school staff also affect principal leadership styles (Frewoini, 2016). Principal leadership style plays significant role in motivating teachers and other staff. A motivated principal works as a catalyst in improving school productivity. Such principals are optimistic and build a collaborative work environment in the school. Such principal knows how to engage teachers in constructive work and how to avail from their skills and experience (Khakimova. 2008).

Through respective leaders, school leadership is essential for conflict management. During managing conflict, their job experience and attitudes can influence their goals, techniques, and approach. Different leadership styles and conflict management methods may be used by school officials (Su'ud. 2009). An examination of the previous research suggests that school administrators have a few alternatives for dealing with a school conflict, which can be divided into five categories. Integrating, obliging, dominating, compromising, and avoiding are five conflict management methods identified by Rahim (2011). The efficiency and applicability of conflict management styles are determined on the circumstances. It really is a mistake to assume that one approach of conflict was work in all circumstances.

Conflict can arise in the workplace due to differences in thought, ideas, and sentiments, regardless of the educational system. School administrators, like principals in any other organization, are expected to manage conflict in their school. Based on their training and expertise, school leaders are expected to identify how to manage or reduce conflicts in their schools. Personal or organizational factors might increase conflict in schools (Wilmot &Hocker, 2011).

Different researchers (Salleh and Safarali. 2013, and Boucher. 2013) conducted research studies and they identified mainly two types of conflicts which frequently occur in organization or work place. Two major conflicts which were identified in these research studies, are based on effect or task. Task conflict can also be termed as cognitive conflict. Task conflict or cognitive conflict emerges among members of a group when there are disagreements on achieving common goals and objectives of the organization (Hassanzadeh. 2010). Effect conflict is also term as interpersonal conflict. Effect conflict or interpersonal conflict result in disagreements which are related to emotional interaction or personality clashes among group members which perform duty in organization (Adeyemi. 2009).

Some time, conflict is considered as interpersonal conflict and also intrapersonal conflict. Usually intrapersonal conflicts reside in individual himself and this arises when an individual fails in achieving organization goals or when an individual is downtrodden and feel frustration. Interpersonal conflict usual emerges when there is disagreement among group members in organization. Interpersonal conflict also diminishes organizational productivity and individual performance. It also results in employee stress (Akinnubi et al. 2012).

In educational institution, there is also conflict between teachers and principals or among teachers regarding different issues. It is essential for school principals to have effective skills of conflict management. Principals having fundamental and effective skills of conflict management, can create effective and conducive teaching and learning environment in school. Conflict cannot be avoid altogether but it is important for school head to perceive and recognize conflict and manage it at once by taking strong and effective initiatives. Some time personal biases also effect conflict management in organization. There for it essential for principal to take group decision or unanimous judgment how to tackle conflict in school. Through technical skills and artistic insight, effective school principal settle conflicts in school effectively. Effective principals assist teachers and other staff in resolving conflicting situation in school (Ghaffar. 2011).

In educational institutions, different teachers and other personnel are rendering duties. Teachers belong to divers area and diverse social and cultural background. There are differences in their ideas and opinion. Due to individual differences among teachers, there emerge conflicting situation in school. If such conflicts do not handle in time effectively, it disrupts conduciveteaching environment and also learning environment in the school. It is imperative for school principal to know how to manage and tackle down conflicting situation in the school (Albert. 2001).

School principals have different leadership and conflict management style and it depends on how principal interact with teachers and other staff members. In a research study, Kumar (2012) concluded that conflict management style of school principal is largely related to the productivity of the school, efficiency of the institution and effectiveness of the school system and its overall productivity. In another research study, Ziaee (2012) concluded that accommodating style of conflict management was most favored style of primary school principals. It was also concluded in this study that competing style of conflict management was least favored and it had least efficacy. It was further concluded that in training programs, collaborative and compromising conflict management style had better result.

Rajabi (2012) conducted a research study and it was determined that school principals had accommodating style as dominant conflict management style. Sterman (2010) concluded that school principal possessed collaborative conflict management style and it has positive relation with conducive teaching and learning environment. It was also conclude that avoiding style of conflict management of school had insignificant relation with school performance. In a research study it was found that principal conflict management style has positive and significant relationship with school effectiveness. All this indicates that leadership styles and conflict management styles has relationship.

Different research studies identified relationship between leadership styles and conflict management styles. A transformative leader, for example, could try to motivate teachers to resolve conflicts successfully (Kark & Shamir, 2002). A laissez-faire leadership style, in contrast to leadership style, might be congruent with the avoidance conflict management method, as passive leadership is defined as ignoring deal with a conflict. It has been stated that laissez-faire leadership was neglect problems, resulting in an increase in workplace conflicts, such as disagreements among employees (Bartlett. 2009); Johari, Morni, Ahmed, and Bohary (2009);

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design was quantitative. In data analysis, numerical data was statistical analyses to see whether there are any links between them (Slavin, 2008). This research explain the strength of the connection between the conflict styles of management and leadership styles management. The present research was descriptive in nature and survey type and quantitative research approach was used. The 193 principals were visited personally and their opinion was assessed by providing them with questionnaire designed for the current study. Their opinion was categories by using statistical tools.

All the secondary school principals of government and private sectors schools of district Poonch from Azad Jammu and Kashmir was included in the population. There were 193 principals (93 in government and 100 in private schools). It was not possible to include all principals in sample size. A small amount of principals from government educational institution and private educational institution were selected as sample of the study. Sample size was selected through Krojice & Morgan (1970) sample selection table. In this way 75 principals was selected from government school principals and 80 principals were chosen from principals who were performing duty in private schools. In this way total sample size was 155 principals including both form private school and government school. For data collection twostandard questionnaires were used. One questionnaire was for leadership styles and the questionnaire was for

conflict management styles. Both questionnaires were for principals. Five point Lickert Scale was used to assess responses of the respondents. Scale was ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

4. FINDINGS & RESULT

Table 1

Leadership styles according to institution

School	Autocratic Leadership	Democratic leadership	Laissez-Fair Leadership
Public Mean	3.88	3.74	3.67
Private Mean	3.32	3.53	3.93

There are substantial difference in dominant leadership styles public and private school principals. Public or government institution heads possessed autocratic leadership style as their favored leadership styles. One possible reason for this leadership style may be that government school principals are appointed on permanent bases. They have job security and there is no tension of job loss. They make decision solely and seldom involve other staff members. Laissez-fair style of leadership was the dominant leadership styles of private educational institution heads. Similarly, private school principals are appointed on temporary bases. They have no free hand in their decision making. Owners have final decision power.

Table 2

Conflict Management Style according to Institution

School	Collaborating	Accommodating	Competing	Avoiding	Compromising
Public Mean	3.93	3.43	3.72	3.63	3.45
Private Mean	3.36	3.46	3.91	3.81	3.31

Table 2 indicates differences in conflict management styles according to institution. According to the result, collaborating conflict management styles was the dominant styles of public school principals. It is also found of that private school principals possess avoiding conflict management styles as dominant conflict management styles.

Table 3

Regression Analysis result

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F
1	.499	.249	.244	.754	50.743

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	1.859	.259		7.170	.000
Leadership Styles	.489	.069	.499	7.123	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Conflict management

b. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership styles

Table shows the results of the regression analysis indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between secondary school principals' leadership styles and conflict management. The R-value of .499 and R² value of .249 indicate that 24.9% of the variance in conflict management can be explained by principals' leadership styles. The F-statistic value of 50.743 indicates that the model is fit and there is a significant relationship between the two variables. The beta value of .499 indicates that a unit change in the independent variable (principals' leadership styles) was result in a positive change of .499 in the dependent variable (conflict management). Based on these results, hypothesis Ho1, which stated that there is no relationship between leadership styles of school heads and conflict management styles of school heads is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between principals' leadership styles and conflict management in secondary schools.

Table 4

Difference in leadership style according to institution

	Institution	Mean	Mean Difference	F	t-value	Sig.
Leadership	Public	3.90	.43	.497	3.181	.002
Styles	Private	3.46			3.17	.002

(df= 153, n= 155)

It is conclude from above result of the table that significant difference exists in leadership styles of government school head and private school principals. Mean difference is .43 which shows difference in leadership styles. P value is .002. this p value is less than .05. It is concluded from this result that our null hypothesis is failed to accept. It shows that there is significant difference in leadership between government secondary school heads and private educational institution heads.

Table 5

Difference in conflict management style according to institution

	Institution	Mean	Mean Difference	F	t-value	Sig.
Conflict	Public	3.81	.30	.136	2.179	.031
Management	Private	3.51				

df= 153, n= 155 (Public school principals = 75, and private school principal= 80)

Table 4.4.2 indicate the results of the independent sample t-test show that there is a significant difference between the dominant conflict management styles of public sector school principals and private sector school principals. The mean score of public school principals was higher (3.81) than that of private school principals (3.51), indicating that public school principals tend to use a different dominant conflict management style than private school principals. The p-value is less than .05 ($p < .05$), which indicates that the difference between the two groups is statistically significant. This means that we can reject the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between the two groups, and conclude that there is a significant difference between public and private sector school principals in terms of their dominant conflict management style. The results suggest that public and private sector school principals use different dominant conflict management styles, which may have implications for how conflicts are managed in these two types of

Discussion

The study found that secondary school principals exhibit three main leadership styles: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. The dominant leadership style among all principals was democratic, indicating a preference for shared decision-making and collaboration among the school community. However, the study also revealed a significant difference which exists between government school heads and private educational institution heads at secondary level. Principals regarding most favored leadership styles. Private-sector school principals favored an laissez-faire leadership style, characterized by a top-down approach to decision-making and a focus on achieving goals without seeking input from others.

On the other hand, public school principals tended to exhibit a democratic leadership style, which involves empowering staff and applying them in decision-making processes. Interestingly, the study also found that principals of private sector schools were more inclined towards a laissez-faire leadership style, characterized by a hands-off approach and a lack of direction or guidance for staff. This suggests that private-sector school principals may be less concerned with being involved in day-to-day operations and more focused on achieving overall goals. These findings suggest significant differences in leadership styles among secondary school principals and that these styles may be influenced by factors such as sector (public vs. private) and individual preferences. Understanding these differences can help school leaders develop more effective strategies for managing their staff and achieving their goals.

The study identified five dimensions of conflict management styles: avoiding, compromising, competing, accommodating, and collaborating. The study found significant differences between public-sector and private-sector school principals in terms of their excellence in different dimensions of conflict management styles. Government school headswere found to be more anxious in the perception of conflict management compared to private educational institution head. Public school principals better understand conflict management strategies and are more likely to use them effectively. On the other hand, private school principals were found to have a stronger sense of managing their competition than public school principals. In terms of accommodating subordinates, public school principals were found to be more capable than private school principals. Public school principals may be more wising to make

concessions and find common ground with their subordinates.

Finally, it was found that public school principals were more substantial in utilizing collaboration than private school principals. Public school principal utilizing competing more than private. Public school principals may be more adept at working with others to find mutually beneficial solutions to conflicts. The study indicates that there are significant differences in the conflict management styles of public-sector school principals and private-sector school principals. While both groups have strengths and weaknesses in different areas, public school principals are more capable overall of perceiving and managing conflicts.

5. CONCLUSION

Conflict arises when there is disagreement among people regarding their opinion, interest or issues. Conflict cannot be eliminated from workplace, it exist in one form or other. Educational institution also face conflicting situation due to teacher, principal and other staff back ground. Individual differences among teachers and principals pay the way for conflict management. Effective conflict management depends on the skills and knowledge of the school principals, how to resolve conflict effectively. If conflict in school exists for long time, it negatively affects teachers performance and result poor productivity of the school. Avoiding conflict in organization result in the failure of achieving organizational goals and it further create frustration and pessimism in employees. An important job of school principal is to understand conflicting situation in the school and take initiative for resolving it. Principal leadership style is also an important factor in managing conflict in school. Principals having cordial relation with teachers and other staff members seldom face conflicting situation in the school. Principals with democratic leadership styles were more effective in managing conflicting situation in school. Similarly principals of public schools were more effective and efficient in resolving conflicts as compared to private school principals. Principals of private school were prone to laissez-faire leadership styles and competing styles of conflict management.

Competing Interests

The authors did not declare any competing interest.

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