Leadership Style as a Predictor of Conflict Managing Style through Faculty Members in University Colleges of Kathmandu

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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how transformational and transactional leadership styles predict conflict management techniques through faculty members at university colleges in Kathmandu. By identifying effective leadership practices, the study aims to improve conflict resolution and foster a collaborative academic environment. A descriptive and correlational research design was used, with data collected from university colleges in different parts of Kathmandu. The total sample size for data collection was 125 faculty members. Out of which, the data of 100 respondents was used for analysis. The Likert scale questionnaires were distributed to the different 20 colleges in Kathmandu in the year 2023. Reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha of .739, and validity was ensured through expert review and factor analysis. The findings revealed mixed opinions on conflict inevitability in educational institutions, with "The students of this institution also show progress in their professional fields in future" scoring 4.20 with a standard deviation of 0.725, indicating strong agreement. some agreement on the administration's capability to meet current requirements and moderate agreement on the creation of a conducive study environment. Opinions varied on transaction facilities and timely salary payments. There was disagreement on resolving conflict through strength, while mutual concessions and joint exploration were seen as effective strategies. The study concluded that leadership styles significantly influence conflict management, enhancing conflict resolution and promoting a cooperative academic atmosphere. The research is useful to the leaders of the university colleges for the management of conflicts.

1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict is the opposite thoughts of positive thinking. It occurs in every part of the institution if it is improperly managed. Educational institutions often experience intricate conflict dynamics. Strong leadership and a supportive organizational culture can help navigate and manage these conflicts during times of change (Ariatpi & Marlina, Conflict Management in the transformation of educational organizations: Understanding the role of

leadership and organizational culture, 2024). The level of job performance in several Nigerian tertiary institutions seems to have been diminished due to conflicts between academic and non-academic staff (Ogunode, Ayeni, & Samuila, Conflict Management Strategies and Tertiary Institutions Management in Nigeria, 2024) Conflict avoidance can be deliberately employed as a leadership strategy to enhance effectiveness and achieve better outcomes (Naqvi & Anjum, LeadStyle in the Workplaceership Style as a Predictor of Conflict Management, 2024). School conflicts arise from various causes. To manage these conflicts effectively, schools must be able to investigate their underlying reasons thoroughly (Sintapertiwi, Ali, & Andika, 2023). The education system in Aceh has been greatly affected by the conflict (Cardozo, Affiat, Zaman, Irawani, & Srimulyani, 2022).

Conflict is an inherent result of human interactions and the formation of social relationships (Laue, 1990). Conflict is a common occurrence (Vokić & Sontor, 2010) in organizations where individuals have differing goals. It becomes evident through antagonism, harsh words, hostility, and indifference among individuals. Conflict arises daily in the workplace whenever there is a clash of objectives, values, or purposes between individuals or groups (Lee, 2008). This friction occurs when people hinder each other from achieving their objectives (George & Jones, 2006). Conflict is an inherent and daily occurrence in both private and professional settings. It is an inevitable aspect of human interaction (Brahnam, Margavio, Hignite, Barrier, & Chin, 2005). conflict is an experienced struggle between two or more interdependent individuals due to perceived incompatible differences in their beliefs, values, and goals, or due to differing desires for esteem, control, and connectedness (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011).

Conflict management styles and theories are often used interchangeably, both referring to how an individual behaves in a conflict situation (Rahim A., 2002).

Mohamad, et al. (2024) studied young people, as future leaders, need to develop strong leadership skills and effective conflict management abilities. This study examines the connection between authentic leadership and conflict management skills among Malaysian youths, highlighting the role of resilience as a mediating factor. Data from 439 respondents, analyzed using SPSS 29 and Smart PLS 4, shows a significant link between authentic leadership and conflict management, indicating that resilient individuals are better equipped to handle conflicts positively.

Tabassia, et al. (2024) examined how relational leadership by team leaders affects conflict-handling styles and team coordination in temporary organizations. It evaluates how leaders' cultural backgrounds moderate the relationship between relational leadership and project team performance, based on socio-psychological and relational leadership theories. Using data from 126 teams in temporary organizations and Partial Least Square (PLS) path modeling, the research finds that relational leadership promotes cooperative and conflict-avoiding styles, which enhance team coordination and performance. Conflict-avoiding can be an effective strategy in multicultural teams under relational leadership. The impact on team coordination and performance is notably stronger when leaders share a specific cultural background.

Ruan, et al. (2024) studied in China, higher education institutions (HEIs) feature a governance structure where the university president and the party secretary play key roles, though their legal responsibilities are not clearly defined in current laws. This paper uses a four-dimensional theoretical model to (i) clarify leadership roles in this dual governance system, (ii) examine how HEI leaders view their leadership, and (iii) evaluate Chinese practices against existing leadership theories. In-depth interviews with six top leaders from Chinese public HEIs reveal that these leaders emphasize structural over symbolic aspects in their leadership. Unlike studies outside China that

focus on symbolic leadership, our findings suggest that Chinese HEI leaders act more as university managers than institutional leaders.

Chandolia & Anastasiou (2020) aimed to examine school conflicts, their sources, and the effectiveness of different conflict management styles in secondary education schools in Greece. A total of 128 teachers from twelve randomly selected schools in the Epirus region participated. The study surveyed teachers' opinions on their principals' leadership styles, conflict sources, types, and severity in their schools. Conflict was found to be a common issue, with interpersonal and organizational factors being frequent sources. School leaders employed various conflict management styles, with compromise and collaboration being common. Transformational and transactional leadership styles were equally effective in resolving conflicts, while laissez-faire leadership was not. The findings suggest a link between leadership and conflict management effectiveness.

Naqvi and Anjum (2024) found that leaders use conflict avoidance to enhance leadership but its effectiveness is uncertain. This study aims to clarify the link between conflict avoidance and good leadership. It urges researchers to explore this area. While leadership styles and conflict management are studied separately, their direct correlation remains under-researched in university settings. This knowledge gap hampers targeted strategies for leadership and conflict management in higher education. A quantitative approach with data collected from Education Authorities (n = 330) was used. One-way ANOVA was employed for analysis. Results showed conflict's positive impact on leadership style and organizational commitment. Additionally, leadership, organizational culture, and ethics positively affect faculty members. Significant differences in Conflict Styles and Leadership Styles among faculty members were observed in university settings, supported by statistical tests. The low p-value rejects the null hypothesis, affirming style differences.

Kiran and Ikram Kayani (2020) examined how conflict management affects faculty performance, with transformational leadership as a mediator. Conflicts are inevitable in social interactions due to differences and goal incompatibilities, impacting higher education institutions similarly. Poorly managed conflicts lead to low performance. The research employed the Farooqi Organizational Conflict Inventory, Institutional Performance Evaluation, and the Multifactor Leadership Style Questionnaire. Using multistage random sampling and various statistical analyses, the findings showed that a compromising and integrating conflict management strategy was common, and transformational leadership mediated the relationship between conflict management and faculty performance.

Ogunode, et al. (2024) examined conflict management strategies in Nigerian tertiary institutions, utilizing secondary data from print and online sources. The findings identified accommodation, avoidance, collaboration, competition, and compromise as key strategies for managing conflicts among management, staff unions, and staff. The paper recommends regular workshops on conflict management for both management and staff to enhance workplace efficiency and fulfill the socio-economic development goals of Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Maduforo, et al. (2024) studied in the ever-evolving realm of higher education, the need for adept leaders is crucial, yet there is a significant lack of institution-specific leadership development programs tailored for post-secondary education leaders. This gap leaves many higher education leaders without essential skills in areas like strategic planning, communication, and talent management. The review emphasizes the importance of creating internal leadership development initiatives, highlighting their benefits in succession planning, talent retention, networking, and addressing modern challenges in higher education.

Ariatpi and Marlina (2024) studied that in educational institutions, effective leadership and a supportive organizational culture are essential for managing conflicts during periods of transformation. This research highlights the importance of these factors in conflict resolution, utilizing data from interviews, document analysis, and observations involving school principals, teachers, and education staff. The findings emphasize the need for visionary leadership and open communication, advocating for a nurturing culture that views conflict as a constructive process for achieving mutual agreement and maintaining institutional harmony.

Erawadi, et al. (2023) examined the evolution of Dayah institutions in Aceh, transitioning from traditional religious schools to modern Islamic educational institutions, especially after the conflict era. It highlighted the integration of modern education into Dayah, showcasing the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity amid Aceh's broader social and political changes. The findings revealed that Dayah institutions now combine traditional Islamic teachings with modern education, promoting scientific and technological advancement and fostering a comprehensive understanding of Islam and tolerance.

Guiab and Miguel (2023) examined the conflict management styles (CMS) of faculty and staff and their relationship with demographic profiles to create a potential training program in conflict management. Participants included 26 faculty members and 14 staff. Data were collected through surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions (FGD). The Thomas-Kilmann CMS Inventory was used, showing high validity (CVI of 0.91) and reliability (Cronbach's Alpha of 0.95). Data analysis included descriptive statistics, the Z-test for independent sample means, and the Chi-square test. Results indicated that faculty mainly use the avoiding style, while staff predominantly use the compromising style. Faculty with administrative roles and some staff use a combination of compromising and collaborating styles. Demographic profiles did not significantly influence CMS. The study suggests that current conflict management practices need improvement, leading to the development of a proposed training program on CMS.

Alshehri (2022) aimed to identify common conflict management styles among academic leaders at Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University and to assess the organizational commitment level of faculty members. It explored the relationship between the conflict management styles of department heads and the organizational commitment of faculty, examining differences based on academic rank, years of experience, and gender. The research involved all 1696 faculty members, with a sample of 315 respondents, representing 19% of the population. Results showed significant effects of collaborative, compromising, and obliging styles on organizational commitment, which was found to be high among faculty. There was a strong direct correlation between the conflict management styles of department heads and faculty commitment, with no significant differences based on academic rank, experience, or gender.

1.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this study is established by integrating leadership theory and conflict management theory. Its primary aim is to methodically investigate how different leadership styles foretell the conflict management styles adopted by faculty members in the university colleges of Kathmandu. The leadership and conflict management styles of nursing students in Saudi Arabia, reveal a preference for democratic leadership and integrating conflict management. The research underscores the importance of effective leadership in clinical decision-making and highlights the crucial role of nurse educators in teaching and modeling these skills (Alnajjar & Hashish, 2022).

1.2 LEADERSHIP STYLES AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

Downton (1973) first developed the transformational leadership theory, then after Burns (1978) as politicians and scientists developed the other concept of transactional leadership. Rahim (1983) widely recognized and validated model for conflict management is structured around a two-dimensional framework the first-dimension measures how an individual address their concerns in a conflict. The second dimension assesses the extent to which an individual address the concerns of others. Combining these two dimensions yields five specific conflict management styles: integrating (problem-solving), obliging, dominating (forcing), avoiding, and compromising.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Conflict within educational institutions, particularly at the university level colleges, can significantly impact the effectiveness and harmony of the academic environment. In university colleges in Kathmandu, faculty conflicts can arise from differing opinions, competition for resources, and interpersonal issues. Ineffective conflict management can lead to reduced job satisfaction, decreased productivity, and negative effects on student outcomes. Leadership style plays a crucial role in managing conflicts within an organization. Transformational leaders, focusing on inspiration and motivation, may foster collaborative conflict resolution, while transactional leaders, emphasizing structure and rewards, might encourage competitive or compromising strategies. Despite the importance of leadership in conflict management, there is a lack of empirical research on how specific leadership styles predict conflict management styles among faculty in Kathmandu's university colleges. Understanding these relationships is vital for creating effective leadership training programs and policies that improve conflict resolution, foster collaboration, and enhance educational outcomes. Therefore, this study aims to address this research gap by examining how transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles influence the conflict management styles of faculty members. By identifying effective leadership practices, this research seeks to provide insights that help educational institutions develop better strategies for managing conflicts and promoting a harmonious and productive academic environment.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this study is to investigate how various leadership styles. Transformational and transactional predict the conflict management techniques used by faculty members in university colleges in Kathmandu. The study seeks to identify leadership practices that effectively enhance conflict resolution and promote a collaborative academic environment.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used a descriptive and correlational research design to examine the relationship between leadership and conflict management styles among faculty members in university colleges in Kathmandu. The target population encompasses all faculty members from various university colleges in Kathmandu, with a sample of 100 faculty members selected through stratified random sampling. The total number of faculty members was 125 as total sample size. Out of these only 100 faculty members filled out the questionnaires and used them for the data analysis. This approach ensured representation across different departments and colleges, considering age, gender, academic rank, and years of experience. Data was collected through Likert Scale questionnaires from strongly disagree to agree strongly. The data collection process includes obtaining formal permission, securing informed consent, and distributing questionnaires via personal contract directly in the filled. The Reliability has been assessed using Cronbach's alpha, while validity has been ensured through expert review and factor analysis. Data analysis has incorporated descriptive statistics, mean, and standard deviation. The study acknowledges potential

limitations, such as response bias and the limited generalizability of findings. Through these methods, the study aims to offer comprehensive insights into how leadership styles influence conflict management styles among faculty members in university colleges in Kathmandu.

3. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS
3.1 FINDINGS

Table 1: *Reliability Statistics*

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.739	26

In summary, a Cronbach's Alpha of .739 for the 26 items indicates an acceptable level of internal consistency. This means the items are reasonably correlated and can reliably measure the same underlying concept or construct.

Table 2: *Mean and Standard Deviation*
The findings of the data can be presented with the help of mean and standard deviation values.

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
Conflict is inevitable in educational institutions.	2.90	1.403
College administration makes the students capable as per the requirements of the current scenario.	3.61	.931
College administration provides inadequate transaction facilities for the students.	3.01	1.227
College administration provides the bill of fees more than expected.	2.77	1.090
College administration sends remuneration/salary to the bank account on time as per the agreement.	3.27	1.370
College administration creates a study environment for the students.	3.81	1.022
College administration provides remuneration/salary as per the current scenario.	2.88	1.140
Conflict can be solved only if one shows one's strength to the other party/person.	2.35	1.388
In a conflict situation both the parties have to be given up something to reach a solution.	3.98	1.255
It is better to give concessions to the opponent group to win their confidence.	3.04	1.127
In a conflict situation, one party should leave to avoid unpleasantness.	3.58	.976
Conflict management needs to involve the process of joint exploration for solutions.	4.12	.656
In most conflicts, one should find out the solution.	4.08	1.143
Compromise is the best strategy of managing a conflict.	3.91	1.248

When two parties are deeply involved in conflict arbitration by an acceptable outside party may be very helpful.	4.00	.791
Accepting a few demands of the opponent group may help in resolving the conflict.	3.74	.733
If one waits for some time and does not attempt to solve the problems, the conflicts will get defused and resolved in due course of time	2.53	1.410
It is foolish to be bothered by conflicts: they are there and we may better live with them.	3.22	1.411
If a teacher/group interacts with another teacher/group only on the necessary and limited dimensions, conflicts can be managed.	3.50	1.030
Conflicts can be solved if the conflicting parties/teachers understand each other and jointly search for alternative solutions	4.13	.734
The more powerful you are, the more effectively you can resolve the conflicts.	3.60	1.247
If conflicting parties accept a part of each other's demand, conflict can be resolved.	3.86	.829
Difficult conflicts can be solved by an impartial arbitrator acceptable to both the conflicting parties.	3.78	1.079
It is better to buy peace for some time even by acceding to some demands of the conflicting group so that conflict can be effectively resolved.	3.63	.928
Waiting for some time to let the emotions subside helps in solving the major problems.	3.63	.849
The students of this institution also show progress in their professional fields in the future.	4.20	.725

Each statement was examined using the mean and standard deviation. "Conflict is inevitable in educational institutions" scored 2.90 with a standard deviation of 1.403, suggesting mixed opinions. "College administration makes the students capable as per the requirements of the current scenario" scored 3.61 with a standard deviation of 0.931, indicating general agreement. "College administration provides inadequate transaction facilities for the students" scored 3.01 with a standard deviation of 1.227, showing moderate disagreement. "College administration provides the bill of fees more than expectation" scored 2.77 with a standard deviation of 1.090, indicating slight disagreement. "College administration sends remuneration/salary to the bank account on time as per the agreement" scored 3.27 with a standard deviation of 1.370, suggesting diverse opinions. "College administration creates a study environment for the students" scored 3.81 with a standard deviation of 1.022, showing moderate agreement. "College administration provides remuneration/salary as per the current scenario" scored 2.88 with a standard deviation of 1.140, indicating mild disagreement. "Conflict can be solved only if one shows one's strength to the other party/person" scored 2.35 with a standard deviation of 1.388, reflecting disagreement. "In a conflict situation both the parties have to give up something to reach a solution" scored 3.98 with a standard deviation of 1.255, indicating agreement. "It is better to

give concessions to the opponent group to win their confidence" scored 3.04 with a standard deviation of 1.127, suggesting mixed views. "In a conflict situation, one party should leave to avoid unpleasantness" scored 3.58 with a standard deviation of 0.976, showing slight agreement. "Conflict management needs to involve the process of joint exploration for solutions" scored 4.12 with a standard deviation of 0.656, indicating strong agreement.

"In most conflicts, one should find out the solution" scored 4.08 with a standard deviation of 1.143, suggesting strong agreement. "Compromise is the best strategy for managing a conflict" scored 3.91 with a standard deviation of 1.248, indicating agreement. "When two parties are deeply involved in conflict, arbitration by an acceptable outside party may be very helpful" scored 4.00 with a standard deviation of 0.791, suggesting agreement. "Accepting a few demands of the opponent group may help in resolving the conflict" scored 3.74 with a standard deviation of 0.733, indicating agreement. "If one waits for some time and does not attempt to solve the problems, the conflicts will get defused and resolved in due course of time" scored 2.53 with a standard deviation of 1.410, indicating disagreement. "It is foolish to be bothered by conflicts: they are there and we may better live with them" scored 3.22 with a standard deviation of 1.411, suggesting mixed views. "If a teacher/group interacts with another teacher/group only on the necessary and limited dimensions, conflicts can be managed" scored 3.50 with a standard deviation of 1.030, showing slight agreement. "Conflicts can be solved if the conflicting parties/teachers understand each other and jointly search for alternative solutions" scored 4.13 with a standard deviation of 0.734, indicating strong agreement. "The more powerful you are, the more effectively you can resolve the conflicts" scored 3.60 with a standard deviation of 1.247, showing slight agreement. "If conflicting parties accept a part of each other's demand, conflict can be resolved" scored 3.86 with a standard

deviation of 0.829, indicating agreement. "Difficult conflicts can be solved by an impartial arbitrator acceptable to both the conflicting parties" scored 3.78 with a standard deviation of 1.079, showing agreement. "It is better to buy peace for some time even by acceding to some demands of the conflicting group so that conflict can be effectively resolved" scored 3.63 with a standard deviation of 0.928, indicating slight agreement. "Waiting for some time to let the emotions subside helps in solving the major problems" scored 3.63 with a standard deviation of 0.849, showing agreement. "The students of this institution also show progress in their professional fields in future" scored 4.20 with a standard deviation of 0.725, indicating strong agreement.

3.2 CONCLUSIONS

The study explored how transformational and transactional leadership styles impact conflict management techniques through faculty members at university colleges in Kathmandu. Utilizing a descriptive and correlational research design, data were gathered from 100 faculty members through Likert scale questionnaires, with reliability and validity confirmed via Cronbach's Alpha and expert review.

Findings revealed that conflict is considered inevitable in educational institutions, with varied opinions on the administration's ability to meet current demands and create a conducive study environment. There was moderate agreement on the effectiveness of mutual concessions and joint exploration for conflict resolution, whereas resolving conflict through strength was generally disagreed upon.

The study concluded that leadership styles significantly influence conflict management, with transformational and transactional leadership enhancing conflict resolution and fostering a cooperative academic atmosphere. These findings underscore the importance of effective leadership practices in promoting a harmonious and productive educational

environment. Future research and practical efforts should focus on developing targeted leadership training programs to improve conflict resolution strategies within academic institutions.

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