A Comparative Study of Conflict Management Styles of Public & Private Secondary Schools' Principals

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Abstract

This paper examines the most preferred styles of the public and private secondary schools' principals in District Charsadda (KPK). The findings suggest that the conflict styles though vary in nature but interestingly both types of the principals almost follow the same conflict management styles. For analysis of data, Kendall's Tau B and Tau C were utilized. On the basis of findings of the study some recommendations have been forwarded for policy implications. The paper concludes that all the principals should adopt the best style according to the demand of the situation.

 Keywords: Conflict Management, Principal, Conflict Resolution, Education.

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Introduction

Secondary schools play important role in providing knowledge for further education as well as contributing to the county by providing work force to the community. "Conflict", has been viewed differently by different, according to them it connotes negative impact as is viewed in war, destruction, aggression, violence, and competition[1]. Human beings interact with each other for their mutual give and take and as such come in conflict with another.

According to Stephen P. Hencley (1961), evidences about interpersonal conflict show that it can be seen in the working relationship of the school principal and his subordinates[2], such types of conflicts can be found not only in theory but in practice as well.

The idea of any type of conflict and its management strategies in not only limited to the education institutions only but it can always and often be found in other disciplines as well. Literature testifies that conflict management can be linked to the secondary school principal because of his administrative position in the school.

Bailey (1971) is of the view that no doubt rifts are always evident not only in theory but practically it can be seen as well. Therefore it is mandatory that while conflict management strategies are developed, field experiences should be taken into consideration. Now it becomes obligatory on the principals that they need to be participating in field activities so that to make themselves familiar with the management skills which need to be adopted in the institutions. He offers some ideas on managing conflict to the school administrator. First of all, the school administrator should be aware of the timely recognition of conflicts and that he should promptly respond to the misunderstandings among his subordinates, educators and the students too. Secondly he should utilize collective judgment in order to overcome his personal biases. Third and most importantly when one understands that conflicts are going to become out of control then the best and most suitable way is to judge his resources, see his enemy's strength and to handle the conflict what plan of action needs to be adopted, how the decision would be implemented and how to prepare oneself for the possible attack. And at the final stage, the school administrator should be clear and very realistic about his merits and or demerits for managing conflict[4].

Conflict Management

Robbins (1974) opines that management of conflict is to plan and then evaluate different levels of conflict"[5]. Management of conflict is a social process used people or groups thereof to tackle different conflict types so as to understand each other's grievances about their behaviors; conflict management is first a diagnostic process, interpersonal conflict i.e. between individuals, negotiating strategies, for the timely handling of conflicts so as to reduce its negative effects[6]. Conflict management is an effective catalyst or motivating force for bringing change in the institution. That is the main reason for the principal or administrator which approach is best for bringing a positive change in the organization and amicable change in the behaviors of the employees.[7]

Conflict Management in School

In this section the researchers have delineated that who are the key players in the schools for conflict management. The fact is that if teachers or students are able enough to understand the nature of conflict then it is very easy for them to manage any type of conflict in a constructive way.[8] On the other hand Moran (2001) views that managing conflict is a philosophy and a set of skills which is used by individuals and groups of people to understand conflict in a better way and to deal with any conflict situation in their respective lives"[9]. Regarding the positive or negative nature of effect of conflict but it is clear that this is a part and parcel of school life which always yields positive results.[10]

In the organizational life conflicts are competitive as well as cooperative in its nature depending on the situations in which it happens. It is evident that certain problems arise when conflicts are viewed whether in a competitive or cooperative situations [11].

Hocker and Wilmot (1985) have assumed that conflict have negative effects in the organization, which are listed as follow;

a.   it has been proved that harmony is normal and any problem situation is abnormal.

b.   whether in organization or individual capacity conflicts and disagreements is always one and the same phenomena.

c.   for de escalation of the adverse effects of conflict proper measures must be initiated.

d. one main reason of conflicts is a clash of personality.

e. difference exists between emotions and a true conflict.[12]

According to Deetz and Stevenson (1986) there are destructive assumptions about conflict. They are:

(a) it is an untrue and unnatural departure from human perspective and a social way of life.

(b) it should be stopped in maximum circumstances.

(c) misunderstanding on the part of the employees is considered a major cause of Conflict which occurs due to communication failure.[13]

Method & Procedure

Questionnaire was framed which was distributed to the respondents for the purpose of collecting the information about conflict management styles of the principals. Questionnaire was personally served by the researchers to the schools' teachers. These were collected back and analyzed through Kendall's correlation technique.

Research Questions:

The goal of the study was to learn about conflict management styles of the principals of public and private secondary schools of District Charsadda (KPK). The following questions were addressed in the data collection and analysis:

Q.1. Does the principal adopt a collaborative approach for conflict management?
Q.2. Does he seek a compromising solution for ending conflict?
Q.3. Does he utilize a competitive approach to deal with conflict?
Q.4. Does the principal follow an accommodating approach for conflict   resolution?
Q.5. Does he prefer an avoidance approach for conflict management?

Sample

The sample consists of total 50 teachers which were taken both from public as well as private secondary schools of District Charsadda (KPK). A questionnaire was evolved which was consisted of items in order to ascertain the conflict management styles of the principals. The questionnaire was distributed among the participants of the study, they were asked to properly tick the most relevant box and

after filling return it to the researcher. The data were collected, tabulated and analyzed, for analysis purposes; Kendall's Tau B and Tau C were utilized.

Data Analysis

Here analysis of the data has been given in order to support our research questions.

Collaborative Approach for Conflict Management

Crosstabs

[DataSet1] E:\Teacher and Teacher Analysis.sav

CMG1P * CMG1T Cross-tabulation

Count							
		Collaborative approach for conflict management skills					
		Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Always	Total
CMG1P	Never	1	0	0	0	2	3
	Seldom	0	1	0	1	1	3
	Occasionally	1	0	2	1	2	6
	Frequently	1	2	1	6	4	14
	Always	2	3	4	9	6	24
Total		5	6	7	17	15	50

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.200	.066	3.016	.003
	Kendall's tau-c	.130	.043	3.016	.003
N of Valid Cases		50			

The principal adopts a collaborative approach for conflict management" this question was put both to private as well as public schools' teachers; the correlation between the responses of them was calculated through Kendall's correlation technique which is for ordinal by ordinal. The p-value which is 0.003, and is less than 0.05, shows that the correlation between the responses is highly significant which means that both the teachers mostly agree on the same level of response.

CMG2P * CMG2T Cross-tabulation

Count							
		Seeks a compromising solution for ending conflict					
		Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Always	Total
CMG2P	Never	0	0	0	1	1	2
	Seldom	1	1	0	2	5	9
	Occasionally	0	1	2	0	3	6
	Frequently	1	1	1	4	6	13
	Always	1	2	3	5	9	20
Total		3	5	6	12	24	50

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.219	.065	3.271	.001
	Kendall's tau-c	.153	.047	3.271	.001
N of Valid Cases		50			

Compromising Solution for Ending Conflict

Crosstabs

[DataSet1] E:\Teacher and Teacher Analysis.sav

The question which seeks a compromising solution for ending conflict is put to the participants; its Correlation was calculated through Kendall's correlation technique which is for ordinal by ordinal. The p-value (0.001<0.05) shows that the correlation between the responses is highly significant which means that both types of teachers mostly agree on the same level of response.

Competitive Approach To Deal With Conflict

Crosstabs

[DataSet1] E:\Teacher and Teacher Analysis.sav

CMG3P * CMG3T Cross-tabulation

Count							
		Prefers competitive approach to deal with conflict					
		Never	Seldom	occasionally	Frequently	Always	Total
CMG3P Never		1	0	0	0	2	3
Seldom		0	1	0	1	1	3
Occasionally		1	0	2	1	2	6
Frequently		1	1	1	4	3	10
Always		3	3	6	9	7	28
Total		6	5	9	15	15	50

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.131	.062	2.097	.036
	Kendall's tau-c	.126	.060	2.097	.036
N of Valid Cases		50			

"The principal prefers a competitive approach to deal with conflict" for which correlation between the responses of teachers was calculated through Kendall's correlation technique which is for ordinal by ordinal. The p-value was calculated as 0.036 which is less than 0.05 shows that the correlation between the responses is highly significant which means that both private as well as public schools teachers mostly agree on the same level of response.

Accommodating Approach to resolve the Conflict

Crosstabs

[DataSet1] E:\Teacher and Teacher Analysis.sav

CMG4P * CMG4T Cross-tabulation

Count							
		Accommodates the conflicting parties to resolve the issue					
		Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Always	Total
CMG4P	Never	1	0	0	0	2	3
	Seldom	0	1	0	1	1	3
	Occasionally	2	1	2	1	2	8
	Frequently	1	2	1	6	4	14
	Always	2	3	3	8	6	22
Total		6	7	6	16	15	50

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.207	.066	3.080	.002
	Kendall's tau-c	.151	.049	3.080	.002
N of Valid Cases		50			

The teachers were put the question whether the principal accommodates the conflicting parties to resolve the conflict? The correlation between their responses was calculated through Kendall's correlation technique which is for ordinal by ordinal. The p-value (0.002<0.05) shows that the correlation between the responses is highly significant which means that both the participants mostly agree on the same level of response**.**

Avoidance approach for ending Conflict

Crosstabs

[DataSet1] E:\Teacher and Teacher Analysis.sav

CMG5P * CMG5T Cross-tabulation

Count							
		Avoids conflict whenever it occurs					
		Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Always	Total
CMG5P Never		1	0	1	2	2	6
	Seldom	0	2	1	1	1	5
	Occasionally	0	1	3	3	2	9
	Frequently	2	2	1	3	3	11
	Always	1	2	6	7	3	19
Total		4	7	12	16	11	50

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.182	.064	2.805	.005
	Kendall's tau-c	.134	.048	2.805	.005
N of Valid Cases		50			

Both types of teachers were asked the question whether the principal avoids conflict whenever it occurs? The correlation between the responses of both types of teachers was calculated through Kendall's correlation technique which is for ordinal by ordinal. The p-value which is 0.005 and which is less than 0.05 shows that the correlation between their responses of is highly significant which means that they mostly agree on the same level of response**.**

Findings of the study

- Data collected from both types of schools testifies the teachers' response that most of the time the principals follow a collaborative approach while managing conflict, the findings showed that this approach is the preferred conflict management style of the principals.

- Findings from the teachers' responses showed that the second preferred style of the principals for conflict management is compromising, it showed that most of the time the principals followed a compromising approach while dealing with conflict.
- The study also revealed that teachers were of the opinion that the principals frequently or never opted for a competitive approach in conflict management.
- Teachers' responses further revealed that the principals also adopted an accommodating approach while dealing with conflict.
- Findings of the study showed that according to the view points of teachers, the principals never followed an avoiding approach for managing of conflict.

Recommendations

- It is suggested that principals should be given proper conflict management training for the solution of interpersonal problems.
- It is further recommended that principals should also be encouraged to adopt a compromising style for conflict management.
- While giving training to the principals they should be told that a competitive approach should be avoided while dealing with conflicts.
- Principals should be told that they should adopt the most relevant style according to the situation and the persons involved.
- They may be informed of the adverse effects of an avoiding style for dealing interpersonal conflicts.

Conclusion

Conflicts always exist in a working environment, its total elimination from the organization can't be thought of. It's, therefore, required of the principal that these must be properly managed. It depends on the situation as well as the principal's personal preference which style/s they want to adopt to deal with conflict. The findings show that the principals adopt one or other type of conflict management style. The principals should adopt the style which best suit them and the situation which is in need of ending the conflict.

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