

**RESEARCH PAPER****Relationship between Principal's Compromising, Competing and avoiding Conflict Management Styles with Academic Achievement****Ruqaya Naseem**

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ABSTRACT

This research study investigated the relationship between college principals' conflict management styles and students' academic achievement. The study used a correlational research method and surveyed public degree colleges in Punjab, Pakistan. A multi-stage sampling technique was utilized to select the sample for the study. The results showed that principals' use of compromising and avoiding conflict management styles positively correlated with academic achievement. In contrast, the competing style was negatively correlated with academic achievement, except for a weak positive correlation reported by teachers. The study suggests that avoiding conflict is the most effective approach in educational settings, while competing is not favored by most principals. The study recommends training principals and teachers in effective conflict management and exploring underlying factors influencing conflict management styles through qualitative research. The findings highlight the importance of conflict management in academic achievement and provide insights for educational leaders and policymakers.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Avoiding Conflict Management, Competing, Compromising**Introduction**

Social institutions, including educational organizations, are governed by established rules and procedures that dictate the extent of each member's actions and conduct (Batool, 2016). Colleges play a vital role in disseminating knowledge and supplying skilled workers to urban areas. Historically, progress in universities has been narrowly focused on student achievements in tests, which are used to classify and describe those deemed eligible for continued education at the next level (Dinham, 2015). The significance of examinations is underscored by their utility in assessing educational progress, as evidenced by students' performance in external assessments.

However, the role of college leaders in ensuring institutional success has become increasingly complex and multifaceted. In light of rapid changes and diverse stakeholder needs, effective leaders must promote and encourage teach (Boucher, 2021). This requires strong management skills, encompassing not only administrative expertise but also the ability to navigate disputes and conflicts inherent in corporate life. Research suggests that approximately 25% of executive time is devoted to dispute mediation (Lloyd & Uzhenyu, 2017).

The prevalence of conflict and its management practices is not unique to educational establishments, but rather a ubiquitous feature of organizational life. Literature highlights the critical role of college principals in dispute mediation, which can be attributed to their managerial status (Muindi, Ndunge, Jonathan, & Joseph, 2017). Larasati and Raharja (2020) identified several sources of tension between teachers and principals, including time constraints, perceptual differences, autocratic tendencies, inadequate performance, unmet expectations, and unclear criteria.

The proliferation of public colleges has been accompanied by growing tensions between teachers and school officials, negatively impacting academic achievements (Aqqad, Obeidat, Tarhini, & Masa'deh, 2019). However, conflict can also be a catalyst for improvement and growth, enhancing decision-making and teacher engagement. Effective conflict management is crucial, as it can either disrupt or positively impact college dynamics, depending on the leader's approach.

Literature Review

Research has shown that principals often struggle to manage disputes efficiently, failing to employ effective mediation techniques (Bean, 2019). The establishment of dispute resolution committees has been recommended to promote free knowledge sharing and minimize communication gaps. The impact of conflict mediation strategies on student rights and academic performance has been investigated, highlighting the need for administrators to balance authority with student autonomy (Farooqi, Arshad, Khan & Ghaffar, 2017).

Dispute management involves scheduling and calculating varying degrees of conflict, with conflict mediation being a common procedure (Goddard & Miller, 2010). Effective instructional leaders must comprehend multiple conflict management strategies, as each approach can influence outcomes. Five commonly used conflict management styles, as identified by scholars, include collaborating, compromising, competing, avoiding, and accommodating (Hashmi, Altaf & Kiyani, 2019). They also suggest that individuals can employ all five styles, but may prefer certain approaches based on their temperament or experience.

Unmanaged conflict can have detrimental effects on colleges, emphasizing the need for interpersonal skills development, guidance, and openness during conflicts (Hallinger, 2018). Ultimately, student education is critical to a nation's economic and social growth, with academic excellence playing a crucial role in producing responsible graduates (Irfan, 2021). Various factors, including psychological, fiscal, societal, personal, and environmental influences student performance, underscoring the need for effective conflict management and leadership in educational institutions.

The compromising style seeks to find a middle ground, sacrificing some interests while pursuing others. This approach is reasonably stable and cooperative. It is useful when both parties are equally strong and committed to their opinions (Okello, 2018). However, excessive compromise can lead to the neglect of long-term priorities, lack of confidence, and a pessimistic atmosphere. Underutilization of this style can result in unnecessary disputes and power struggles.

Individuals who lack interest in themselves and others tend to adopt an evasive approach, disregarding problems and avoiding solutions. This style involves overlooking situations, potentially leading to unresolved disputes. While it may be useful in calming problems and preventing frivolous issues, it is unacceptable in critical situations requiring immediate attention. Research suggests that avoiding conflict can have detrimental effects on work quality and lead to increased workforce replacement intentions (Lloyd & Uzhenyu, 2017).

The competing style is characterized by a desire to win at the expense of others, often leading to violent, autocratic, or harassing behavior. This approach may be acceptable in situations requiring quick decision-making or crisis management. However, it can lead to broken partnerships, secret approaches, and even violence or conflict. Excessive use of this style can result in poor performance, decreased learning, and negatively impact academic achievement (Montes, Rodríguez & Serrano, 2012).

The effectiveness of a college system is heavily influenced by the principal's management and conflict resolution approach. A leader's ability to handle tension and conflict efficiently is often seen as a key factor in their overall success. Despite high grades, academic achievement in Punjab's colleges has been subpar. This study aimed to investigate the conflict management strategies employed by college principals and their impact on academic performance. The challenges facing the college system are largely dependent on the leadership and conflict management style of the principal, which affects their daily administration. Effective conflict management is perceived as a hallmark of a competent leader. However, academic achievement in Punjab's colleges has not met expectations, prompting this research to explore the conflict management styles used by principals and their influence on academic outcomes.

Material and Methods

This research study was grounded in the positivist research paradigm, which emphasizes the use of quantitative data and numerical values to examine phenomena. The study employed a correlational research method, which is a quantitative approach that seeks to identify relationships between variables. The research design was purely quantitative in nature, focusing on the collection and analysis of numerical data.

The population of the study comprised all public degree colleges in the Sialkot and Narowal districts of Punjab, Pakistan. Specifically, the population included all principals and teachers from these colleges. In the Sialkot district, there were 12 male college principals and 72 male teachers, as well as 18 female college principals and 126 female teachers. In contrast, the Narowal district had 5 male public college principals and 25 male teachers, as well as 6 female public degree college principals and 42 female teachers. Therefore, the total population of the study consisted of all 41 principals (12 male and 18 female from Sialkot, and 5 male and 6 female from Narowal) and 265 teachers (72 male and 126 female from Sialkot, and 25 male and 42 female from Narowal).

The information regarding the number of principals and teachers in each district was obtained from the official website of the Director's Office (Colleges) in the Gujranwala division. This ensured that the data was accurate and up-to-date, providing a reliable foundation for the study. By examining the relationships between conflict management styles and academic achievement within this population, the study aimed to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on effective conflict management strategies in educational settings.

Table 1
Population of the Study

Gender	District Sialkot		District Narowal	
	Public colleges(principal)	Teachers	Public colleges (Principal)	Teachers
Male	12	72	05	25
Female	18	126	06	42
Total	30	198	11	67

To select the sample for the study, a multi-stage sampling technique was employed, involving a combination of simple random sampling, proportionate sampling, and convenient sampling methods. In the first stage, the researcher utilized simple random sampling to select colleges from the population. This involved randomly selecting colleges from the list of all public degree colleges in the Sialkot and Narowal districts. In the second stage, proportionate sampling was used to select an equal proportion of teachers from both male and female wing colleges. This ensured that the sample represented both genders and minimized potential biases.

In the third stage, convenient sampling was employed to collect data from the selected teachers and principals. This involved approaching the selected participants and requesting their participation in the study.

As a result of this multi-stage sampling process, a total of 20 college principals out of 30 colleges and 90 teachers out of 198 were selected from the Sialkot district. Similarly, 7 college principals out of 11 and 33 teachers out of 67 were selected from the Narowal district. The total sample size for the study consisted of 27 college principals and 123 college teachers. The sample size from both districts was determined according to their proportion in the population, ensuring that the sample was representative of the population. This sampling technique allowed the researcher to collect a diverse and representative sample, increasing the validity and generalizability of the study's findings.

Instrumentation

The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between Principal's conflict management styles and Academic Achievement in public colleges. For this purpose, two instruments were adopted for data collection. A closed ended items was consisted on a five point Likert scale as 1= strongly Disagree (SDA), 2= Disagree (DA), 3= Undecided (UD), 4= Agree (A), and 5= Strongly Agree (SA).

Principal's Questionnaire . Public degree college Principals from two districts Sialkot and Narowal filled conflict management styles questionnaire. Conflict management styles inventory ROCI-II was consisted of 28 items developed by Rahim (2001) on mentioned styles as collaborative and accommodating.

Teacher's Questionnaire . The second instrument was also used to examine the teachers' views about the Principal's conflict management styles. For this purpose, Rahim's (2001) ROCI-II inventory was used which was consisted on 28 closed ended items.

The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II). ROCI-II is a 28 sentence questionnaire to classify the methods for resolution: incorporation (IN), obligatory (OB), dominant (DO), avoidance (AV) or compromise(CO). Researcher done pilot testing of the instrument and used coefficient of Alpha reliability analysis. Cronbach's alpha for ROCI-II was found 0.80 and for teachers questionnaire it was found 0.82 which showed fair reliability analysis. Researcher personally visited the colleges and collected data from the respondents.

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between the conflict management styles employed by principals and the academic achievement of students in public colleges. To achieve this goal, two data collection instruments were utilized: the Principal's Questionnaire and the Teacher's Questionnaire.

The Principal's Questionnaire consisted of closed-ended items, each featuring a five-point Likert scale with the following response options: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Undecided (U), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA). This questionnaire was completed by public degree college principals from the Sialkot and Narowal districts, who provided insights into their conflict management styles. The Conflict Management Styles Inventory (ROCI-II), developed by Rahim (2001), was used to assess the principals' conflict management styles. This inventory comprises 28 items and evaluates five conflict management styles: collaborative, accommodating, incorporating, obligatory, dominant, avoidance, and compromise.

The Teacher's Questionnaire was the second instrument employed in the study. This questionnaire aimed to gather teachers' perspectives on the principals' conflict management styles. Rahim's (2001) ROCI-II inventory was used again, consisting of 28 closed-ended items. To ensure the reliability of the instruments, pilot testing was conducted, and Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis was performed. The results showed a fair level of reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.80 for the ROCI-II and 0.82 for the Teacher's Questionnaire. Data collection was conducted through personal visits to the colleges, where the researcher distributed and collected the questionnaires from the respondents. This approach ensured a high response rate and facilitated the collection of accurate and reliable data.

Table 2
Reliability of Questionnaires for Principals and Teachers

Questionnaire	Cronbach's Alpha Reliability
Principal's Questionnaire	0.82
Teachers Questionnaire	0.80

Following the development of the questionnaires, the researcher sought expert validation from renowned field experts in education. Three distinguished researchers in the field reviewed and validated the questionnaires, providing constructive feedback and suggestions. In response to their input, certain items were deleted, rephrased, or omitted to enhance the clarity and effectiveness of the instruments.

Subsequently, the refined questionnaires underwent pilot testing with a sample of 30 teachers and 15 principals. The pilot testing served as a crucial step in assessing the reliability of the instruments. The results of the pilot testing were analyzed to determine the reliability of the questionnaires, which is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 provides a detailed account of the reliability analysis, highlighting the Cronbach's alpha values for each instrument. The reliability analysis ensured that the questionnaires were consistent and accurate measures of the variables under investigation, thereby increasing the validity of the study's findings. By subjecting the questionnaires to rigorous validation and pilot testing, the researcher ensured that the data collection instruments were robust and reliable, laying a solid foundation for the study's success.

Ethical Considerations

Following ethical considerations were adopted during the data analysis.

- Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they were fully aware of the data collection process, its objectives, and the measures in place to protect their data and maintain confidentiality.
- The researcher took rigorous steps to guarantee the anonymity and confidentiality of participants' personal information and data, upholding the highest standards of data protection.
- Throughout the research process, the researcher actively sought to minimize bias in data collection and analysis, acknowledging and addressing potential sources of bias to ensure the integrity of the findings.
- The researcher was considerate of the time and effort required from participants, ensuring that the demands placed upon them were reasonable and respectful, and that their involvement was valued and appreciated.

Results and Discussion

Based on the research objectives and questions following are the interpretations of the collected data.

Table 3
Relationship between Compromising Conflict management reported by Principals and Academic Achievement

Principal' Self-report	Academic Achievement (Results 2022, 2023)		
	R	n	P
Compromising Conflict Management Style	0.365	27	.037

Table 3 presents the findings on the relationship between the compromising conflict management style reported by principals and academic achievement. To examine this relationship, a Pearson coefficient of correlation was employed. The results indicate a significant, positive, and moderate correlation between compromising conflict management and academic achievement ($r = 0.365$, $n = 27$, $p = 0.037$).

This correlation suggests that there is a notable association between the use of compromising conflict management by principals and improved academic achievement in their colleges. Specifically, the findings reveal that principals who frequently employ compromising conflict management tend to have better academic achievement in their institutions. This implies that the use of compromising conflict management is a predictor of academic success, highlighting its importance in educational leadership.

Table 4
Relationship between Compromising Conflict management reported by Teachers and Academic Achievement

Teacher' reported	Academic Achievement (Results 2022,2023)		
	R	n	P
Compromising Conflict Management Style	0.111	123	0.274

Table 4 presents the findings on the relationship between the compromising conflict management style reported by teachers and academic achievement. A Pearson coefficient of correlation was used to examine this relationship. The results indicate a weak positive correlation between compromising conflict management and academic achievement ($r = 0.111$, $n = 80$, $p = 0.274$).

This correlation suggests a slight association between the use of compromising conflict management by teachers and academic achievement. However, the relationship is not statistically significant, indicating that the correlation is relatively weak. Specifically, the findings reveal that teachers' use of compromising conflict management has a minimal impact on academic achievement, suggesting that other factors may play a more significant role in influencing academic outcomes.

Table 5
Relationship between Competing Conflict management reported by Principals and Academic Achievement

Principal' Self-report	Academic Achievement (Results 2022,2023)		
	R	n	P
Competing Conflict Management Style	-0.083	27	.648

Table 5 presents the findings on the relationship between the competing conflict management style reported by principals and academic achievement. A Pearson coefficient

of correlation was used to examine this relationship. The results indicate a negative weak correlation between competing conflict management and academic achievement ($r = -0.083$, $n = 27$, $p = 0.648$). This correlation suggests a slight negative association between the use of competing conflict management by principals and academic achievement. However, the relationship is not statistically significant, indicating that the correlation is relatively weak.

Table 6
Relationship between Competing Conflict management reported by Teachers and Academic Achievement

Teacher' reported	Academic Achievement (Results 2022,2023)		
	R	n	P
Competing Conflict Management Style	0.267	123	.018

Table 6 presents the findings on the relationship between the competing conflict management style reported by teachers and academic achievement. A Pearson coefficient of correlation was used to examine this relationship. The results indicate a significant, positive, and weak correlation between competing conflict management and academic achievement ($r = 0.267$, $n = 80$, $p = 0.018$). This correlation suggests that there is a notable, albeit weak, association between the use of competing conflict management by teachers and improved academic achievement. Specifically, the findings reveal that teachers who frequently employ competing conflict management tend to have better academic achievement in their classes.

Table 7
Relationship between Avoiding Conflict management reported by Principals and Academic Achievement

Principal' Self-report	Academic Achievement (Results 2022,2023)		
	R	N	P
Avoiding Conflict Management Style	.467	27	.006

Table 7 presents the findings on the relationship between the avoiding conflict management style reported by principals and academic achievement. A Pearson coefficient of correlation was used to examine this relationship. The results indicate a significant, positive, and moderate correlation between avoiding conflict management and academic achievement ($r = 0.467$, $n = 27$, $p = 0.006$). This correlation suggests a notable and moderate association between the use of avoiding conflict management by principals and improved academic achievement. Specifically, the findings reveal that principals who frequently employ avoiding conflict management tend to have better academic achievement in their colleges.

Table 8
Relationship between Avoiding Conflict Management Reported by Teachers and Academic Achievement

Teacher' reported	Academic Achievement (Results 2022, 2023)		
	R	n	P
Avoiding Conflict Management Style	0.230	123	.043

Table 8 presents the findings on the relationship between the avoiding conflict management style reported by teachers and academic achievement. A Pearson coefficient of correlation was used to examine this relationship. The results indicate a significant, positive, and weak correlation between avoiding conflict management and academic achievement ($r = 0.230$, $n = 80$, $p = 0.043$). This correlation suggests a notable, albeit weak, association between the use of avoiding conflict management by teachers and improved academic achievement.

Table 9
Comparison of Principals and teachers on Conflict Management Styles

Conflict Management Styles	Principals		Teachers		Independent samples t-test		
	M	SD	M	SD	t	df	P
Conflict Management	3.79	0.41	3.93	0.39	0.399	109	0.691
Compromising	4.03	0.70	3.95	0.59	0.602	109	0.548
Competing	2.80	0.69	3.37	0.82	3.501	109	0.001
Avoiding	3.59	0.67	3.86	0.55	2.235	109	0.027

Table 9 presents a comparative analysis of the conflict management styles used by Principals and teachers. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if there were significant differences between the two groups. The results showed no significant differences in the overall conflict management scores, as well as the Compromising and Avoiding conflict management styles ($p > 0.05$).

However, some notable differences were observed. Principals scored lower on overall conflict management ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.41$) compared to teachers ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.39$). Conversely, Principals scored higher on the Compromising style ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.70$) than teachers ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.59$). Teachers tended to score higher on the Competing style ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.82$) and Avoiding style ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.55$) compared to Principals, who scored ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 0.69$) and ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.67$) respectively. Although these differences are not statistically significant, they suggest that teachers may be more inclined to use Competing and Avoiding approaches to conflict management compared to Principals.

Discussion

The study revealed a moderate correlation between the compromising conflict management style and academic achievement in colleges, whereas teachers reported a weak and insignificant relationship between the compromising style and academic achievement. In light of these findings, it is essential to implement compromising strategies in a career-staged approach, providing a continuum from pre-service preparation to throughout a Principal's career. This will enable Principals to effectively manage conflict and promote academic achievement.

The demographic evidence suggests that Principals have utilized compromise strategies in their colleges as a means of managing conflict. This is consistent with the findings of Lloyd and Uzhenyu (2017), which discovered that compromises on student sustainability are influenced by the strategy employed. This implies that while compromising conflict management strategies may be unavoidable, they can have a significant impact on the sustainability of secondary school academia.

Furthermore, Muindi, Ndunge, Jonathan, and Joseph (2017) argue that coordinated conflict management compromises can mitigate some negative effects of Principals' turnover. This suggests that compromising dispute management is crucial for effective leadership change, which has a positive impact on academic achievement in colleges. The use of compromise style demonstrates a willingness to sacrifice certain objectives while convincing others to relinquish their own, adopting a "give a little, get a little" approach. This approach can lead to more effective conflict resolution and improved academic outcomes.

The conflict management style under examination reveals that head teachers rarely utilize the avoidance style to resolve conflicts. The mean score for avoidance style in this study was 3.79 out of 5, indicating a moderate level of avoidance. Notably, both Principals and teachers reported a moderately significant relationship between the avoiding style and Academic Achievement. This finding aligns with Saeed, Almas, Anis-ul-Haq, and Niazi (2014) study, which showed that managers infrequently employ the avoidance style.

However, research suggests that the avoidance style is not an effective approach in certain situations. According to Soomro, Saraih, and Ahmad (2023), avoiding conflict is not

suitable when issues are critical to a party, when decisions need to be made, or when swift action is required to address a situation. Moreover, the avoidance style has been linked to negative outcomes, including decreased job satisfaction and increased intentions of personnel turnover (Yildirim, Akan, & Yalçin, 2015).

Therefore, head teachers should refrain from using the avoidance style to resolve school conflicts. This style involves overlooking the problem and failing to understand and address conflicts. While it may be useful in certain situations, such as cooling down a tense situation or preventing trivial issues, it is not an effective long-term solution. In fact, administrations that rely on the evasive style often fail to satisfy both themselves and other parties (Ugbor, Fredrick, & Paul, 2018). Furthermore, research has shown that delaying decision-making can have detrimental effects on academic achievement and increase employee turnover intentions (Noermijati, Sunaryo, & Ratri, 2019).

The least effective approach employed by principals in managing conflict was the competing style, which exhibited a negative correlation with academic achievement in colleges. Leaders who rely heavily on this strategy tend to demonstrate poor leadership qualities, characterized by aggressive, autocratic, confrontational, and intimidating behavior. The competitive style is marked by an attempt to gain power and exert pressure to change at the expense of others, often leading to hostility, unrest, or even violence in the school environment, as noted in Brewer, Mitchell, & Weber (2012) study. This can have a detrimental impact on students' academic achievement due to the resulting institutional chaos.

The competing style is a unreliable and uncooperative approach, primarily focused on winning, as stated by Deligiannidou, Athanailidis, Laios, & Stafyla (2020). It is often employed in situations requiring swift action, unpopular decisions, critical issue management, and self-protection against abuse. While this style enables managers to assert their opinions and feelings through argumentation and discussion, excessive use can lead to a lack of feedback, reduced learning opportunities, and diminished capacity. This, in turn, can negatively impact students' academic performance due to the chaotic environment. The competing style is typically accompanied by constant tension, wrath, and occasional outbursts, creating a toxic atmosphere that hinders effective conflict management and academic success.

Conclusion

Based on the present research findings it can be highlighted that a significant finding of this study was the strong and positive correlation between Principals' conflict management styles and the academic achievement of their colleges. Similarly, teachers also reported a positive relationship between their conflict management styles and students' academic achievements. Notably, the compromising conflict management style had the strongest and most positive relationship with academic achievement, resulting in significantly better academic outcomes compared to other styles.

In contrast, the competing style was found to be the least effective approach for Principals in managing conflict, with a negative correlation between this style and academic achievement. Colleges led by Principals who employed this strategy experienced poor academic performance. The study also revealed a moderately significant relationship between the avoiding style and academic achievement, as reported by both Principals and teachers. However, the compromising conflict management style showed a moderate level of correlation with academic achievement, although teachers reported a weak and insignificant relationship between this style and academic achievement.

The findings of this study have far-reaching implications for the professional development of Principals and teachers, highlighting the crucial role of effective conflict

management in enhancing academic achievement and cultivating a positive school culture. By recognizing the significance of conflict management in educational settings, leaders can take proactive steps to develop their skills and foster a collaborative approach that promotes open communication, mutual respect, and academic excellence.

Recommendations

Based on the results and findings of the study following are the recommendations of the study.

- The compromising conflict management style may be a universally effective approach for resolving disputes in colleges, regardless of district-specific factors, and its application could be beneficial for both principals and staff.
- Principals must exercise caution when employing conflict resolution methods to avoid potential misunderstandings that may lead to leniency and subsequent negative consequences.
- Future research could explore the comparative analysis of conflict management styles employed in public and private sector colleges to gain insight into the relationship between conflict management approaches and academic achievement in private institutions.
- Providing principals with training sessions on conflict management styles could enhance their awareness and understanding of each approach, enabling them to make informed decisions when addressing conflicts.
- A qualitative study could be conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying factors influencing principals' conflict management styles, offering valuable insights into the complexities of conflict resolution in educational settings.

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