CONFLICT MANAGEMENT BETWEEN COLLEGE ADMINISTRATION AND TEACHERS: A QUANTITATIVE CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Conflict management between college administration and teachers is a critical aspect of maintaining a positive work environment and fostering effective relationships within educational institutions. The ability to effectively manage and resolve conflicts is crucial for maintaining a harmonious work environment and promoting positive relationships between college administration and teachers. While conflicts are inevitable, limited researches have specifically focused on this area. Keeping this situation in mind, the present study was carried out to identify the conflict management strategies of college administration with the teachers in private colleges. This study involved 68 respondents from private colleges in Kathmandu Valley, representing college administration staff and teachers. Data were collected using self-administered questionnaire and face-to-face interviews and were analysed using SPSS version 25, including univariate and bivariate analyses. The findings of the study showed that higher educational qualifications, specific departments, and greater experience in the college context are associated with the utilization of effective communication skills, creativity, and motivational strategies in managing conflicts between college administration and teachers. The study also showed that recognizing these factors help administrators and teachers create a collaborative work environment, leading to improved relationships and productivity.

Keyword: Conflict Management, College Administration, Teachers, Private College

Introduction

Conflict, as an inherent aspect of human existence, social systems, and organization, including educational institutions (Thapa, 2016), requires effective management to foster a healthy organizational climate and ensure the effective performance of responsibilities (Institutions & Salleh, 2013). Due to the dynamics and interdependencies among various stakeholders, including teachers, researchers, principals, and staff, the workplace environment (Shitambasi, 2022) often serve as a fertile ground for conflicts to arise (Bano et al., 2013; Callister & Wall, 2001; Folger et al., 2021; Hancks, 2013). Threats to resource availability and demand, which may be genuine or perceived, have a major impact on how conflicts develop in educational settings (Yotonu, 2019). Conflicts between college administration and teachers can negatively impact productivity, job satisfaction (Owan, 2018), and the quality of education, making conflict management essential

for fostering positive outcomes (Ignace, 2014). So, principals and instructors play a role in dispute resolution and management within the educational system (Akanfaba, 2017; Davis, 2021; Kalagbor & Nnokam, 2015).

Conflicts are bound to arise in all human relationships, especially those that take place in organizations (Oboegbulem & Alfa, 2013) because educational institutions are made up of a diverse group of individuals, disputes are unavoidable. Conflict may be damaging if it results in poor communication, strained working relationships, arguments, underwhelming teamwork, and animosity, all of which have an impact on how smoothly an organization runs (Bano et al., 2013; Makaye & Ndofirepi, 2012). However, if conflicts are handled well, benefits may result, fostering cooperation between opposing groups and resolving legitimate interests, which, in turn, strengthens relationships, improves the identification of problems and solutions, increases knowledge and skill, and preserves peace (Ramani & Zhimin, 2010).

Understanding conflict management dynamics between college administration and teachers has both academic and practical significance for educational institutions. The study findings can guide evidence-based interventions, policies, and practices that enhance collaboration, communication, and mutual understanding. Ultimately, this contributes to improving the educational environment, teacher satisfaction, and student success. The problem addressed in this study is the lack of comprehensive understanding and empirical investigation into the dynamics of conflict management between college administration and teachers in private educational institutions. There is a need to identify the sources and nature of conflicts, explore the strategies employed for conflict resolution, and assess their effectiveness in creating a positive work environment. Thus, this study aims to explore conflict sources and dynamics, investigate resolution strategies, and assess their effectiveness in fostering a positive work environment.

Methods

The descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 68 respondents representing staffs of college administration and teachers of private colleges in Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. Self- administered questionnaire was used to collect the data after getting permission from cooperatives and individual consent. The collected data were entered into SPSS version 25 for analysis where univariate and bivariate analyses were done. The internal reliability test was done where Crone Bach Alpha was 77%.

Results

Personal Details. This section presents the age group variation of participants, which have been presented on the following table.

Table 2
Personal Details of the respondents

Characteristics		N=68	Percent (%)
Age of the respondents	22-30	26	38.2
	31-40	21	30.9
	41 and Above	21	30.9
Educational qualification	PhD	7	10.3
	Masters	40	58.8
	Bachelor	14	20.6
	M.Phil.	7	10.3
Department	Teachers	54	79.4
	College Administration	14	20.6
Experience in the college (years)	1-10	47	69.1
	11-20	21	30.9

Table 1 showed that the majority of the respondents i.e., 38.2% were from the age group 22-30 years old, 58.8% had masters level of education, 79.4% were teachers where 69.1% have 1-10 years of experience in the private college.

Causes of Conflicts. There are numerous causes of conflict between college administration and the teachers. The following table presents various causes of conflicts that exist in private schools of Nepal.

Table 3
Causes of Conflicts

Characteristics		N=68	Percent (%)
The major causes of conflicts in the college	Administrative incompetence of Administration	7	3.3
	Misappropriation or Embezzlement of funds	35	16.7
	Indiscipline on the part of students	19	9.1
	Indiscipline on the part of Teachers and administration	14	6.7
	Inferiority or superiority complex	40	19.1
	Poor academic performance	14	6.7
	Favoritism by the school administration	33	15.8
	Inadequate resources	47	22.5
Conflicts experienced with the college	Conflict over image perceptions	7	3.6
	Role conflict	40	20.3
	Conflict over basic values	14	7.1
	Interpersonal conflict	21	10.7
	Structural conflict	21	10.7
	Political conflict	19	9.6
	Decision making	33	16.8
	Communication	28	14.2
	None of the Above	14	7.1

Table 2 showed that the majority of respondents (i.e., 22.5%) complain that the major causes of conflicts in the college is inadequate resources followed by 16.7% who said misappropriation or embezzlement of funds while only 3.3% said administrative incompetence of Administration. Likewise, 20.3% have experienced role conflict in the college followed by 16.8% have experience conflict in decision making while 3.6% have experienced conflict over image perceptions and only 7.1% have not experienced any conflict.

Communication Skills as a Strategy in Conflict Management. Good communication skill is a key strategy in minimizing the conflict between administration staff and the teachers. Under communication skill as strategy to resolve the conflict, six statements were included. The following table presents the results in relation to various aspects of communication skill to reduce the conflict between concerned people.

Table 4
Communication Skills as a Strategy in Conflict Management

Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Strongly Disagree		Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The college administration listens actively to teachers to ensure mutual understanding.	14	20.6	54	79.4	0	0	0	0	0	0
The college administration communicates promptly and on time.	14	20.6	35	51.5	19	27.9	0	0	0	0
The college administration always communicates with clarity.	14	20.6	33	48.5	21	30.9	0	0	0	0
The college administration uses appropriate channel of communication.	21	30.9	28	41.2	19	27.9	0	0	0	0
The college administration ensures confidentiality in communication.	28	41.2	40	58.8	0	0	0	0	0	0
The college administration is assertive in communication.	21	30.9	19	27.9	28	41.2	0	0	0	0

Table 3 showed that the majority of the respondents agree that the college administration listens actively to teachers to ensure mutual understanding (79.4%), college administration communicates promptly and on time (51.5%), college administration always communicates with clarity (48.5%), college administration uses appropriate channel of communication (41.2%), college administration

ensures confidentiality in communication (58.8%) and 41.2% have neutral response on college administration is assertive in communication.

Creativity in Conflict Management. This section presents the role of creativity as an effective strategy of managing conflicts between college staff and teachers existent in private schools of Nepal. The results, on the basis of responses of sampled participants, have been presented on Table 4.

Table 5

Creativity in Conflict Management

Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Strongly Disagree		Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The college administration is flexible and open in dealing with different conflicts.	21	30.9	33	48.5	14	20.6	0	0	0	0
The college administration makes thoughtful choices that support creative choices.	0	0	47	69.1	21	30.9	0	0	0	0
The college administration comes up with diverse ideas quickly.	7	10.3	42	61.8	12	17.6	7	10.3	0	0
The college administration always allow room for alternative ideas from the teachers.	21	30.9	33	48.5	14	20.6	0	0	0	0
The college administration resolves conflict by guiding the teachers.	14	20.6	40	58.8	14	20.6	0	0	0	0
The college administration remains neutral when resolving conflicts.	28	41.2	33	48.5	0	0	0	0	7	10.3
The college administration facilitates information to and between disputing teachers.	7	10.3	49	72.1	5	7.4	0	0	7	10.3
The college administration assures impartiality and neutrality in dealing with conflicts.	14	20.6	19	27.9	35	51.5	0	0	0	0

Table 4 showed that the majority of the respondents agree that the college administration is flexible and open in dealing with different conflicts (48.5%), college administration makes thoughtful choices that support creative choices (69.1%), college administration comes up with diverse ideas quickly (618%), college

administration always allow room for alternative ideas from the teachers (48.5%), college administration resolves conflict by guiding the teachers (58.8%), college administration remains neutral when resolving conflicts (48.5%), college administration facilitates information to and between disputing teachers (72.1%) while 51.5% have neutral response on college administration assures impartiality and neutrality in dealing with conflicts.

Motivational Strategies in Conflict Management. Assuming motivation is one of the key strategies of managing the conflicts between administrative staff and teachers, six different motivational strategies were included in the questionnaire. The responses of the participants have been presented on Table 5.

Table 6

Motivational Strategies in Conflict Management

Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Strongly Disagree		Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The college administration ensures there is effective performance appraisal system.	7	10.3	54	79.4	7	10.3	0	0	0	0
The college administration sensitizes teachers on availability of opportunities for professional development.	7	10.3	47	69.1	14	20.6	0	0	0	0
The college administration develops assessment standards for promotions and rewards to deserving teachers.	14	20.6	26	38.2	28	41.2	0	0	0	0
The college administration ensures that teachers are aware of opportunities to improve their skills and knowledge.	14	20.6	42	61.8	12	17.6	0	0	0	0
There is fairness in access to professional development for teachers.	12	17.6	42	61.8	14	20.6	0	0	0	0
Teachers have the authority to negotiate the various values in order to improve job performance.	7	10.3	54	79.4	0	0	0	0	7	10.3

Table 5 showed that the majority of the respondents agree that the college administration ensures there is effective performance appraisal system (79.4%), college administration sensitizes teachers on availability of opportunities for professional development (69.1%), college administration ensures that teachers are aware of opportunities to improve their skills and knowledge (61.8%), there is fairness in access to professional development for teachers (61.8%), and Teachers have the authority to negotiate the various values in order to improve job performance (79.4)%, while 41.2% have neutral response on college administration develops assessment standards for promotions and rewards to deserving teachers.

Correlation between personal details with Conflict Management. This section presents the bivariate analysis of personal details of the participants and conflict management.

Table 7

Correlation between personal details with Conflict Management

Characteristics	Communication Skills as a Strategy in Conflict Management		Creativity in Conflict Management		Motivational Strategies in Conflict Management	
	Pearson Correlation	Sig.	Pearson Correlation	Sig.	Pearson Correlation	Sig.
Age of the respondents	0.174	0.157	0.314**	0.009	-0.099	0.420
	0.335**	0.005	0.201	0.100	0.540**	0.0001
	0.294*	0.015	0.024	0.848	0.246*	0.043
Educational qualification	0.386**	0.001	0.423**	0.0001	0.596**	0.0001
	0.174	0.157	0.314**	0.009	-0.099	0.420
	0.335**	0.005	0.201	0.100	0.540**	0.0001
	0.294*	0.015	0.024	0.848	0.246*	0.043
Department	0.386**	0.001	0.423**	0.0001	0.596**	0.0001
	0.174	0.157	0.314**	0.009	-0.099	0.420
Experience in the college (years)	0.335**	0.005	0.201	0.100	0.540**	0.0001
	0.294*	0.015	0.024	0.848	0.246*	0.043
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						

Table 6 showed educational qualification, department, and experience in the college (years) have significant relationships with certain conflict management strategies. Higher educational qualification was found to be positively and moderately correlated with communication skills (r = 0.386, p = 0.001), creativity (r = 0.423, p = 0.0001), and strongly correlated with motivational strategies (r = 0.596, p = 0.0001). Department also displayed similar patterns of correlation, with communication skills (r = 0.386, p = 0.001), creativity (r = 0.423, p = 0.0001), and motivational strategies (r = 0.596, p = 0.0001). Moreover, experience in the college exhibited a significant positive correlation with communication skills (r = 0.335, p = 0.005) and motivational strategies (r = 0.540, p = 0.0001).

Discussion

The findings presented valuable insights into conflict management between college administration and teachers. The findings of the present study indicate that the majority of respondents were young adults with a master's level of education, most of whom were teachers with 1-10 years of experience in private colleges. As known, organizations comprise many relationships and groupings that are a significant source of conflict arise (Bano et al., 2013; Callister & Wall, 2001; Folger et al., 2021; Hancks, 2013). The study also finds some major cause of conflicts such as inadequate resource, misappropriation of funds and administrative incompetence. Similar studies has shown that lack of resources, including money and infrastructure, as well as a heavy workload and management unhappiness as some of the causes of conflicts (Salleh, 2013; Uchendu et al., 2013). Conflicts in educational environments are strongly influenced by actual or perceived threats to the availability and demand of resources (Yotonu, 2019).

The findings also demonstrate positive perceptions of the college administration's active listening, timely and clear communication, and ensuring confidentiality play key role to minimize the conflicts with the teachers. Moreover, the findings suggest that the college administration is perceived as flexible, supportive of creativity, impartial in resolving conflicts, and is believed to provide an effective performance appraisal system, opportunities for professional development, and fairness in access to such opportunities. Organizational conflict can be caused by departments having different working principles and cultures from one another (Ilgan, 2020); nevertheless, on occasion, disagreements have been resolved fairly and justly (Roche *et al.*, 2014). Emotionally intelligent teachers prioritize integration and commitment strategies for conflict management in the classroom, while minimizing the use of consent, avoidance, and domination strategies (Valente and Lourenço, 2020).

The findings of the present study reveal significant relationships between educational qualification, department, experience in the college, and conflict

management strategies, emphasizing the importance of these factors in shaping communication skills, creativity, and motivational strategies. It is crucial to understand that different conflict management strategies may be more appropriate in some situations than others to manage conflict effectively (Rahim, 2002; Aliasgari and Farzadnia, 2012). A strategy is considered appropriate if using it results in the formulation or resolution of the conflict in an effective manner (Valente *et al.*, 2020). These findings take a broad view on the importance of effective conflict management practices and their relationship to various characteristics within the college setting, highlighting the need for tailored interventions and policies to promote a positive work environment.

Conclusion

The present study adopted quantitative cross-sectional study to examine conflict management strategies to minimize the conflicts and misunderstanding between college administration and teachers. The educational qualifications, departments, and experience in the college were found to be positively correlated with effective communication skills, creativity, and motivational strategies in conflict management. These results emphasize the importance of considering these factors when developing conflict resolution interventions within educational institutions. By recognizing the impact of these characteristics on conflict management, administrators and teachers can work towards creating a more harmonious work environment that promotes collaboration, effective communication, and creative problem-solving. Implementing strategies that leverage these findings may contribute to improved relationships and enhanced productivity between college administration and teachers, ultimately benefiting the overall quality of education provided. Future research could delve deeper into these relationships and explore additional factors that influence conflict management in the college setting.

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