

## **A Comparative Study of Public and Private Sector Universities about Nature Causes of conflicts, and Role of Academic Personnel**

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Conflict management is dealing with the resolution of conflicts among employees and between employees and institutions. In educational institutions, conflict resolution among students, between students and faculties and with institutions has negative impacts on the academic environment and overall performances of the institutions. Therefore, this study was designed to investigate the causes, nature and role of personnel in conflict resolution. Furthermore, an attempt was made to compare the public and private sectors universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from the perspectives of conflicts resolution. For this purpose data were collected from ten (10) universities through a Self-developed questionnaire. A quantitative research design was adopted and data were collected from Master students, teaching faculty, director academics and HODs of the selected department. The collected data were put into SPSS 21 version and standard deviation and t-test were utilized for analysis of data. Findings show that private sector universities have got more accurate disciplinary committees for the identification of students' conflicts. Similarly, they very aptly resolve their internal conflicts.

**Keywords:** *conflict; conflict resolution strategies; social skills; academic personnel*

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### **Introduction**

Educational institutions like other institutions are dependent on its human resources, and the presence of human beings in an organization is the essence of conflicts and discrepancies in institutions (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2014). These conflicts are of different nature, and thus different reasons are responsible for these conflicts (Bar-Tal, 2007). Sometimes these conflicts get started with power and authoritative dimensions of the institutions, while some other times these are because of external pressure, out-dated and un-realistic institutional rules and regulations (Novelli, & Cardozo, 2008) and institutional leadership always strives for the smooth running of institutional activities in a coordinative and logical manner (Wittmer, Rauschmayer, & Klauer, 2006). The efforts which are made for the solution of a problem are called conflict resolution process. For successful conflict resolution process, it is obligatory that requirements and benefits of the involved groups be

realized in a harmonious and equitable manner that the parties get satisfaction from the results of the decision made during conflict resolution process (Weaver, 2003).

Conflict resolution is a systematic method that deals with strong views to visit the rival groups and generate peace procedure in individuals or groups; and to end the aggravation and vehemence and even brutality from parties against each other (Wallenstein, 2007). Furthermore, conflict resolution is a stage of change at a national and international level in the fields of politics, economy, institutions, personal and groups. It is a multi-dimensional procedure of development and the range is so vast that is stretched from family to international level (Datzberger, 2014).

Conflict resolution is the finishing of aggressive behaviour, removal of hostile feelings and tendency to change the conflictual situation into peaceful co-existence (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall, 2005). Similarly, it is the fruitful

resolution of conflicts and satisfaction for parties, establishing strong relationships and mental preparation of opponents for future safety to finish the visibility of in the coming time (Johnson, & Johnson, 2005). Conflict resolution deals with steps and measures which are taken for the removal of the masterminds and of conflict and make certain the favourable acceptance to all concerned. It is stated that conflict resolution strategies bring deep change in understanding which cannot be achieved at certain realities-win-win game or win-lose game (Ramsbotham, Miall, & Woodhouse, 2011).

Conflict resolution is an analytical approach to the reasons and changes conflicts for efficient and deep understanding and making certain the peace procedure. There are dissimilar approaches to the goals and practices of conflict resolution. Currently, the notion of change becomes the focal point of negotiation and discourses within conflict resolution to eradicate the symbolic symptoms of conflicts (Fischer & Roper, 2003; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall, 2005; Bloomfield, Fischer & Schmelzle, 2006).

### **Rationale of the Study**

There different type of universities, having a different kind of academic personnel, reflecting a different from the type of mechanism for resolving the conflicts teaching faculties and students. In Pakistan universities are classified into two main categories 1) public and 2) private. The role of academic personnel is different as the nature of administration is different in both types of these universities. Therefore, it was important to investigate that whether public or private sector universities' academic personnel role is more authentic and effective in resolving the conflicts?

### **Statements of the Problem**

Keeping in view the above discussion this study intends to investigate the role of academic personnel in resolving conflicts in public and privative sector universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

### **Objective of the Study**

The following were the objectives of the study;

1. To identify differences between public and private universities respondents' views regarding the nature and causes of students' conflicts in universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
2. To identify differences between public and private universities respondents' views regarding academic personnel' strategies in universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
3. To identify differences between public and private universities respondents' views regarding the role of academic personnel in resolving students' conflicts in universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

### **Research Questions**

This study addressed the following research questions;

1. Is there a significant difference among the opinions of different categories of respondents of public and private universities regarding the nature of conflicts among university students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa?
2. Is there a significant difference among the opinions of different categories of respondents of public and private universities regarding the causes of conflicts among university students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa?
3. Is there a significant difference among the opinions of different categories of respondents of public and private universities regarding the strategies in resolving conflicts among university students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa?

4. Is there a significant difference among the opinions of different categories of respondents of public and private universities regarding the role of academic personnel in resolving conflicts among university students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa?

### Review of Related Literature

Conflict resolution skills and techniques are the fundamental supports of peace education for it takes to apparent the approval of conflict organization (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). The skills and techniques prepare the young generation to get expertise and adopt best strategies to meet the issues in their coming life. These skills are a defence against conflicts, fair dealings with others, reciprocated give and take policy, intercession, negotiation, mediation, intercession, intrusion, rage control and looking for fair justice. These skills are used in pre-conflict humanitarian education (Davies, 2005).

Davidson and Wood (2004) proposed a model concerning conflict resolution in Australia. This model has four components- the first component is to form the estimation and prediction to construct ideas on the base of cooperation and compromise that is considered the best remedy to resolve conflicts; secondly, to demarcate the drives and intentions of each party or group; thirdly, to record the mind map for original picks and varieties and lastly, to merge the picks into gain-gain resolution. Conflict resolution techniques are fundamentally the strategies to resolve the issues with the help of practical negotiation, positive thoughts and collaborative determinations. It has the strength to resolve the matter in a peaceful manner. These resolving tactics are significant in eye-catching issues. The following assumptions are laid by these devices (Jones, 2004; Coleman & Fischer-Yoshida, 2004).

- a. Admit the reality that life and conflicts are integral parts of each other.

- b. The better the experience of conflict detection, the better the formation of a framework for its solution.
- c. The better the tendency to the other party, the better to promote a program in this facet.
- d. The better inclination to stresses and needs, the better will be the solution.
- e. To bring emotions of others in proper order for the peaceful and non-aggressive way.
- f. The acceptance of an issue in a shared way and to break and then to solve the issue with collective efforts and positive negotiation by including a third party for the accurate and acceptable solution to the conflict.
- g. The mindset of the individual/group/party may be challenged and made clear for a fruitful solution (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2013).

There are some socio-psychological skills. Self-education, feeling for fellow beings and good decision-making make sure solid ground for conflict resolution. Revisiting and refining of social constructs towards conflicts is the need for shapeless and mysterious issues. The utilization of these skills and tactics are very necessary for resolving conflicts (Halperin, 2014). Similarly, cognitive –behavioural techniques are the vital remedy for rage and brutality in youth. The program founded on socio-cognitive strategies concentrated on perception, skills for the solution of problems and conflicts. It brings drastic changes in problem-solving in the domain of ethical, social and moral circles and is shaped in the light of the mental level of young people targeted for the program (Boxer et al, 2005).

There are several factors and reasons for the creation of conflict and social strain. There are many dimensions and approaches to conflicts. There are five dimensions of conflicts. These five parameters deal with structure, instruments, interests, values and personal expression. These factors make the

availability of chances to meet divergent situational challenges. All the dimensional components of conflict are directly or indirectly related (Vestergaard, Helvard & Sorenson, 2011). Furthermore, Conflict resolution procedures comprise every level of the social setup. It needs a wide spectrum of representatives for its implementation and understanding. There are external factors and actors which play a key role. Despite external forces, there are internal factors and players which assist the conflict resolution process. The main purpose of conflict resolution is to produce a positive environment for the self-reliance and durable peace and to prevent the disputes from occurring again. This will lead to the end of aggression and annihilation between/among groups. The congenial atmosphere produced by the conflict resolution process has structural, relational and personal dimensions (Schilling, 2012).

#### ***Structural Dimension***

Numerous factors are present in structural dimension. The central factors are social, financial, political and traditional that cause heated and violent conflicts. Disputes have severe starting and with a passage of time become more and more complicated and intricate. All types of disputes should be settled down for the satisfaction of the people which bring happiness not only for the quarrelling parties but also for the arbitration party. The panacea for these conflicts is the analytical approach for true assessment of the structural means because these develop the conflicts and bring structural change in the social atmosphere (Schilling, 2012).

#### ***Relational Dimension***

The establishment of the strong relationship, horizontal interaction and positive attitude restrict the opposing results which the central point of structural dimension. It emphasizes on negotiations, leniency and tolerance and to bring self-confidence edifice in contacts. Proper communication and efficient connections play a significant role in conflict

resolution. The role of dialogue cannot be ignored in conflict resolution. Perceptions are developed through dialogue, which further increases understanding and awareness; and guarantees resolving conflicts. Dialogue is future-oriented and leads the process towards reconciliation which acknowledges common non-violent futures and previous misdeeds and abnormalities (Schilling, 2012).

#### ***Personal Dimension***

It needs alternation at the individual level and individuals are considered responsible. They are responsible for the restoration of social, economic, political, cultural, traditional aspects of life. The annihilated social structure due to severe conflicts is reconstructed again and for this emotional and psychological consideration is very essential. Aggression is followed by weakness, threat, powerlessness and vulnerability, therefore strong consideration is necessary for controlling aggression and violent attitude of the individuals.

#### ***Organisational Dimension***

Organizational dimensions relate to the structure of the organization. Many factors like the institutional structure, proprietorship, and lawgiving affect the organizational dimension. These do not directly deal with to resolve the issue in a straight manner between or among individuals or groups. The factors are future-oriented and only highlight the issues for the abrupt stoppage and future solution of the conflicts. They really influence the decision-making process from the grass root level and veneration is given to the most respectable persons and catches their outlooks and ideas to reach to the better solution of the conflict in time (Mayor, 2000).

#### ***Dimensional Approaches***

The use of different approaches to the solution of conflicts has a paramount importance. The best method in this respect is argumentation and group discussion to reach to the solid and acceptable solution of the problem.

Consultation is the best instrument for a better solution. Understanding of the opinion of the opposing individuals or parties is one of the best tools to resolve the conflicts (Tschirgi, 2011).

#### ***Dimension Based On Interests***

Physical resources are the main concentration of this dimension. Affluence, time spans and space; influence and power; water, territory and natural resources are the divergent aspects that become the cause of conflict. When there is a need of interest aspect to be talked, the adoption of suitable approach is required for reconciliation to reach to a fruitful accord on the basis of the equal distribution of resources and reduction of conflict (Tschirgi, 2011).

#### ***Dimension of Standards/Values***

The most important and basic constructs of society are values, standards and principles. Values are several and some of them are permanent and some are transitory. Among these values, personal, cultural, ethical, moral, religious, aesthetic, economic and political are very prominent. It is a reality that these values are the reasons for disagreements, clashes and conflict in society (Vesterguard, Helvard, & Serensen, 2011). These values and standards bring demarcation between two extremes. The appearances of most of the conflicts are due to personal aspects or value aspects and these are constant. It is very important to understand deeply the values, standards and philosophies of other individual or group for the reduction of tension between or among the parties or individuals or groups. Negotiations, discourses, discussion, approving investigations, mediations and constructive communication are the most vital methods and procedures to resolve conflict on the basis of values (Tschirgi, 2011).

#### ***Behavioural Dimension***

Individual behaviour causes many conflicts. Several conflicts are originated by personal dimension. Worries, fears, concerns, apprehensions, intense feelings, qualms, uncertainties and deep anxieties of

individuals originate conflicts. Personal dimension includes adverse reaction, fidelity, renunciation, credibility, self-esteem and other components like the sense of worth. The methods used for resolving conflicts are an optimistic and solid discussion, negotiation, proper analysis of matter and constructive investigation and other such techniques are useful in personal dimension (Vestergaard, Helvard & Sorenson, 2011).

#### ***Conflict Resolution Techniques/Skills***

Conflict resolution skills and techniques are the fundamental supports of peace education for it takes to apparent the approval of conflict organization (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). The skills and techniques prepare the young generation to get expertise and adopt best strategies to meet the issues in their coming life. These skills are a defence against conflicts, fair dealings with others, reciprocated give and take policy, intercession, negotiation, mediation, intercession, intrusion, rage control and looking for fair justice. These skills are used in pre-conflict humanitarian education (Davies, 2005).

#### ***Methods and Procedures***

##### ***Population***

There are Twenty-eight (28) universities, including Nineteen (19) Public and Nine (09) Private sector universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa-Pakistan which constituted the population of this study. All the academic personnel (Director Academics, Deans of Science and Arts, Chairperson, Assistant professors, lecturers and students) of these universities constituted the population of this study.

##### ***Sampling***

A Sample of Ten (10) universities, five (05) each from Public and Private Sector Universities were selected randomly. Multistage-Purposive sampling methods were used for the selection of Directors academics, Deans of science and art, chairpersons/ HODs and random sampling techniques were employed for the selection of assistant professors, lecturers and students of Bachelor and Master. A

sample of 580 respondents was selected through multistage- purposive and random sampling techniques from the universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa-Pakistan for the study. From ten selected Universities, Director Academic, Dean of Science and Dean of Arts were selected using identical sampling method while, five Directors/ Chairmen from respective Departments, ten Assistant Professors, ten Lecturers, fifteen Bachelors and fifteen Masters Students were selected randomly. In this way, from each University the size of the sample was fifty-eight and total sample size was five hundred and eighty (580).

**Data Collection Instrument**

The mentioned sample groups of the study were investigated through a self-developed questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed keeping in view the available literature and personal experiences of the authors. Furthermore, this was a self-developed questionnaire, reflecting the nature and causes of conflicts in universities. Similarly, there were items reflecting the major conflicting resolution strategies and the role of academic personnel in the resolution of conflicts occurs at the university level.

The questionnaire was pilot tested

**Table 1**

*Respondents' views on the nature of conflicts in public and private sector universities*

University category	N	Mean	SD	T	P	Cohen's d
Public	290	3.78	0.55			0.32
Private	290	3.96	0.57	-3.85	0.00	
Overall	580					

Table 1 depicts a significant difference between the views of the respondents from public and private universities respondents at point 0.05 level of significance with t value=-3.85 and p-value=0.00. It can be further depicted that the respondents of private universities are significantly more

for the purpose of reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was .79, reflecting an acceptable range of reliability in social sciences, while for content validity the instrument, along with objectives of the study were discussed with three senior faculty members working from the last fifteen years. The recommended changes were incorporated in the questionnaire and finally, the data were collected from the respondents of the study.

**Analysis of Data**

To analyze the data statistically, the data were placed in SPSS version 21. Descriptive statistics which were; mean, and the standard deviation were used to describe the trends in the data. Furthermore, through inferential statistics public and private universities comparison were calculated while using t-test. And the effect size was calculated through Cohen's d calculator. Independent samples t-test was used to find mean difference across groups along with effect size to find the strength of the mean difference through Cohen's d. The obtained results were tabulated and interpreted separately.

**Results**

agreed on statements regarding the nature of conflicts among university students as compared to the respondents of public sector universities with effect size=0.32 which reflects a small effect size between the two groups.

**Table 2**

*Respondents' views on the causes of conflicts in public and private sector universities*

University category	N	Mean	SD	T	P	Cohen's d
Public	290	3.95	0.51			
Private	290	4.00	0.53	-1.22	0.22	0.09
Overall	580					

Table 2 depicts that there is a significant difference between the views of the public and private universities at point 0.05 level of significance with t value=-1.22 and p-value=0.22. It can be further depicted that the respondents of private universities are

significantly more agreed on statements regarding the nature of conflicts among university students as compared to the respondents of public sector universities with effect size=0.09 which is not significant.

**Table 3**

*Comparison regarding conflict resolution strategies in public and private sector universities*

University category	N	Mean	SD	T	P	Cohen's d
Public	290	3.61	0.51			
Private	290	3.86	0.57	-5.53	0.00	0.46
Overall	580					

Table 3 depicts that there is a significant difference between the views of the public and private universities respondents at point 0.05 level of significance with t value=-5.53 and p-value=0.00. It can be further depicted that the respondents of

private universities are significantly more agreed on statements regarding the nature of conflicts among university students as compare to the respondents of public sector universities with effect size=0.46.

**Table 4**

*Comparison regarding role of academic personnel in conflict in public and private sector universities*

University category	N	Mean	SD	T	P	Cohen's d
Public	290	3.64	0.55			
Private	290	3.82	0.57	-3.75	0.00	0.32
Overall	580					

Table 4 depicts that there is a significant difference between the views of the public and private universities respondents at point 0.05 level of significance with t value=-3.75 and p-value=0.00. It can be further depicted that the respondents of

private universities are significantly more agreed on statements regarding the nature of conflicts among university students as compare to the respondents of public sector universities with effect size=0.32

## Findings

The following were the findings of the study:

1. There was a significant difference ( $t=3.85$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) between public and private sector universities on the nature of conflict among students at universities. Private sector universities are clearer on the nature of students' conflicts at university level than public sector universities. (Table 1)
2. There was a significant difference ( $t=1.22$ ,  $p=0.022$ ) between public and private sector universities on the causes of conflict among students at universities. Private sector universities are clearer on the causes of conflicts of students at university level than public sector universities. (Table 2)
3. There was a significant difference ( $t=5.53$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) between public and private sector universities on the approaches and strategies for resolving conflicts among students in universities. Private sector universities are clearer on the appropriate approaches/strategies on conflicts resolution of students at university level than public sector universities. (Table 3)
4. There was a significant difference ( $t=3.75$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) between public and private sector universities on the approaches and strategies for resolution of conflict among students at universities. It can be further depicted that the respondents of private universities are significantly more agreed on statements regarding the nature of conflicts among university students than the respondents of public sector universities (Table 4)

## Discussions

Conflicts among students and faculty need to be resolved by the concerned authorities in public and private sector universities. There are proper mechanisms for the resolution of these conflicts. These results are supported by the study of (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2013) who was of the opinion

the institutions to clarify the nature of conflicts and its stakeholders and therefore, they also define the nature of the conflicts and its contrivance of the solution. Furthermore, in Pakistan, the office of chief proctor along with its protocol board is working under the rule and regulations of university statutes. From the perspectives of causes of conflicts in public and private sector universities, the findings of this study revealed that authorities of private sector universities are clearer than the public sector. Novelli, and Cardozo (2008) there are different causes of conflicts which are important to be understood as the solution of these conflicts can be effectively traced in the cause of conflicts. Furthermore, Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2005) concluded that it is important to remove the causes of conflict than the conflict directly which will reduce the future perspective of the conflict.

Experts in the field of conflict management are agreed that same strategy may not be effective for all the times and therefore they recommended different strategies of conflict resolution (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2014; Datzberger, 2014; Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2013). Laconically, it is important to analyse the nature of the conflict from every aspect and to adopt the most appropriate strategy for its solution.

## Recommendations

Keeping in view the conclusion of the study the following recommendations are made;

1. Findings show that private sector universities have got a more clear idea about the nature of conflicts. It is suggested that public sector universities may frame committees for the identification of different kinds of conflicts.
2. Similarly, the universities in public sector universities may have a serious look at the causes of conflicts and they should adopt approaches which may



help in mitigating these conflicts among students.

3. It was found that private sector universities were clearer about nature, causes and strategies adopted for resolution of students' conflicts. The reason might be their disciplinary committees' role and the size of the staff and students' strength.
4. It is suggested that the staff/academic personnel of public sector universities may be trained in resolving students' conflicts. Furthermore, future researchers are recommended to investigate the impact of conflicts on the overall performances of universities. They are also recommended to investigate the satisfaction level of the stakeholders on from the perspectives of conflict resolution mechanisms of universities.

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