



Original Article

Conflict Management Strategies of Nurses Distributed according to the Age and Length of Time in Position

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ABSTRACT

Healthcare worker conflict has been identified as a global issue in healthcare settings.

Objectives: To find how do conflict management strategies rank when distributed according to the selected demographic variables of (a) age or (b) length of time in position? **Methods:** This study's methodology was a descriptive cross-sectional study. The investigation was carried out at the King Edward Medical College-affiliated Mayo Hospital in Lahore. Using a 6% margin of error and a 95% confidence range, a sample size of 122 cases was estimated. The nurses' information was gathered using a random sample procedure. SPSS V.21 was used to analyze the data, and descriptive statistics were used. **Results:** For the age category of 21-35 years (15 subjects or 25%), the most frequently utilized strategy was compromising. This strategy was followed by avoiding, accommodating, collaborating, and competing. The strategy of avoiding was the most frequently utilized behavior in all categories except the category of time in position of less than 1 year when considering length of time in nursing position. **Conclusions:** In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of considering age and length of time in nursing position when analyzing conflict management strategies used by nurses in hospital settings. For the age category of 21-35 years, the most common strategy was compromising, followed by avoiding, accommodating, collaborating, and competing. However, the strategy of avoiding was the most frequently utilized behavior in all categories except for those with less than one year of experience.

INTRODUCTION

According to research, staff conflict is a prevalent problem in healthcare settings worldwide, with personal differences, unclear work descriptions and tasks, role incompatibility, high stress levels, a lack of resources, and uncertain employment being the most common causes of conflict within healthcare facilities [1]. Interpersonal conflict among healthcare workers has been found to have a negative impact on stress levels, job satisfaction, and team efficacy [2], resulting in increased absenteeism and high staff turnover [3]. Additionally, effective cooperation among healthcare professionals is critical for ensuring the quality of health services delivered and the implementation of quality-improving techniques [4]. Conflict is defined as genuine or imagined conflicts

between individuals with differing beliefs, values, or objectives, and is a process that begins when someone feels compelled, senses obstruction from the other, and begins to oppose [5]. The nursing profession has undergone significant transformations since the mid-19th century, with the field of nursing knowledge expanding and the roles of nurse manager and head nurse evolving in response to developments and needs in the health sector [6]. Conflict management is essential for all nurses, regardless of their position, to maintain quality patient care [7]. With changes in the care model and a move away from dominant medical models and vertical power structures, communication, interpersonal interactions, and management training have become increasingly critical for

nurses' effectiveness and credibility [8]. As a result, managerial abilities and leadership have become essential for success in the employment market, as they contribute to how well nurses function in these changing work environments [9]. There are five types of conflict resolution behavior in management theory: competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance, and accommodation [10]. Assertion and cooperation are the intentions that determine the conflict management strategy used, with assertion referring to an attempt to confront the other party and cooperation referring to an attempt to find a workable solution [11]. Nurse managers have a significant impact on nursing staff, other healthcare team members, and patient care, based on their leadership and conflict resolution abilities [12]. Learning conflict communication competencies is essential for all roles, and coaching is an effective leadership intervention that nurse managers can use to increase staff nurses' desire to remain on the job and employ effective dispute resolution techniques [13]. Nurse leaders face numerous organizational-culture issues that impact team dynamics, retention, and work satisfaction, such as generational factors, cultural, racial, and belief variations, variations in practice, and different levels of nursing education and training [14]. In light of patient experience, health outcomes, regulatory compliance, and reimbursement, it is also critical to consider the impact of corporate culture on patient care [15]. Conflict is inevitable in all human relationships and organizations, and healthcare organizations must have goals and targets in place to raise the standard of patient care. Nurses, as the primary frontline staff engaging with patients, must learn to settle conflict effectively to deliver high-quality patient care and achieve financial success [16, 17]. However, nurses often face challenging circumstances that negatively impact their ability to provide high-quality patient care [18], making it critical to support those who struggle with conflict management to maintain high-quality patient care [19]. Thus, this study aimed to assess the impact of a conflict management program on the standard of patient care. The question addressed was: How do conflict management strategies rank when distributed according to the selected demographic variables of (a) age or (b) length of time in position?

METHODS

This study used a descriptive cross-sectional design and was conducted at Mayo Hospital in Lahore, a large public hospital with a population of 1500 nurses. A sample size of 122 cases was chosen using a random sampling method with inclusion criteria of registered female nurses aged 20-50 with at least one year of experience and a diploma. Data

were gathered using a self-administered questionnaire consisting of two sections, one for socio-demographic characteristics and one for conflict management tools. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data using SPSS V.21, including frequencies, percentages, median, mean, and standard deviation. The Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests were used to assess normality distribution.

RESULTS

Figure 1 shows demographic characteristics of participants. 45 nurses were of age 25-30 years, 40% of nurses were in range 31-35 years and 22 nurses were in range 36-40 years. 37 were single, 83 were married, 1 was divorced and 1 was widow. 24 nurses had job experience of 1 year, 31 nurses had 2-5 years of job experience and 67 nurses had greater than 5 years of experience. 11 nurses had master degree, 36 had generic BSN, 21 had post RN and 54 had diploma of nursing.

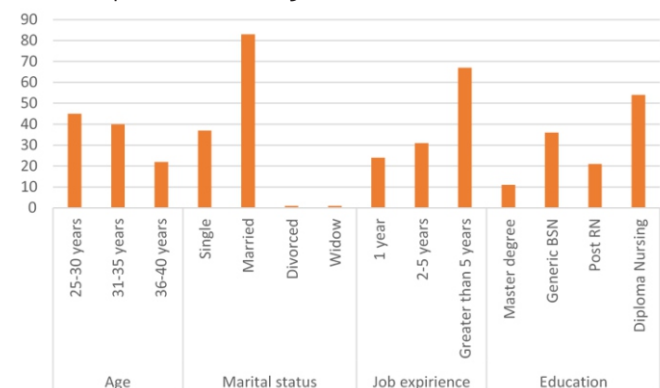


Figure 1: Demographic characteristic of participants

The research question was: How do conflict management strategies rank when distributed according to the selected demographic variables of (a) age or (b) length of time in position? Conflict management strategy mean scores were determined for each of the categories of the selected variables. These mean scores were rank ordered from 1 to 5 with the most frequently utilized strategy ranked as 1. These data were used to answer this research question. A comparison of the conflict management strategy mean scores according to age categories revealed differences among strategies which are utilized most frequently. For the age category of 21-35 years (15 subjects or 25%), the most frequently utilized strategy was compromising. This strategy was followed by avoiding, accommodating, collaborating, and competing. For subjects in the age categories of 36-50 years (34 subjects or 56.67%) and 51-65 years (11 subjects or 18.33%), the most frequently utilized strategy was avoiding which was followed by accommodating, compromising, collaborating, and competing. The conflict management strategies of

collaborating and competing as number four and five, respectively, remained consistent across all age categories (Table 1).

Age	Rank order	Mean Score
25-30 year (N= 55)	1. Compromising	7.73
	2. Avoiding	7.53
	3. Accommodating	7.13
	4. Collaborating	4.80
	5. Competing	2.80
31-35 year (N= 45)	1. Avoiding	8.21
	2. Accommodating	7.21
	3. Compromising	7.00
	4. Collaborating	5.80
	5. Competing	2.58
36-40 year (N= 22)	1. Avoiding	8.36
	2. Accommodating	7.09
	3. Compromising	6.55
	4. Collaborating	5.09
	5. Competing	2.91

Table 1: Rank order and mean scores of strategies according to age

Comparison of the subjects' conflict management strategy mean scores according to length of time in nursing position revealed differences in frequency of occurrence of the five strategies. The strategy of avoiding was the most frequently utilized behavior in all categories except the category of time in position of less than 1 year. Subjects who reported less than 1 year as length of time in position utilized the strategy of compromising most frequently. Rank order and mean scores for the five strategies according to length of time in position are presented in Table 2.

Experience	Rank order	Mean Score
Less than 1 year (N= 24)	1. Compromising	8.73
	2. Avoiding	8.00
	3. Accommodating	7.00
	4. Collaborating	4.00
	5. Competing	2.88
1 year - 5 years (N= 31)	1. Avoiding	8.04
	2. Compromising	7.46
	3. Accommodating	6.77
	4. Collaborating	5.00
	5. Competing	2.73
Greater than 5 years (N= 67)	1. Avoiding	7.44
	2. Accommodating	7.25
	3. Compromising	6.75
	4. Collaborating	5.69
	5. Competing	2.87

Table 2: Rank Order and Mean Scores of Conflict Management Strategies According to Length of Time in Nursing Position

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to investigate the ranking of conflict management strategies based on selected

demographic variables, namely age and length of time in position, among nurses working at Mayo Hospital in Lahore. The study was conducted using a descriptive cross-sectional design and a sample of 122 nurses was chosen using a random sampling method. The study found that compromising was the most frequently used conflict management strategy among nurses aged 21-35 years, followed by avoiding, accommodating, collaborating, and competing. On the other hand, avoiding was the most frequently used strategy among all other age groups and length of time in nursing position categories. This study's findings are consistent with the results of previous research that has investigated conflict management strategies used by healthcare workers. For instance, a study by Needham et al., (2005) found that avoiding was the most frequently used conflict management strategy among nurses [20]. Similarly, another study by Tuncay et al., (2018) reported that avoiding was the most commonly used strategy among Turkish nurses. These findings suggest that avoiding is a prevalent conflict management strategy among healthcare workers, regardless of their cultural or geographical background. However, the current study's finding that compromising was the most frequently used strategy among nurses aged 21-35 years is somewhat different from the results of previous research. For instance, a study by Chan et al., (2014) found that collaborating was the most frequently used conflict management strategy among nurses in Hong Kong. Similarly, a study by Baddar et al., (2016) reported that collaborating was the most commonly used strategy among nurses in Saudi Arabia [11]. These findings suggest that cultural and societal factors may influence the choice of conflict management strategies used by healthcare workers. The current study's findings are limited by its small sample size and the fact that it was conducted in a single hospital in Lahore. Therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing the results to other healthcare settings or populations. Future research should investigate the factors that influence the choice of conflict management strategies used by healthcare workers, including cultural and societal factors, as well as individual and organizational factors.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of considering age and length of time in nursing position when analyzing conflict management strategies used by nurses in hospital settings. For the age category of 21-35 years, the most common strategy was compromising, followed by avoiding, accommodating, collaborating, and competing. However, the strategy of avoiding was the most frequently utilized behavior in all categories except for those with less

than one year of experience. These findings provide valuable information for healthcare organizations in developing conflict management training programs tailored to different age groups and levels of experience.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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