The Hashemite University Students' Preferred Conflict Resolution Styles and Their Relation to Students' Sex, Grade Point Average and Faculty

Yazid Isa Alshoraty[1]

[1] Faculty of Educational Sciences, The Hashemite University, Jordan

Correspondence: Yazid Isa Alshoraty, Department of Educational Foundations and Administration, Faculty of Educational Sciences, The Hashemite University, Jordan.

Abstract

The study aimed at identifying students' preferred conflict resolution styles and their relation to students' sex, grade point average and faculty at The Hashemite University in Jordan. The descriptive method was used. The data of the study were collected through a questionnaire. The sample of the study consisted of 360 students. The results showed that students used cooperation, compromise, and avoiding respectively in a high degree respectively. Also, the results revealed that there were no statistically significant differences in students' preferred conflict resolution styles due to their sex, grade point average and faculty. In light of the study results, the researcher recommended providing educational programs to students focusing on skills such as tolerance, critical thinking, teamwork, communication, negotiation, dialogue, decision making, problem solving, and resilience to reduce the possibility for their resort to (forcing) as a preferred conflict resolution style.

Keywords: conflict resolution styles, The Hashemite University students, Jordan

1. Introduction

Conflict is a natural unavoidable human phenomenon and activity that represents a situation in which the concerns of two or more individuals are incompatible, and which occurs when individuals or groups think that others prevent them from achieving their goals (Lather, Jain, & Shukla, 2011), or when needs and desires of two individuals or parties contradict, or when parties do not get what they want (Khanaki & Hassanzadeh, 2010). Conflict may result from incompatible interests, needs, desires and goals, or from a struggle over values or claims to status, power and scare sources. Conflict usually involves disagreement, distortions, inconsistencies, enmity, hatred and differences leading to cruelty, inhumanity, violence, or war (Oboegbulem & Alfa, 2013). Among the sources of conflicts are: Scare sources, interdependent and different activities, communication problems, differences in perceptions and attitudes, individual differences, preferences and nuisances, values, beliefs, and the nature of relationship between the parties (Ghaffar, 2010).

In order to avoid tensions and stresses caused by conflicts, reaching proper resolutions is inevitable (Khanaki & Hassanzadeh, 2010). The way conflict is dealt with affects its nature: Beneficial or destructive. If not managed properly, conflict can result in bad feelings, high turnover and costly litigation, but, if properly managed, it can enhance individuals' innovativeness and productivity (Lather, Jain, & Shukla, 2011).

According to Yu and Chen (2008), Khanak and Hassanzadeh (2010), Kim and Meyers (2012) and Ciuladiene and Kairiene (2017), conflict resolution styles were classified, based on two main dimensions: Concern for self and concern for others, into the following ones:

-Cooperation: It is a win–win approach that involves achieving an integrative solution that meets both parties' needs, and enables each party to show respect to the ideas and values of the opposite side. It represents a high level of concern for self and for the other.

-Accommodating: It is a form of selfless generosity and altruism which involves satisfying the needs and interests of the other party and sacrificing one's own needs and interests. Its essence is the individual's negligence of his/her own goals, needs and desires and concerns for the other party's satisfaction. It represents cooperativeness and a low level of concern for self, and a high level of concern for the other and aims at protecting relationships.

-Forcing: It is an uncooperative strategy that represents high level of assertiveness and stresses achieving one's own needs through, competition, selfishness, and, in some cases, violence and force.

-Avoiding: It is an uncooperative, ineffective, passive and inappropriate approach which represents a low level of concern for self and for the other; and may involve neglecting, evading, delaying, or denying conflict.

-Compromise: It is a lose -lose approach that involves partially meeting each side's needs, requires that each side should make some concessions to reach a mutual integrative solution, and characterized by moderate degrees of concern for self and for the other and seen as moderately direct, cooperative, effective and appropriate

1.1 Study Problem

According to Al-Jundi (2014), from 2010–2013, there were 296 fights on Jordanian universities' campuses, in which 3999 students were involved, and which led to 7 fatalities, 193 injuries, and heavy property losses. The results of a study conducted by Al-Badayna, Altarawneh, Alothman, and Abu Hassan (2008) showed that two thirds of a sample of Jordanian universities' students believed that university students' violence was a dangerous social problem on which research should concentrate. The spread of student violence on some campuses of Jordanian universities is an academic, social and moral failure. Many university students' fights were triggered by trivial causes, but the wrong methods of dealing with them turned them into dangerous violence. So, exploring the conflict resolution styles employed by students is a real need because a possible relation between university violence and the styles and strategies used by students to handle conflicts may exist. This study represents an attempt to respond to that need, taking into consideration that, to the best of my knowledge, no similar Jordanian studies have been conducted.

1.2 Study Aim and Questions

The aim of the study was to explore the preferred conflict resolution styles employed by the Hashemite University students in Jordan by answering the following questions:

1) What are The Hashemite University students' preferred conflict resolution styles?

2) Are there statistically significant differences in The Hashemite University students' preferred conflict resolution styles due to sex, grade point average, and faculty?

1.3 Study Significance

The significant of the study lies in the following points:

1) Exploring the university students' preferred conflict resolution styles may lead to adopting proper policies and procedures to boost the constructive styles, and get rid of the destructive or less effective ones.

2) Most Jordanian educational studies have concentrated on the causes of university students' violence, and neglected recognizing the styles of dealing with conflicts which may cause it.

1.4 Literature Review

A number of non-Jordanian and Jordanian studies have been conducted on university conflict management and resolution such as the following:

A. Non-Jordanian Studies

Ohbushi and Takahashi (1994) asked 94 Japanese and 98 American students to about their recent experiences with interpersonal conflicts. They conducted content analyses of reported 476 episodes. A strong tendency to avoid conflict was found among Japanese subjects as a result of their desire to preserve relationships, and their perceptions of shared responsibility.

Antonioni (1998) explored the relationship between the Big Five personality factors: Extroversion, openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness and neuroticism), and five styles of handling interpersonal conflicts: Integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising. The sample of the study consisted of 351 students, and 110 managers. The data were collected by questionnaire. The researcher found that extroversion, conscientiousness, openness, and agreeableness had positive relation to integrating style, extroversion had positive relationship to dominating, while agreeableness and neuroticism had positive relation to avoiding

Tyler and Lind (2001) requested a sample of African American, Hispanic American, and European American students to rate their procedural preferences to response to a hypothetical conflict scenario, and involved them in a real dispute. The results showed that all the subjects preferred persuasion and negotiation to other options.

Stevahn, Johnson, Johnson, and Schultz (2002) explored the effectiveness of conflict resolution and peer mediation training among California high school students. Two of four classes received 5 weeks of conflict

resolution and peer mediation training, integrated into the required social studies curriculum. The remaining 2 classes studied the same social studies curriculum for five weeks too, without conflict resolution and peer mediation training. The results of the study showed that the trained students, compared with the untrained ones, learned the integrative negotiation and peer mediation procedures better, applied procedures more completely, chose an integrative over distributive approach to negotiation, and developed more positive attributes toward conflict.

Sportsman and Hamilton (2007) examined prevalent conflict management styles employed by university students in allied health professions. The results showed that the prevalent styles were avoidance, followed by compromise and finally accommodation.

Brockman, Nunes, and Basu (2010) studied the conflict management preferences of graduate students with their faculty advisors. One hundred and twenty one graduate students completed the pre-workshop surveys, and 69 participants completed the post- workshop surveys after seven workshops conducted over a 3 year-period. The results showed that avoidance and accommodation styles were preferred by participants for managing conflicts.

Turnukl, Kacmaz, Sunbul, and Ergul (2010) investigated the effects of conflict resolution and peer mediation training on 591 Turkish elementary school students' conflict resolution strategies. The training program consisted of skills such as communication, anger management, negotiation and peer mediation. The results showed that the training program significantly improved students' ''integrative/constructive'' conflict resolution strategy, and reduced their ''forcing'' and "withdrawing/avoidance" strategies.

Williams (2011) investigated the relation between conflict management styles and job satisfaction. The random sample of the study consisted of 113 employees working at a private university in Texas. The results showed that there was a significant positive relation between the integrating conflict style and overall job satisfaction for middle level managers and faculty members.

Aliasgari and Farzadnia (2012) attempted to find out the relation between emotional intelligence and conflict management styles among a sample of high school teachers in Tehran, and identify the styles of teachers' conflict management. The results revealed that conflict management styles had significant and positive relationship with emotional intelligence, and cooperation style was the most prominent teachers' conflict resolution style.

Ghaffar, Zaman, and Naz (2012) analyzed the secondary schools principals' preferred conflict management styles in a Pakistani district. The results showed such styles were collaboration, and then compromising.

İLĞAN (2020) examined 156 Turkish school principals' conflict management styles. It was found that the most frequently used styles by the principals were integrating and compromising; but the least frequently used ones were forcing and avoiding.

Skordouli, Koukounaras, Liagkis, Sidiropoulos, and Drosos (2020) explored the relation between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution among a sample of 130 high schools' teachers in Greece. The results have revealed that emotional intelligence had a direct relation with conflict resolution styles, and a negative relationship between emotional intelligence and the frequency of involvement in workplace conflicts existed.

Ertürk (2022) investigated the causes of conflicts in schools, levels and type of conflict, effects of conflict, methods used to solve conflicts. The sample of the study consisted of 40 teachers working in Yeniçağa district of Bolu,Turkey. The data were collected through interviews and semi-structured interview form and analyzed with content analyses. The study results revealed that among the effects of conflicts on teachers were: Weariness, tiredness, burnout, unwillingness to work, decrease in work efficiency, performance, motivation and organizational commitment, stress, anxiety, loneliness, unhappiness, cynicism, unwillingness to come to school, wanting to leave school, disappearance of ethical behaviors, withdrawal, and anger.

B. Jordanian Studies

Al-Ibrahim's (2008) study attempted to show the conflict management styles employed by a sample of (167) academic leaders working at three public universities: University of Jordan, The Hashemite University, and Yarmouk University.

Aljaafreh's (2013) study investigated the relation between organizational conflict management styles and administrative creativity among a sample of 225 principals working at public schools in Karak, Jordan.

The study Abu Snaina and Al-Biati (2014) aimed at investigating the relation between principals' organizational conflict management and teachers' organizational loyalty at public secondary schools in Amman, Jordan.

Almawla's (2015) study explored organizational conflict management and its effect on job satisfaction at Jordanian public universities, as perceived by a sample that consisted of 329 faculty members. The findings of the

study showed that cooperation and compromising positively affected faculty members' job satisfaction.

The study done by Al-Hamdan, Nussera, and Masa'deh (2015) that explored the relation between conflict management styles used by nurse managers in Jordan and intent to stay of staff nurses.

Jubran's (2017) study explored schools principals' styles for dealing with organizational conflicts among teachers.

Al-Omary's (2017) study explored principals' organizational conflict management and their relation to teachers' organizational loyalty in Irbid Governorate, Jordan.

The study conducted by Twerish Al-Hourani (2017) aimed at exploring the relation between organizational health, and principals' practice of organizational conflict management styles at public secondary schools in Amman, Jordan.

Al-Hamdan, Al-Ta'amneh, Rayan, and Bawadi's (2019) study that examined the impact of demographic variables and emotional intelligence on conflict management styles among nurse managers from Jordan.

The study of Aqqad, Obeidat, Tarhini, and Masa'Deh (2019) aimed at investigating the relation between emotional intelligence and job performance at Jordanian banks through the mediating effect of conflict management styles.

The review of related literature showed that:

-The majority of non-Jordanian studies focused on the conflict resolution styles of university students (Sportsman & Hamilton, 2007; Brockman, Nunes & Basu, 2010; Tyler & Lind, 2001; Ohbushi & Takahashi, 1994; Antonioni, 1998). Other non-Jordanian studies concentrated on students' styles (Turnukl, Kacmaz, Sunbul, & Ergul, 2010), university employees' styles (Williams, 2011), And school teachers' styles (Aliasgari & Farzadnia, 2012; Skordouli, Koukounaras, Liagkis, Sidiropoulos. & Drosos, 2020; Ertürk, 2022).

-No Jordanian studies have focused on the conflict resolution styles of university students. Jordanian studies dealt with universities faculty members' styles (Almawla, 2015), Jordanian banks employees' styles (Aqqad, Obeidat, Tarhini, & Masa'Deh, 2019) nurse managers' styles (Al-Hamdan, Al-Ta'amneh, Rayan, & Bawadi; Al-Hamdan, Nussera, & Masa'deh, 2015), public universities academic leaders' styles (Al-Ibrahim, 2008), and schools principals' styles (Jubran, 2017; Aljaafreh's, 2013; Al-Omary, 2017; Abu Snaina & Al-Biati, 2014; Twerish & Al-Hourani, 2017).

2. Method

The analytic descriptive method was employed because it suited the study.

2.1 Sample

The random study sample consisted of (360) students studying at The Hashemite University in in Zarqa, Jordan. Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample according to its variables.

Table 1. Distribution of study sample according to study variables

Variable	Type/Level	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	29.20	105
	Female	70.80	255
GPA	Less than 2	7.50	27
	3-Less than 3	60.60	218
	3 and more	31.90	115
Faculty	Scientific	21.70	78
	Human	78.30	282
Total		360	100%

2.2 Study Tool

To gather the data of the study, the researcher developed a questionnaire consisting of 29 items divided into four domains that measures The Hashemite University students' preferred conflict resolution styles after benefiting from the studies of Yu and Chen (2008), Khanak and Hassanzadeh (2010), Kim and Meyers (2012), Yousry, El-Halawani, and Shiha (2014).

2.3 Validity and Reliability of Study Tool

To verify the validity of the tool, the researcher consulted ten experts specializing in educational sciences and working as faculty members at some Jordanian universities. Based on their comments, two items were deleted, and some typing and language corrections were made.

To prove the reliability of the tool, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used. The coefficient for the tool was 0.81, and the coefficients of its domains were: Forcing (.78), compromise (.75), avoiding (.74), and cooperation (.79).

The values were considered to be satisfactory to achieve the aim of the study.

Each item of the scale was rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree. The means of the evaluation of the study sample's responses to the questionnaire items were as follows: (1-2.33-low), (2.34-3.67-medium, and (3.68-5-high).

3. Findings and Discussion

-Answering the first question: What are the Hashemite University students' preferred conflict resolution styles?

To answer the question, the means and standard deviations of the items of the domains of the study questionnaire were computed, as Table 2 showed.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of the domains of the Hashemite University students' preferred conflict resolution styles

Rank	Strategies	Means	Standard Deviations	Practice Degree
1	Cooperation	3.98	0.94	High
2	Compromise	3.59	0.67	High
3	Avoiding	3.53	0.77	High
4	Forcing	3.42	0.81	High
Total Practice Degree		3.61	0.41	High

Table 2 showed that the Hashemite University students' preferred conflict resolution styles were: Cooperation, compromise avoiding, and forcing, respectively, and all of them were practiced in a high degree. This may mean that The Hashemite University students: Frequently and almost equally use Cooperation, compromise avoiding, and forcing, almost equally use different contradictory conflict resolution styles in different situations and circumstances.

The most encouraging result was that the most commonly used conflict resolution style by The Hashemite University students was cooperation. But the most discouraging and dangerous result was that although (forcing) was the least frequently used conflict resolution style by The Hashemite University, it was practiced in a high degree, as Table 3 showed.

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, and practice degree of the items of the (forcing style domain)

Rank	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Practice Degree
1	Most people nowadays deserve using forcing against them	4.07	1.03	High
2	I feel comfortable when I beat my opponent in a conflict	3.95	1.04	High
3	When I get involved in a conflict, my aim becomes satisfying my needs, and keeping my interests.	3.61	1.29	High
4	Excluding the use of forcing in conflicts is a sign of weakness	3.50	1.29	High
5	I use forcing to gain or keep my rights	3.45	1.20	High
6	In conflicts, power makes difference.	3.30	1.29	Medium
7	In conflicts, my first option is the use of force because its results are the best	2.78	1.46	Medium
8	In conflicts, my first option is the use of force because its results appear quickly.	2.68	1.39	Medium
	Forcing	3.42	0.81	High

So, the main justification for preferring force, from the viewpoint of the sample members, were: Many people do not know except the language of force, misinterprets lenience and looks it as a sign of weakness, and so they

should be defeated by force which guarantees needs and rights.

The above mentioned justifications are allegations, fabrications and fallacies that should be dispelled.

This may partially explains the escalation of the spread out of violence on the campuses of a number of Jordanian public and private universities. University violence in Jordan has recently escalated quantitatively and qualitatively.767 university students' violence fights occurred between the years 1995-2007. The results of a study showed that one third of the Jordanian university students participated in fights, about two thirds of them witnessed fights (Alshoraty, 2015). One of the possible sources of that violence is its unwise handling and management. But instead of studying students' conflict resolution preferences, some universities resort to wrong methods. Al-Makhreez (2006) pointed out that he most common methods used by some universities' administrations to deal with university violence were: Punishing students, forming investigation committees and avoiding problems. Whereas, the least commonly used ones were: Counseling, increasing awareness, and listening to students' suggestions and opinions. The students' high level of use of forcing as a conflict resolution style may be attributed in part to universities' focusing on indoctrination and memorization and their negligence of emotional and social skills, critical thinking, problem solving, culture of dialogue, values of tolerance and forgiveness, moral and character education, Islamic noble teachings and values, and discussion (Alhawamda, 2007).

-Answering the Second Question: Are there Statistically Significant Differences in The Hashemite University Students' Preferred Conflict Resolution Styles Due to (Sex, Grade Point Average and Faculty)?

To answer the question, the means and standard deviations of the items of the domains of the study questionnaire were computed as Table 4 showed.

Table 4. Means, standard deviations of the sample's preferred conflict resolution styles due to (sex, grade point average and faculty)

Variable	Variable Level/Type		Styles				Practice Degree
			Forcing	Compromise	Avoiding	Cooperation	
Sex	Males	Mean	3.32	3.37	3.58	3.54	3.56
		Standard Deviation	0.83	0.77	0.78	1.31	0.41
	Females	Mean	3.72	3.69	3.50	4.17	3.63
		Standard Deviation	0.78	0.60	0.77	0.65	0.40
GPA	Less than 2	Mean	3.79	3.18	3.72	3.36	3.56
		Standard Deviation	0.96	0.86	0.55	1.03	0.33
	2-Less than 3	Mean	3.48	3.57	3.58	3.93	3.63
		Standard Deviation	0.77	0.65	0.69	0.79	0.37
	3 and more	Mean	3.21	3.74	3.38	4.23	3.59
		Standard Deviation	0.82	0.61	0.93	1.08	0.48
Faculty	Scientific	Mean	3.29	3.63	3.62	3.98	3.60
		Standard Deviation	0.84	0.63	1.04	0.82	0.45
	Human	Mean	3.45	3.59	3.50	3.99	3.61
		Standard Deviation	0.80	0.68	0.68	0.97	0.40

Table 4 showed apparent differences in the means of the responses to the items of the questionnaire according to the variables of the study. To check if such apparent differences were statistically significant, 3-way ANOVA was used as Table 5 showed.

Table 5. The results of 3-way ANOVA for the sample's preferred conflict resolution styles due to study variables

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	sig
Sex	0.270	1	0.270	1.631	0.202
GPA	0.176	2	0.088	0.531	0.588
Faculty	0.011	1	0.011	0.066	0.797
Error	58.721	355	0.165		

Table 5 showed that there were no statistically significant differences in The Hashemite University students' preferred conflict resolution styles due to (sex, grade point average, and faculty). This result may have been due to similarity in students' societal and educational circumstances, environments, cultures and socialization processes. The sample's members, irrespective of their sex, grade point average, and faculty, had a similar judgment and estimation regarding their preferred conflict resolution styles.

4. Recommendations

In light of the study results, the researcher introduced the following recommendation: To reduce the possibility for resorting to (forcing) as a preferred conflict resolution style, educational programs consisting of skills such as tolerance, critical thinking, teamwork, communication, negotiation, dialogue, decision making, problem solving, and resilience should be provided to students.

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