

Students Perceptions About The Causes Of Conflict Among Students In Universities

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Abstract

Conflict is an important notion in the workplace situations. Like other workplaces universities often face situations of conflict among students, teachers and other stakeholders. The current study aimed to get an insight into the causes of conflict of male and female students in Hazara University, Mansehra, KhyberPakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The study explored different aspects of causes of conflicts by the students. This study adopted qualitative research design to explore the issue. The sample of the study comprised of male and female students from the selected university. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the respondents to collect data. Thematic analysis method was used for data analysis. Findings revealed that among the main causes of conflicts in the university are personal, political and cultural differences, teachers' favoritism, jealousy, misbehavior and disagreement. Overall the study might be useful in enhancing our understanding regarding the causes of conflict among students in the university and regarding the ways and means to respond to situations of conflict in this and other universities with similar contexts.

Keywords: conflicts, gender, university students.

Introduction

Research, education, student facilities, staff disburse and other interests and services all have their asserts on the incomplete resources at the elimination of the university. So there is withdrawal (relative or absolute) of the requirements of all groups within the system. The result of insufficient supervisions and conditions of financial resources to the university campus are the decline of the structures, services and functions of the university. Sanda (1992) describes that the deprivation of the students is directly proportion to the frustration, irritation and aggression.

Conflicts that are the consequence of frustration are often directed against the aggression or it may be executor of the unwanted state of relationships. Unpleasant and bad mismanagement of the resources could result in conflicts. These conflicts can take the outlook of strikes, boycott of classes and aggression and violence etc.

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Perceived Goal Incompatibility:

The rate of the conflicts in the groups is perceived high where same phenomenon are perceived and interpret differently by different people. In the universities the higher authority should give more attention to the students and teachers to the points that are more critical and complicated. It has been observed that students will not learn effectively unless and until they are involve in the process, have a sense of responsibility for their learning schedules. So if the students learn effectively, much also be forgiven. If students are not co-operative in studies there should be making a realization to them. According to Geoffery (1977), this type of students than divert to any other type of attention if they are not focused to the studies.

Drives for Autonomy:

Autonomy or independence is the basic need and drive of most of the individual, it can be explained as when one group or individual attempts to make a control in some activities which some other party tries to regard their own domain or seeks to protect itself from such controls of that group or individual (Idowu, 1985). Sanda (1992) stated that academic freedom is the liberty or autonomy to systematize the university, making schedules of teaching courses, making involvement with others, projects, imbibe, swap over and exchange of ideas without the fear of harassment or persecution or ill treatment, and challenge established orthodoxies without any fear of contradiction, all of these in the search and detection of truth. However, if such events occur like absolute ban of the university staff and students associations, frightened teachers or early retirement, or explanation of the programmes as an effect of government over regulation, this all is the result of decreasing autonomy and independence, low morale, goal displacement and at the end conflicts and disputes. To manage a conflict is important aspect in daily living. Conflict management can be defined as ones approaches to handle a conflicting situation that is problematic and conflicting (Moberg, 2001). Blake and Mouton (1964) proposed five modes for managing conflicts, which may involve direct confrontation, smoothing over the differences, neglecting conflicts, making, forcing ones location and making some compromises and negotiation. Certain personality factors are also involve in the conflicts, The Big Five Inventory instrument measures these personality factors of the individual involving in the conflicts and the factors handling conflicts, also used in different researches (Costa & McCrae, 1995; Moberg, 2001).

Cause of conflict is also the differences of ideologies and opinions of the students with other. Similarly every individual manage their conflicts in their own way and use the strategies of their own choice. Mostly the students and the educational institutions are unaware of their conflict types they are experiencing and the cause and solution and strategies to resolve these conflicts even they don't know about their management styles to solve their conflicts. Very truly students experienced a lot of conflicts and use their own coping strategies to solve their conflicts.

The conflict management in the educational institutions depends upon the provision of directions to the staff and pupil, coordination, final reports of the students and every activity of the institution and revision of the curricular based on the global needs changes. It is also more favorable regarding the availability of quality assurance system Marsh (1982) discussed the ratio of the conflict is higher in the public universities and also in the universities where there is high structural differentiation, more number of students and campuses and very less novelty and recreation. In Pakistan there is a huge number of students exists in the public universities and have a high structural differentiation if compare to the private campuses, so the teachers will perceive more conflicts in the public sector universities. Jehn (1995) defined conflicts conflict is the name of change ideologies, perspectives thoughts and analysis about the goals

and tasks performed by students and faculty members. Intensity means the amount of costs and participation. If the groups are bitterly organizes and structured the concentration and intensity of the conflict decreases (Dahrendorf et al., 2006). It shows that public organizations are more complex and disorganized as compared to private organizations.

Method

Research Design

Qualitative research design was used in the study.

Sample of the Study

A sample of 20 students was selected in which 10 are males and 10 are females. In qualitative interview studies a sample ranging between 12 to 15 is deemed adequate for data collection and saturation of themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Data was collected from Hazara University Mansehra Pakistan.

The sampling technique used for this study is Convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is the most common type of sampling in qualitative studies where the criteria are convenience accessibility of the sample. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews exploring themes such as Meaning and nature of conflicts in the university, causes of conflicts, conflict management strategies that are used by university students, consequences of conflicts if not managed properly, suggestions for useful conflict management among student .

Informed consent of the respondents was obtained before data collection. A consent form was prepared which the respondents read and signed prior to participating in the interview process. Besides giving them initial information about the research aims and objectives, the consent form ensured the respondents anonymity and confidentiality.

Data collection and Data Analysis

Semi structured interview was used for data collection. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative method of inquiry that combines a pre-determined set of open questions, these are questions that prompt discussion with the opportunity for the interviewer to explore particular themes or responses further.

The interview was started with formal discussion in which the participants was asked about their personal point of view about conflict and all the related issues which assisted me to develop a strong rapport with participants. The duration of each interview was 30-40 minutes approximately. Interviews were recorded using a voice recorder with the permission of the respondents. The researcher made sure to let the respondents enough time to answer her questions in detail. The respondents were also asked to answer questions in a language of their choice (Urdu/English) to enable them to communicate their views with ease and understanding. The data collection process took around three months to complete as access to respondents was not easy and smooth. The data collection process began in December, 2015 and completed in February, 2016.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is the process in which the data is analyzed through examining and recording patterns or themes within data. Thematic analysis generally consisted of six phases to produce meaningful pattern. These phases are used through the process of coding. These phases are as follow: Familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, producing the final report. First of all the

interview data was transcribed. After the transcription, the data was arranged through coding. Coding is a process which structured the data to analyzable form. The data were categorized through coding process and then managed through themes or sub-themes so that the researcher and the reader can understand the research.

Data Analysis and Result

Causes of conflicts

A number of causes of conflict among students in the university were identified. The following details such causes.

Personal conflicts

The respondents identified that personal conflicts occur between two peoples due to personal reasons. Sometimes, it was a personal conflict with another university student. But it was very purposeless and indecent. One of the male respondents for instance said:

I started a fight because the other person argued with me and my friend without any reason, consent or purpose. I initiated the fight. The purpose was to deliver a message to similar others 'not to touch people like me and my friend again (MR 2).

Another male respondent stated:

I have been in conflict with teachers as well. When a teacher starts deviating from professional ethical standards of teaching, conflict arose; e.g. teacher getting personal, showing bias, , not being available on time, or projecting family frustration on students. (MR 5)

Many respondents said that when they have differences in opinions and disagreement with other person this will cause conflict between them. One of the male respondents for instance said:

I have recently observed, direct, a circumstance where the individual qualities were so profoundly extraordinary that it made individuals go their different ways .Simple things like what activities were conscious and what were not, what was adequate and what was most certainly not (MR 3).

One female respondent argued:

In my point of view when a person is in a disagreement with another person, or his/her behavior. For example; interfering in an important discussion with teacher during the class, abusing, misusing another student's personal object (pen, pencil, notebook) FR 2.

Conflict due to teachers' favoritism

A number of respondents said that conflicts in universities arise due to teachers' favoritism. Some teachers favor students unduly. A student who is unduly favored by teacher can get good grades easily. This is one of the main factors that affects the student's academic performance and causes conflicts among students. One of the male respondents for instance said:

In my perspective students are buckling down yet they are not increased in value by the educators. Educators are making biasness

among students and they are supporting a few students over others. On the off chance that a student is supported by educator he or she gets decent evaluations effortlessly and different students are not acknowledged on their work. It makes disappointment among students that they are not esteemed (MR 3).

Most of the male respondents said that most of the conflicts among students are due to teacher's favoritism one of the male respondents (MR 4) for instance said:

Female students are preferred more than males. This can cause misunderstanding between students. This really put a bad image on students and students who are hardworking and competent lag behind because of teachers' favoritism and injustice. Some male teachers prefer female students because of their attractiveness and do a favor to them in studies which is the cause of conflict between male students and teachers. This is highly unethical which can also present the bad image of the teacher. Some students work very hard and want to be on top but because of this attitude of teachers they always fail to achieve their desire goal.

Female respondents for instance have an opposing view on this as one of the female respondent for instance said:

According to me female teachers prefer male students over female students because of their smartness, popularity, race and class. Playing top choices is the most exceedingly bad. I even imagine that a teacher that does that, is not a decent teacher, and with this I don't need offend any teacher. I have been having a harsh time in this specific class where my teacher plays it. She intrudes on me, over-talks me, and gets excessively passionate over other's remarks. What would I be able to do? Simply keep my mouth close starting now and into the foreseeable future. On the off chance that I defied, it most likely enrages her significantly more (FR 10).

Some respondents, however, said that favoritism is much rarer in their experience. It happens, but most teachers they know are professional enough and they try to avoid it. One of the female respondents said:

In my point of view if a teacher treats students similarly and give them bolster then the outcome would be distinctive. The scholarly execution of students will increment (FR 5).

The respondent clarified that each student will buckle down on the grounds that he realizes that he would be regarded and assessed. He or she will use his or her abilities and it helps in making a superior expert future. The achievement of student lies upon the teachers in light of the fact that there's a teacher who makes students effective.

Disagreement

Most of the respondents were of the view that disagreement is when everyone has their own opinions regarding to specific situation and one wants to win in his arguments through dirty means then their occurs disagreement. One of the male respondents for instance said:

Disagree with the advice of other. I have my own point of view related to every matter when someone give me advise which is totally against my views then there will be conflicting situation.Sometimes I disagree with the opinion of my teacher and then a conflicting situation arises that what should I do either I will go with the advice of my teacher or not (MR 5).

One of the female respondents reported:

In my perspective when you can't help contradicting somebody, you have a distinction of supposition since you and the other individual have diverse interests, qualities, needs and goals (FR 11).

Contradicting somebody isn't a terrible thing. It can be seen as positive and practical and additionally normal. Contradiction doesn't need to prompt to an enormous battle butthose who disagree typically argue, and dirty tricks to get his side to win this could lead to conflict.

Misbehavior

Many students misbehave in classroom with students or teachers to disturb the classroom environment or to exert a control on the classroom. This could cause conflicts. One of the female respondents for instance said:

Conflicts occur when students misbehave with administration and teachers. Mostly students are not good in manners and because of cultural impact they use bad language and which is very shameful. (FR 6)

Respondents argued students often misbehave with their fellows that can lead to violence and harmful circumstances. Some students misbehave to exert a control on classroom they thought that misbehaving in the classroom makes them powerful. One of the male respondents reported:

In my point of view a few students who get out of hand are communicating a craving for more control in the classroom, and acting improperly makes them feel effective (MR 5).

It is clear from the above quotes that misbehavior causes conflicts they do not follow the rules and want things their way .Their refusal to follow basic rules that are intended for everyone causes conflict.

Conflict due to cultural differences

Many respondents cultural difference could lead to conflicts in universities. One of the male respondents for instance said:

When students from different cultures come into one classroom they can be seen differently by students and teachers on the basis of language, race, they have many differences. In Hazara University the Pakhtoons and Hazarawal cultures are most prominent. They have made their own groups and fight against each other and want to be on top and sometimes this leads to violence. Many times this conflict occurs in university and I have been also the part of that. I am Pakhtoon and have to support my group (MR 5).

One of the male respondents reported:

In my point of view mostly conflicts in the university are on the basis of language and race. Such as; the most recent conflict between Pukhtoon Student Federation & Hazara Student Federation where plenty got injured and damaging the infrastructure of the university. Mostly the boys are involved in this type of conflict. This conflict can be resolved on the basis of unity (MR 5).

The above quote indicates that in Hazara University students had made two groups the Pakhtoons and the Hazarawals they fought each and created violence in the university from many years .

The above are the most dominant themes which were reported by many of the male and female respondents. The nature of the conflict was totally academic but we were dealing it as personal.

When rules are not followed

Conflicts can occur on the educational basis in the universities rules of the institutions when not followed accordingly this can cause conflicts. Sometimes teachers do not follow the rules this can cause conflicts between them. One of the female respondents reported:

Sometimes a teacher may not be attending class on time, but he/she may strictly require students to be on time for the class. Breaking the rule himself, how can a man ask others to abide. Sometimes, a teacher may provide guidelines for syllabus of a paper, and when students sit in a paper, the paper may entirely not follow the syllabus itself (FR 10).

Political Causes

An important cause of conflicts in universities is on political basis. Students make their own groups and parties this cause conflicts among students. One of the male respondents for instance said:

Conflict could also be political. Students in university make different groups and parties. For example; conflict with two student organizations/federations .political inequalities occurs among groups there exists a rivalry condition between two parties In our university students specially boys have two party groups i.e. Pakistan Muslim League (PMLN) and Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf and sometimes by defending their parties they are involved in physical fights causing harm to each other (MR 10).

It is clear from the above quote that in universities students make different political groups which causes conflicts among them as they support their party to the fullest.

Another male respondent reported such kind of conflicts too

The youth have their political affiliations with different groups or they may be participate in university elections and so on .These kinds of activities may cause conflict between certain groups or students (MR 3).

The respondent explained that political interference is the root cause conflicts in educational system. Teachers are also threatened and their respect and status is neglected due to political interventions.

Misunderstanding

Most of the conflicts in universities will occur due to misunderstanding between students and teachers. One of the female respondents reported:

It is due to difference in priorities occurs when some students are not attended with care the student will create a misunderstanding between teacher and student or sometimes wrong perception about teacher and communication breakdown will be a cause of it. Sometimes the teacher don't allow students to participate in classroom or to ask question this will cause misunderstanding between them (FR 1).

Jealousy

Respondents were of the view that jealousy is a feeling, and the word commonly alludes to the considerations and sentiments of instability, dread, concern, and uneasiness over a foreseen misfortune or status of something of awesome individual esteem, especially in reference to a human association. Envy regularly comprises of a mix of feelings, for example, outrage, hatred, insufficiency, vulnerability and disgust. Most of the conflicts are because of jealousy among students because of grades this is most common in females as females are more jealous than males. One of the male respondents for instance said:

In my point of view you need to get one thing straight. There is extremely small number of "best" people in the world, and it takes more time to reach than most of us would give up. There will always be someone who is better than you. Always. The thing is, you could be better at whatever, if you are giving up everything else. It's your decision to go out instead of studying, or play games, or whatever. And that is not a bad thing - but you decided to live your life the way you want. You decided that you want to have some good grades, and get the most fun out of life (MR 4).

The respondent explained that when you decided to study not for the sake of grades but for the sake of yourself. Maybe you are even studying really, really hard, and they aren't and still getting good grades - maybe they just learn faster than you. You can't change that. Studies are important, but they aren't your life. You are not the person you are because of good grades; a lot of other things make a person. For me, they are consisted of various qualities and bunch of bad things that make me unique. I am a good person. I don't have anything to prove to anyone, I am not going to be jealous at someone for being better than me at anything. I don't care about other people success compared to mine. I have success somewhere too, and it's good for me. I believe everyone needs to do more things in life and actually accomplish himself on more fields than one. This way you will find yourself confident enough to set jealousy aside.

One of the female respondents reported that:

I am very good in studies and I always help other students in studies but the problem is that they always get better grades than me even though I work hard this can make me jealous and this causes a conflict between us (FR 6).

The respondent explained that he always work hard than his friends but they always get good grades than him this thing makes me jealous and then conflict arises among us.

Discussion

Different causes of conflicts were identified by the respondents. Political cause was most commonly identified by most of the male respondents while in female respondents the major cause of conflict was over competition for attaining higher grades. This finding is consistent with the study of Faiz (2015) who found most conflicts are due to widespread violence in the universities due to politics, strikes, fighting, and indiscipline.

A second major cause was identified was jealousy and this was reported by most of the female respondents. This cause was previously identified by Barsky et al. (2002) who found that jealousy is a cause of conflict in universities. Other common causes of conflicts were racial or linguistic cause, economic cause, personal cause, individual differences, and differences in perceptions. One other cause identified was diversity. This finding is consonant with the study of Kellerman (2010) who found that distinctions in age, social foundation, morals, and qualities can be a wellspring of conflict among students. The other causes of conflicts which were identified are goal differences, misunderstanding and disagreement. This cause was previously identified by Schultz & Champoux (2008) who distinguished that ordinarily people, gatherings or offices in the association have distinctive and contrary objectives, expanding the odds of conflicts.

Another study conducted by Hitt et al. (2012) also supported the findings in this theme that conflict occurs due to poor communication and misunderstanding among students and teachers. At the point when there is too little correspondence, associates don't know enough about each other's aims, objectives, or plans. Coordination gets to be distinctly troublesome, and false impressions will probably happen, which can bring about conflict.

Conclusion and Implications

Findings uncovered that the significant reasons for conflicts in the universities are personal causes, political causes, educational causes, racial or linguistic causes, misunderstanding and jealousy. The main findings revealed that different conflict management styles are used by male and female students, mostly male students used the mediation, tolerance, competing and negotiation whereas most female students used the collaborating, integrating, compromising, withdrawing and exchange of productive ideas for useful conflict management. The results of this study might be helpful in understanding the main causes of conflicts among university students.

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