

## Types of Conflicts Faced by Students at University Level in Islamabad/ Rawalpindi

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*Conflicts are everywhere in life and can have both constructive and destructive consequences. The present research investigated the types of conflict and conflict management strategies adopted by university students in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. A quantitative research design was used. The population of the study was all public and private university students of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 400 students. A self-developed questionnaire was distributed among the respondents to collect data. Data were stored in tables and analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 24. The study findings showed that most respondents agreed they are having Interpersonal conflicts regarding personality. In contrast, most of the respondents agreed that they have obligations. Therefore, it is recommended that students be encouraged to seek out and use university resources such as counseling and mediation services to help manage conflicts.*

## 1. Introduction

Conflict may be defined in different ways based on its nature, type of function, and perception of the individual. In educational institutions, conflicts have different origins and have different forms. For example, instructors may be unwilling to fulfill the requirements and instructions given to them by the head of the institution, and they are not ready to accept and accomplish the head's instructions and rules for more work. On the other hand, the same authoritative style is used by the heads of educational institutions; they pressure the instructors to run the educational institutes smoothly. Conflicts between instructors and the principal thus grow frequent and can happen anytime during the school day. Due to their regular interactions, conflict arises between different people in institutions. Conflict manifests animosity, rivalry, and miscommunication among employees (Kiran et al., 2022).

It is important to note that conflict is an inherent feature of all relationships, including those in organizations. Present in intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup, and inter-organizational environments, it has been found to significantly affect behaviour, job satisfaction, and the performance of employees (Tabassi et al., 2019). It should be noted that conflict is not necessarily a negative phenomenon. Still, it can simultaneously be a driving force for personal and organizational development (Kay & Skarlicki, 2020).

When people are conscious that their own ambitions conflict with those of others, they become frustrated while seeking to attain significant objectives; it is referred to as a conflict situation. This term sheds light on how disputes in student teams first arise. Some team members may have objectives distinct from those of the others. Additionally, learners may have various choices according to their interests to plan the structure of work to be done and ideas of what constitutes appropriate job outputs (Kiran et al., 2022).

Conflict management strategies also have a significant impact on the values of the students. Handling conflict fosters an environment of safety for discussion, airing out opinions, and taking on tasks intellectually. For intellectual capability, only the cognitive domain has been emphasized. Concerning cognitive development, order thinking skills have been emphasized by many of the studies in the current literature concerning policy documents, teachers' perceptions, and practice (Jamil, Aslam, et al., 2024; Jamil, Bibi, et al., 2024; Jamil, Bokhari, et al., 2024; Jamil et al., 2023; Jamil et al., 2024; Jamil et al., 2021a, 2021b; Naseer et al., 2022). Further, these are utilized to participate more in learning and raise the desire to pursue elaborate knowledge (Malik et al., 2023).

The current study is significant for students at higher education levels to become aware of the type of conflict they are facing and adopt which conflict management strategy they can use to have constructive consequences of conflict. Furthermore, the current study serves as a potential document to establish conflict management mechanisms at the departmental and university levels.

Conflicts are everywhere in life, and they have different levels of intensity. Still, the noteworthy point about conflicts is that they can have constructive consequences if managed properly and destructive consequences if not handled properly, so keeping in view both

consequences, the researcher conducted research to “explore the different types of conflicts faced by students and conflict management strategies adopted by students at higher education level to manage their conflicts.”

### 1.1 Objectives of the study

The following were the objectives of the study:

1. To investigate intrapersonal conflict regarding personality.
2. To investigate intrapersonal conflict regarding the profession.
3. To investigate interpersonal conflict regarding the selection of a supervisor.
4. To investigate interpersonal conflict regarding the institution support supervisor.

## 2. Literature review

The digital era plays an important position in online schooling, and the idea that scholars are prepared to apply any technological gadget for online mastering is measured. Learner-targeted coaching and learner commitment are some dreams the component proposes to gratify (Hasan, 2021). Online collaborative mastering theories that cope with constructivism, behaviorism, and cognitive have been explored and applied to enhance coaching and mastering. The reflections of this look can assist lecturers in comparable surroundings modify to online schooling and undertake the mastering techniques which have proved to be a hit. Further research is wanted to discover procedures to interact with and innovate big cohorts of students studying at the college level (Singh et al., 2022).

Conflict is an inherent and unavoidable part of life, arising from personal preferences and the need for human connection. Conflicts arise due to these agreements and differences of opinion among persons and organizations. Conflicts are neither beneficial nor detrimental, but their outcome can be influenced by how they are managed, resulting in positive or harmful consequences. Like other human organizations, schools are vulnerable to various forms of warfare. Essential methods include mediation, negotiation, avoidance, and participation. Various techniques regulate warfare, the most crucial being the ones already described. This essay primarily aims to analyze the characteristics of conflicts that arise in educational institutions, their underlying reasons, and the strategies employed to prevent and address them (Valente et al., 2020).

Mehling and Kolley (2019) claimed that cooperation (individual or institutional) produces favorable outcomes in growing scientific knowledge, competence, technological innovation, and effective resource use, all contributing to higher education's increased quality. HEC connects local HEIs in Pakistan with international institutions (Mehling & Kolley, 2019).

Batool et al. (2021) study titled "Study of Conflict Management Styles of University Students at the Postgraduate Level: The Influence of Gender and Marital Status." The study aimed to ascertain the conflict management strategies employed by Pakistani instructors who teach at the

postgraduate level. The study also examined any disparities between male and female instructors and married and unmarried teachers regarding their utilization of conflict management strategies. The study sample comprised 300 male and female teachers selected from five public universities in the Lahore district. The study revealed that teachers who participated in this research predominantly employed the cooperating conflict management technique. It was discovered that most teachers use the avoidance strategy of "maintaining distance from conflict" to address conflicts. A notable disparity existed between married and unmarried teachers regarding their competing and compromising conflict management approaches. Nevertheless, no discernible disparity was observed between male and female teachers concerning their conflict management approaches.

Kayani and Kiran (2019) did a study titled "A Comparative Study of Conflict Management Styles Adopted by Academic Staff of Public and Private Universities." Conflict is an intentional effort to contradict, withstand, or coerce the desires of another individual. Effective conflict management is crucial to ensure the smooth progress of regular tasks. The present study is characterized by its descriptive nature. Hence, this study examined the conflict management strategies employed by the academic faculty in public and private institutions in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Additionally, this study revealed the obstacles encountered by the academic staff in effectively handling conflicts. This study population consists of academic staff members, including Lecturers, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Professors.

In their study, Javed and Akhter (2019) examined the conflict management styles between university students and teachers, specifically focusing on universities in Lahore, Pakistan. This study examined the conflict management techniques of students in public and private institutions when dealing with their lecturers. The study examined students' preferences in Lahore universities for various conflict management styles when dealing with lecturers. The study also sought to determine the impact of gender, age, educational attainment, and university sector on conflict management styles. Using a survey method, data was gathered from 350 graduate and postgraduate students from public and private universities. The data were collected using the "Organizational Conflict Management Inventory" scale. The results revealed that students in both types of universities predominantly employ the integrating style as their primary approach to conflict management, followed by the obliging and avoiding styles. The educational level considerably impacts the integration, dominance, and avoidance approaches. Nevertheless, the impact of gender on conflict management strategies remained inconsequential.

It is crucial to note that managing conflicts in an organization requires integrating conflict management strategies. It can be used by an individual and an organization to solve problems that demand planning over time and commitment from all stakeholders. Studies conducted by Friedman et al. (2000) also aimed at integrating conflict management to facilitate, recognize, and minimize organizational conflicts. Research has been done on the topic at the national and international levels. In the Abu Nasra and Arar (2020) study, the performance and leadership of the teachers were examined. In another study, the moderating role of conflict management was

tested concerning the relationship between perceived leadership style and employee commitment (Hussein et al., 2022). The survey by Akhtar and Syeda (2021) revealed that conflict management for organizational commitment among university teachers impacts the teaching faculty in managing conflicts. For the work of Sajid et al. (2022), this research focuses on the impact of teachers' work-family conflict on children's performance.

Conflict management strategies integration is necessary to address complex issues in an organization. It can be used by individuals and an organization to solve problems requiring long-term planning and collaborative commitment. Earlier research focused on combining conflict management to support, identify, and reduce organizational conflicts.

### 3. Research Methodology

The study was conducted using quantitative methodology. Quantitative research approaches prioritize precision in measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical examination of data obtained through polls, questionnaires, and surveys or through manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computer tools. The population of the study was 1173, consisting of M.Phil. and PhD Scholars from public and private universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. (Higher Education Commission, Islamabad. 2022). Two public and private universities in Rawalpindi and 12 public and private universities in Islamabad were selected to select the sample for the final study—the final sample comprised 400 university students in the current research study population. According to Mills & Gay (2016), the study's sample size was 1200 population, a recommended sample size of 291 for better results, and the researchers took 400 students as the sample size. For the current research study, a simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample, which gives every member of the population an equal chance of participating, following the nature of the study.

#### 3.1 Reliability of Research Data

To find the reliability of the research data, the researchers used Cronbach's Alpha formula. To ensure the validity of the research tool, it was shared with different experts in the educational research field. Three experts found the content validity of the research tool. Their valuable feedback was inculcated for better results. Research instrument reliability was found by using Cronbach's Alpha formula, which was under

$$\alpha = \frac{n}{n-1} \left( 1 - \frac{\sum Vi}{V_{test}} \right)$$

Where,

n = "Number of items"

$\sum Vi$  = "Sum of variance of score on each item"

V test = "Total variance of overall scores on the entire test."

References values for the interpretation of Cronbach's Alpha reliability were as under



**Table No 1: Ranges of values for interpretation of Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability**

S.No	Cronbach’s Alpha Value	Internal Consistency
1.	“More than 0.9”	“Excellent”
2.	“0.80 – 0.89”	“Good”
3.	“0.70 – 0.79”	“Acceptable”
4.	“0.60 – 0.69”	“Questionable”
5.	“0.50 – 0.59”	“Poor”
6.	“Less than 0.49”	“Unacceptable”

Overall, the internal consistency of the instrument was as follows.

$\alpha = 0.94$ , This fell in the “Excellent” category of Internal Consistency.

### 3.2 Data Collection

Data was collected personally by the researchers.

### 4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 24. Further details are as follows.

#### 4.1 Chi-Square Test ( $\chi^2$ )

The set of calculations known as a chi-square (2) computation determines how expectations stack up against actual observed data (or model outcomes). A chi-square statistic can only be calculated with mutually exclusive, random, unedited data from independent variables and obtained from a big enough sample.

The Chi-Square statistic may be calculated simply and understandably as follows:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

Where,

$f_o$  = “the observed frequency (the observed counts in the cells)”.

$f_e$  = “the expected frequency”.

$\sum$  = “Sum of equation”.

The Chi-Square values are derived from the observed and expected data discrepancy, assuming no relationship between the variables. Chi-squared tests are statistical tests where the distribution of the test statistic gradually becomes more like a chi-squared distribution as the sample size increases, assuming the null hypothesis is true. The Chi-Square statistic can be computed straightforwardly and understandably.



### 4.4 Descriptive Statistics

**Table No 2: Intrapersonal Conflict Regarding Personality**

S.No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	$\chi^2$
1	“I sometimes don’t freely select my supervisor.”	<b>105</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>49.1</b>
		26%	28%	8.3%	20%	18%	
2	“I generally cannot stalk an issue related to me.”	<b>38</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>48.9</b>
		9.5%	31%	22%	22%	16%	
3	“I mostly use my potential to win my goal.”	<b>156</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>125.2</b>
		39%	23%	8%	20%	9.5%	
4	“I sometimes use my proficiency to make a decision that favors me.”	<b>104</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>215.0</b>
		26%	46%	10%	12%	5.8%	
5	“I sometimes feel much worry about selecting my thesis topic.”	<b>112</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>158.4</b>
		28%	40%	14%	14%	4%	
Total Average %		<b>25.7%</b>	<b>33.6%</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>17.6%</b>	<b>10.7%</b>	

“Degree of Freedom=4” “Significant Level=0.05” “Table Value=9.488”

Table 2 shows the Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) value for statements 1 to 5. The respondents' calculated Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) value for statement 1 was 84.29, which exceeded the table value. Consequently, the result was deemed significant, and the statement was accepted. Calculated Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) values of the respondents for statements 2 and 3 in Table 1 were 74.76 and 73.71, respectively. Both values exceeded the table value. Consequently, the result was deemed significant, and both statements were accepted. Calculated Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) values of the respondents for statements 4 and 5 in Table 1 were 84.29 and 74.76, respectively. Both values exceeded the table value. Consequently, the result was deemed significant, and both statements were accepted.

**Table No 3: Intrapersonal Conflict Regarding Profession**

S.No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	$\chi^2$
1	“Lack of commitment to the profession”.	<b>52</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>45.3</b>
		13%	25%	16%	16%	31%	
2	“Sometimes I found it hard to manage while completing thesis work and job side by side.”	<b>75</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>54.6</b>
		19%	34%	17%	12%	18%	
3	“Mostly, I can’t create a balance between my job and my Thesis work.”	<b>64</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>24.0</b>
		16%	28%	22%	14%	20%	
4	“Sometimes, I display a lack of respect for my job.”	<b>55</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>25.6</b>
		14%	21%	16%	28%	22%	
5	“Poor social services, e.g., accommodation.”	<b>37</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>49.2</b>
		9.3%	30%	25%	18%	18%	
Total Average %		<b>14.3%</b>	<b>27.6%</b>	<b>19.2%</b>	<b>17.7%</b>	<b>21.8%</b>	

“Degree of Freedom=4” “Significant Level=0.05” “Table Value=9.488”



Table 3 shows the Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) value for statements 1 to 7. The respondents' calculated Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) value for statement 1 was 17.5, which exceeded the table value. Consequently, the result was deemed significant, and the statement was accepted. Calculated Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) values of the respondents for statements 2 and 3 in Table 2 were 68.3 and 76.8, respectively. Both values exceeded the table value. Consequently, the result was deemed significant, and both statements were accepted. Calculated Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) values of the respondents for statements 4 and 5 in Table 2 were 202.0 and 84.4, respectively. Both values exceeded the table value. Consequently, the result was deemed significant, and both statements were accepted.

Table 4 shows the Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) value for statements 1 to 6. The respondents' calculated Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) value for statement 1 was 17.5, which exceeded the table value. Consequently, the result was deemed significant, and the statement was accepted. Calculated Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) values of the respondents for statements 2 and 3 in Table 3 were 68.3 and 76.8, respectively. Both values exceeded the table value. Consequently, the result was deemed significant, and both statements were accepted.

**Table No 4: Interpersonal Conflict Regarding Selection of Supervisor**

S.No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	$\chi^2$
1	“My teachers force me to select them as research supervisors.”	48	32	48	160	112	147.2
		12%	8%	12%	40%	28%	
2	“Mostly, the teachers forcefully referred their friends to be selected as our supervisor.”	16	40	72	120	152	156.8
		4%	10%	18%	30%	38%	
3	“Most of the teachers had no space to select me as a supervisory, with whom I was interested in conducting research.”	48	108	68	56	120	51.6
		12%	27%	17%	14%	30%	
4	“My research supervisor welcomes my novel ideas regarding research.”	104	186	70	24	16	239.3
		26%	47%	18%	6%	4%	
5	“Incompatibility with supervisor”.	36	94	66	72	132	63.7
		9%	24%	17%	18%	33%	
6.	“Displays lack of respect for student”.	16	74	54	152	104	132.1
		4%	19%	14%	38%	26%	
Total Average %							

“Degree of Freedom=4”      “Significant Level=0.05”      “Table Value=9.488”

Calculated Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) values of the respondents for statements 4 and 5 in Table 3 were 202.0 and 84.4, respectively. Both values exceeded the table value. Consequently, the result was deemed significant, and both statements were accepted. The respondents' calculated Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) values for statement 6 in Table 3 were 18.6. The values exceeded the table value. Consequently, the result was deemed significant, and the statement was accepted.





**Table No 5: Interpersonal Conflict Regarding Institution Support**

S.No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	$\chi^2$
1	“The student does not have a convenient approach to the concerned campus principal/ director.”	56 14%	108 27%	68 17%	80 20%	88 22%	19.6
2	“The university administration is not helpful regarding the allocation of resources like internet facility, VPN address, etc.”	45 11%	160 40%	83 21%	64 16%	48 12%	111.4
3	“The university has not provided us any access to paid e-libraries.”	49 12%	136 34%	87 22%	32 8%	96 24%	83.8
4	“The university has not provided us any room where we could sit & work regarding out thesis”.	64 16%	120 30%	64 16%	88 22%	64 16%	30.4
5	“The university library has no electricity backup.”	62 16%	56 14%	86 22%	52 13%	144 36%	72.7
Total Average %							

“Degree of Freedom=4”      “Significant Level=0.05”      “Table Value=9.488”

Table 6 shows the Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) value for statements 1 to 5. The respondents' calculated Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) value for statement 1 was 17.5, which exceeded the table value. Consequently, the result was deemed significant, and the statement was accepted. Calculated Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) values of the respondents for statements 2 and 3 were 68.3 and 76.8, respectively. Both values exceeded the table value. Consequently, the result was deemed significant, and both statements were accepted. Calculated Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) values of the respondents for statements 4 and 5 were 202.0 and 84.4, respectively. Both values exceeded the table value. Consequently, the result was deemed significant, and both statements were accepted.

**4.2 Findings of The Study**

1. For the “Intrapersonal Conflict Regarding Personality” statements, 22.65% of respondents responded as Strongly Agree, 32.75% Agree and 13.25% Undecided. Meanwhile, 16.3% and 15% of respondents disagreed and strongly Disagreed, respectively.
2. For the “Intrapersonal Conflict Regarding Profession” statements, 12.5% of respondents responded as Strongly Agree, 27.8% Agree and 17.3% Undecided. Meanwhile, 16.3% and 15% of respondents disagreed and strongly Disagreed, respectively.
3. For the statement “*Interpersonal Conflict Regarding Selection of Supervisor,*” 12.5% of respondents responded as Strongly Agree, 27.8% Agree, and 17.3% Undecided. Meanwhile, 16.3% and 15% of respondents disagreed and strongly Disagreed, respectively.
4. For the statement “*Interpersonal Conflict Regarding Institution Support Supervisor,*” 12.5% of respondents responded as Strongly Agree, 27.8% Agree, and 17.3% Undecided. Meanwhile, 16.3% and 15% of respondents disagreed and strongly Disagreed, respectively.

### 4.3 Discussion

These differences have indicated various types of intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts among students related to personality, occupation, choice of supervisors, and institutional support. Concerning interpersonal conflicts, students reported that they witnessed personal or career choice-related conflicts in over half of the cases. It supports previous research indicating increased self-identity conflict in university students due to academic pressures, career concerns, and questions of self-formation (Kiran et al., 2022). These high agreement rates point more toward the direction that universities should provide better-coping mechanisms in case of such internal conflict among students. Interpersonal conflict was another area noted from this study to be highly charged, particularly concerning the selection of supervisors and institutional support. The authors also state that these results align with Kayani and Kiran (2019), who have observed the same trends in supervisor-student relationships and the institution's support system. Since such problems have been noted in previous research, they should be viewed as systematic and treated with a consequentialist perspective at the institutional level. However, what is more important is that many students disagreed with most of the statements pointing to conflict experiences that were contrary to expectations. These conflicting responses pave the way to the variation, as mentioned earlier, in the understanding of different students, and it can be speculated that individual differences may mediate conflict experiences and perceptions, the culture of the department, or specific institutional contexts. It is suggested that future research could extend these potential influencing factors to enhance the understanding of conflict features within learning contexts embedded in higher learning institutions. However, strategies for managing conflicts, such as seminars, workshops, and training programs described in the study, are effective based on the findings of the literature review. For instance, Abu Nasra and Arar (2020) posited that leadership roles entail managing and controlling conflicts, and Hussein et al. (2022) revealed that conflict management moderates organizational commitment. These are the recommendations that I think may also enhance the effectiveness of students concerning conflicts.

### 5. Conclusions

From the conclusion of the data, it is found that most respondents agree with the existence of *“Intrapersonal Conflict Regarding Personality.”* At the same time, less than half of the total sample size disagrees with the said statement. Hence, it is recommended that universities conduct seminars and workshops to resolve and minimize the *“Intrapersonal Conflict Regarding Personality,”* which will produce positive change in the interpersonal conflict regarding the students' personalities. From the conclusion of the data, it is found that most respondents agree to the existence of *“Intrapersonal Conflict Regarding Profession.”* At the same time, less than half of the total sample size disagrees with the said statement. Hence, it is recommended that universities develop and implement conflict resolution training programs for university students to enhance their conflict management skills. From the conclusion of the data, it is found that most respondents agree with the existence of *“Interpersonal Conflict Regarding Selection of Supervisor.”* At the same time, less than half of the total sample size disagrees with the said statement. Hence, it is recommended that opportunities be provided for university students to

practice conflict resolution skills in a safe and supportive environment through role-playing exercises and simulations. From the conclusion of the data, it is found that most respondents agree with the existence of “*Interpersonal Conflict Regarding Institution Support Supervisor.*” At the same time, less than half of the total sample size disagrees with the said statement. Hence, it is recommended that students be encouraged to seek out and use university resources such as counseling and mediation services to help manage conflicts.

### 5.1 Recommendations

This study explored the types of conflicts and conflict management strategies adopted by students at the university level in Islamabad/Rawalpindi. The researcher would like to recommend the following recommendations for future researchers:

1. The researcher could compare student conflict management strategies from different universities, cultural backgrounds, or academic disciplines. This could help to identify whether there are any differences in conflict management styles based on these factors or not.
2. Gender differences have been shown to play a role in conflict management styles. Researchers could examine whether male and female students adopt different conflict management strategies and the reasons behind these differences.
3. With the rise of digital communication, conflicts can occur online or through social media. Researchers could investigate whether students use different conflict management strategies in these contexts or whether the use of technology affects conflict resolution.
4. Personality traits can influence how people approach and manage conflicts. Researchers could investigate whether certain personality traits are associated with specific conflict management strategies among university students.

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