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# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HEADS

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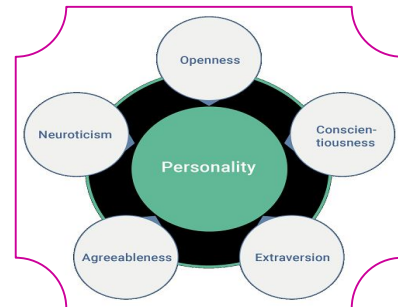
ABSTRACT

The prevalent notion about the personality traits of an individual as correlates of different psychological characteristics emerging from social, moral, mental, and emotional domains is confirmed valid again in the present research. The means and styles of managing conflicts arising in elementary schools, by the headmasters are found to be correlated predominantly with the personality traits extraversion, agreeableness, and openness, and less prominently with the personality traits conscientiousness and neuroticism. Moreover, the present study has confirmed the differences existing in the relationship between personality traits and conflict management styles of elementary school heads in respect of gender.

KEYWORDS: Big 5 Personality Traits, Conflict Management Style, Elementary School Heads.

INTRODUCTION

Man is a rational being for the simple reason; he is bestowed with thinking capacity. But at the same, when thinking about a particular task or an act recurs frequently, he is drawn into a conflict of thinking, to decide which one is good or bad, or right or wrong. Too much of personal conflict debilitates decision making. Similar to this, the 'conflicts' arising between groups gain momentum and at times destroy the peaceful coexistence of different groups because of the delay in harmonizing the thinking of the conflicting groups. Thus what are needed for managing or resolving intergroup conflicts is the unification of thinking and the arousal of emotions in the heads of the conflicting groups. Therefore, the head of an institution needs to be a cool headed person with high professional caliber, strong self esteem charismatic leadership qualities coupled with powerful communication competence and instant decision making. In any educational institution, the faculties are also competent to manage the conflicts arising in their classrooms or in other learning spots. However, the conflicts arising in institutions by the clash of larger groups, bordering legal boundaries, social norms and ethics are to be tackled only by the intervention of the head.

BACKGROUND

Clash of two or more number of groups in an organization over an issue of anticipated or real loss of monetary gains, physical comforts, legal provisions, social privileges, professional growth, job security, future benefits, etc may lead to an organizational conflict causing worry and anxiety to the leaders/managers to manage over the situation for the time being or to resolve it permanently by means of Party-Directed Mediation (PDM) approach, which is suitable for settling disputes between workers and the management and also for resolving conflicts involving multi-cultural issues. Another important approach for solving organizational disputes is Negotiation Performance Appraisal (NPA) primarily meant for improving

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communication between employees and officers in a way to safeguard the power of officers/authorities during interaction between the two groups trying to sort out the differences between them.

Conflict management is defined precisely as the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing their positive aspects. But conflict resolution involves the reduction, elimination or termination of all forms and types of conflict (Retrieved). In conflict management studies, it is found that three categories of orientations have been in vogue for long, presented as: lose-lose orientation, win-lose orientation, and win-win orientation. Win-win orientation may appear to be ideal, as it will satisfy both the parties. However in the practical, competitive world, executing perfect win-win orientation may just be a farce, as human tendency will not accept an idea of loss when the rival taking away the loaf in full. Pruit (1983) argues that problem solving is the preferred method for securing mutual benefits (win-win) for the contesting groups. As a mark of progress in the field of conflict management, several models appeared in successive years as Khun and Poole's model (2000) incorporating two sub-models: Distributive and Integrative; Dechurch and Murk's model (2001) comprising two dimensions: Activeness and Agreeableness; and Rahim's (2002) meta-model consisting of two dimensions: Concern for self and Concern for others. Kenneth, W.T. and Ralph, H.K. (2015) have presented a model comprising five conflict management styles based on two dimensions: Assertiveness and cooperation. The following are the 5 conflict management styles reported by them: Accommodating, Avoiding, Collaborating, Competing, and Compromising (Retrieved).

REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES
Maria et al. (2018) investigated health professionals in Cyprus hospitals to explore the conflicts encountered by them and the type of conflict management adopted by them. The study has found that 73.2% of the subjects used avoiding strategy, while 54.2% of them engaged in negotiation for mutual benefit and 40.5% reported compromise as their style for managing conflicts.

Nigar (2017) studied conflict management strategies of nurses in relation to their personality traits. The personality traits of nurses were mostly conscientiousness and openness and when they had a conflict they tended to make use of integration strategy. The personality traits of nurses were found to have effect on their conflict management traits.

Leodoro et al. (2018) established that integration was the most frequent style used by nursing professionals to manage conflicts followed by accommodation with the least preference of avoiding and competing.

Laurie (2017) reported that nurse leaders and managers were found to adopt problem solving strategies to tackle conflicts encouraged by their leadership qualities, positive team dynamics and communication competence.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
A search through literature on conflict management style reveals that studies on elementary school teachers and heads in the perspective conflict management are much limited in number in general in the global context and just a few in the Indian sub continent. It may be due to lack of awareness among investigators to get their works published in international journals. Anyhow research on conflict management of elementary school teachers and heads in India in general and Tamilnadu in particular is inadequate and not systematic. Therefore, the present one on the neglected population in Tamilnadu, the heads of elementary school in Salem district, focusing on conflict management style is a much needed one.

Moreover, the present study is designed to identify the preference or dominance of elementary school heads' conflict management styles in relation to Big Five personality traits - Extroversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness.

The outcome of the present study would enable the educational authorities and psychologists to plan and design training programmes for the heads to improve their awareness about the ideal conflict

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management styles and develop them for functioning as an efficient head to manage and resolve conflicts to enable institutions to march towards harmony and development.

OBJECTIVES
- To study the significant relationship between conflict management styles and big five personality factors of elementary school heads.
- To find out the significant relationship between conflict management styles and big five personality factors of elementary school heads in terms of gender.

METHODOLOGY
The stated problem demands quantitative data to be generated by the adoption of survey method of research, suitable for correlative analysis. The population of the study includes all the heads of elementary schools run by government and local bodies in Salem district. 3%-5% of the population chosen randomly after due stratification will constitute the sample of the study. The final sample is formed of 120 elementary school headmasters. Conflict Management Styles Assessment Scale (CMSAS) prepared and validated by the investigator and the research supervisor and Big 5 Personality Factors Inventory by McCrae, R.R. (2004).

DATA ANALYSIS
Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between conflict management styles and big five personality factors of elementary school heads.

Table 1: Relationship between Conflict Management Style and Big Five Personality Factors of Elementary School Heads

Factors	Extroversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness
Collaborating	0.22*	0.24*	0.21*	0.16	0.38**
Competing	0.29*	0.38**	0.08	0.22*	0.31**
Avoiding	0.21*	0.41**	0.17	0.14	0.29**
Accommodating	0.32**	0.25*	0.22*	0.24*	0.24*
Compromising	0.35**	0.31**	0.25*	0.12	0.34**

**Significant at 0.01 level & *Significant at 0.05 level.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between conflict management styles and big five personality factors of elementary school heads in terms of gender.

Table 2: Relationship between Conflict Management Style and Big Five Personality Factors of Elementary School Heads based on Gender

Gender	Factors	Extroversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness
Male	Collaborating	0.29*	0.34*	0.24	0.33*	0.44**
	Competing	0.37**	0.30*	0.21	0.27	0.37**
	Avoiding	0.30*	0.45**	0.29*	0.19	0.26
	Accommodating	0.39**	0.41**	0.31*	0.24	0.39**
	Compromising	0.42**	0.33*	0.22	0.31*	0.42**
Female	Collaborating	0.25*	0.30*	0.26*	0.30*	0.28*
	Competing	0.29*	0.39**	0.21	0.22	0.34**
	Avoiding	0.32**	0.34**	0.17	0.19	0.30*
	Accommodating	0.34**	0.42**	0.29*	0.20	0.46**
	Compromising	0.37**	0.40**	0.30*	0.29*	0.41**

**Significant at 0.01 level & *Significant at 0.05 level.

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From Table-2,

The correlative analysis computed for establishing the relationship between prevalence of conflict management styles and big five personality traits of elementary school heads indicates that the conflict management style Collaborating is significantly correlated with all the five personality traits; Competing is significantly correlated with personality traits - extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism and openness; Avoiding is significantly correlated with personality traits - extraversion, agreeableness, and openness; Accommodating is significantly correlated with all the five personality traits; and Compromising is significantly correlated with personality traits - extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness.

On testing the significance of correlation in terms of gender between conflict management styles and big five personality traits, it is found that in the case of male heads of elementary schools significant correlation is found between the conflict management style Collaborating and personality traits - extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism and openness; Competing is significantly correlated with extraversion, agreeableness, and openness; Avoiding is significantly correlated with extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness; Accommodating is significantly correlated with extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness; and Compromising is significantly correlated with extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism and openness.

In the case of female heads of elementary schools the conflict management style Collaborating is significantly correlated with all the five personality traits; Competing is significantly correlated with extraversion, agreeableness, and openness; Avoiding is significantly correlated with extraversion, agreeableness, and openness; Accommodating is significantly correlated with extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness; and Compromising is significantly correlated with all the five personality traits.

DISCUSSION

The finding reveals that the personality traits extraversion is highly predominant in interacting with the conflict management styles. It is reported that the styles Collaborating, Competing and Avoiding are highly significant (1%) correlates of extraversion; while Accommodating and Compromising are significant correlates. That is, all the five conflict management styles are correlated with extraversion. Next to this personality trait agreeableness emerges as a predominant correlate of all the five conflict management styles. Of these, Collaborating and Accommodating are highly significant with agreeableness; whereas, Competing, Avoiding and Compromising are found to be significant at 5% level. Following this, the personality trait openness emerges a dominant correlate. In this case, Accommodating is found to be a highly significant correlate of the personality trait openness, while all the other four conflict management styles are just significant correlates of openness. The other two personality traits, conscientiousness and neuroticism are not found to be the dominant correlates of the 5 conflict management styles.

In the case of the personality trait extraversion, the dominance of this trait in causing highly significant correlation with the conflict management styles Collaborating, Competing and Avoiding may be attributed to the nature of facets of this trait - assertiveness, adventurous, energetic, enthusiasm and outgoing. While Collaborating style is likely to be favoured by the facet of extraversion - sociable, enthusiasm and outgoing, the style Competing may be strongly knitted with the facets of extraversion - forcible, energetic and adventurous. The highly significant correlation between the style Avoiding and the trait extraversion may be attributed to gregariousness and positive emotions embedded in extraversion. The correlation between the trait agreeableness and conflict management styles may be explained on the basis of the facets of agreeableness. The conflict management styles Collaborating and Accommodating emerge as significant correlates of agreeableness because of the following characteristics incorporated in the trait agreeableness: trust, compliance, sympathetic and modesty. Similarly, the personality trait openness has emerged as a significant correlate of the conflict management style Accommodating. The relationship may be attributed to the facets of openness such as wide interest, aesthetic and curious. Hence the Investigator

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attributes the non-significant correlation between conflict management styles and the personality traits conscientiousness and neuroticism to the presence of facets of these traits having non-conducive characteristics.

The study has also brought out the differences between male and female elementary school heads in respect of the relationship between their conflict management styles and the personality traits. In the case of male heads, the trait agreeableness seems to rank first followed by extraversion ranking second, with openness ranking third in effecting correlation with the five conflict management styles. However in the case of female heads, extraversion and openness rank first followed by agreeableness in the second position in effecting correlation with the five conflict management styles. This consolidated information clearly indicates the existing difference between the male and female elementary school heads in respect of the personality traits influencing their possible conflict management styles.

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