Conflict Management Strategies Adopted By Teachers Of Special Education Schools: An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

The origin of conflict concept is equivalent to the history of humanity. The occurrence of conflicts in every environment in which human is present appears to us as normal. The study was aimed at "conflict management strategies adopted by teachers of special education schools". Main objectives of the study were (1) to identify types of conflicts occurring in school according to perceptions and views of teachers and (2) to explore views of teachers about resolution strategies used for conflicts management. Sample of the study comprised of 60 teachers from special education institutions in district Attock. Simple random sampling technique was used for collecting of data. The population of the study was all special education institutions of district Attock. Questionnaire was used as a research instrument. Data was collected through questionnaire. Questionnaire was developed on five likert point scale i,e Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree and consist of 18 items. The reliability of the instrument was found by applying Cronbach's Alpha formula. According to the research findings, Value Conflict were mostly exists in the teachers of special education institute. Most of the teachers strongly agreed to use accommodating conflict management strategy in their institute. The strategies for conflict solution usedby the teachers vary according to school shareholders in which they experience conflict. Furthermore, findings have been obtained regarding that there is not any common management policy in the school. However, most of the teachers showed tendency to use accommodating conflict management strategy in their institutes. Finding of the study also showed that most of the teachers of special education schools are fresh graduates, having teaching experience from 1 to 10 years. Hence it is recommended that their teaching and management skills must be developed by using regular training programs, So that they should be able to manage and improve the teaching learning environment of the institutes.

Keywords: Conflict, Conflict Management, Conflict Resolution Strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

The origin of conflict concept is equivalent to the history of humanity. The occurrence of conflicts in everyenvironment in which human is present appears to us as normal. The subject of the conflict, especially startingfrom 1970's has been the center of attraction of organizational life particularly in the USA and the world. Even,one

of the results that makes people sad and the other one that causes workforce losses and time loss of theorganizations has led to countries to establish organizations and has led the organizations to attend actively totraining in order to minimize these problems (Dagl & Sıgrı, 2014).

Because of diverse and varied definitions of conflict, attitudestowards it and images of its role are also varied. Conflict in schools takesdifferent forms; for example teachers seem reluctant to obey theprincipals, they do not seem to follow rules or accept extra work, they donot easily get along with their principals. Principals too adopt anauthoritative approach, for example they pressurize teachers for anuninterrupted working of the school activities. It, therefore, becomescommon that conflict between teachers and the school principal occurfrequently at any time in the school7. In institutions, conflict occursbetween various individuals because of their frequent interaction witheach other. Conflict is an expression of hostility, antagonism andmisunderstanding between the staff members (David W. Johnson & Roger T. Johnson, 1996).

Conflict is a part of everyday life. Conflict can be found in every organization usually stemming from incongruent goals, different approaches to reach the same outcome, and/or limited resources. Conflict is not always negative. Sometimes the energy from conflict can create innovative solutions; however, conflict left unchecked can result in negative outcomes. Conflict management is a method incorporated to facilitate a positive or at least an agreeable outcome (Katz & Lawyer, 1993).

Conflict involves situations in which differences are expressed by interdependent people in the process of achieving their needs and goals and it arises when a difference between two or more people necessitates change in at least one person in order for their engagement to continue and develop (Denohue& Kott, 1992).

Conflict is a problem when it: (1) Hampers productivity (2) Lowers morale (3) Causes more and continued conflicts (4) Causes inappropriate behaviors (Tschannen-Moran, M., 2001).

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOL

The better educators and students understand the nature of conflict, thebetter able they are to manage conflicts constructively. Hanson sees conflict management as "a philosophy and a set of skills that assistindividuals and groups in better understanding and dealing with conflictas it arises in all aspects of their lives". Conflicts as a concept neverremain positive or negative but it has always been seen as a basic andresult oriented part of school life (Hanson, E.M., 1991).

There is a necessity to delve more deeply into the subject of special education conflict management at the school level. Information is available regarding the formal mechanisms of special education conflict management. However, in regard to the school setting area, information is lacking. In some studies, principals have offered insight into organizational conflict management, embedding information into their descriptions of general management tactics in schools. However, none of these strategies has specifically addressed special education nor have others' opinions been sought at the school level except those of principals (Neely, H. 2005).

RATIONAL OF THE STUDY

The reason for this investigation was to create suggestions for peace promotion systems for the educators of a specialized curriculum. The proposed result of this request is to create proposals and suggestions for school-based peace promotion keeping in mind the end goal to influence exceptional youngsters to fulfill and autonomous in order to make special children satisfy and independent.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Main objectives of the study were

1. To identify types of conflicts occurring in school according to perceptions and views of teachers
2. To explore views of teachers about resolution strategies used for conflicts management.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H_1:   There exist different conflicts in special education schools.

H_2:   Teachers of special education schools are using different conflict management strategies for overcome conflicts.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The current study will be helpful in identification of types of conflicts, causes of conflicts and the strategies used by working staff in special education schools to manage conflict. This will serve as a situational analysis in development of conflict management mechanism in special education schools. In this way special education schools can better meet the needs of working staff, parents and the special students.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study is intentionally limited to explore conflict management strategies adopted by teachers of special education schools in district Attock. The study was delimited to the special schools of District Attock located in the main city.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

DEFINING CONFLICT AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Struggle happens wherever in our life whether inside or outside the association. Because of increment of contention in and outside associations it is getting consideration of different scholastic researchers (Cronin & Weingart, 2007).

The classification of conflict is often made on the basis of the antecedent conditions that lead to conflict. Conflict may originate from a number of sources, such as tasks, values, goals, and so on. It has been found appropriate to classify conflict on the basis of these sources for proper understanding of its nature and implications. Following is a brief description of this classification.

AFFECTIVE CONFLICT

This is defined as "a condition in which group members have interpersonal clashes characterized by anger, frustration, and other negative feelings" (Plunkett, W.R. & Raymond, F., 1989).

SUBSTANTIVE CONFLICT

Jehn (1997) characterized this type of conflict as "disagreements among group members' ideas and opinions about the task being performed, such as disagreement regarding an organization's current strategic position or determining the correct data to include in a report" (Jehn, K. A., 1997).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This is described as an irregularity between two gatherings in their inclinations for the portion of an inadequate asset. This kind of contention happens "when each party, sharing the same understanding of the situation, prefers a different and somewhat incompatible solution to a problem involving either a distribution of scarce resources between them or a decision to share the work of solving it" (Druckman, D., & Zechmeister, K., 1973).

CONFLICT OF VALUES

This occurs when two social entities differ in their values or ideologies on certain issue. This is also called ideological conflict (Druckman, D., Broome, B. J., &Korper, S. H., 1988).

GOAL CONFLICT

This happens when a favored result or an end-condition of two social elements is conflicting. In uncommon cases "it may involve divergent preferences over all of the decision outcomes, constituting a zero-sum game" (Cosier, R. A., & Rose, G. L. 1977).

REALISTIC VERSUS NONREALISTIC CONFLICT

Realistic conflict is linked with "mostly rational or goal-oriented" divergence, nonrealistic conflict "is an end in itself having little to do with group or organizational goals" (Ross, R. S. & Ross, J. R., 1989).

INSTITUTIONALIZED VERSUS NON-INSTITUTIONALIZED CONFLICT

The previous is portrayed by circumstances in which entertainers follow explicit rules, and show unsurprising way of behaving, and their relationship has continuity, as on account of line-staff struggle or works the executives' talks. Most racial clash is non-systematized where these three circumstances are nonexistent.

RETRIBUTIVE CONFLICT

This conflict is described by a circumstance where the clashing substances or groups feel the requirement for an excessively long struggle to rebuff the rival. At the end of the day, each party decides its benefits, to some degree, by bringing about expenses for the other party (Saaty, T. L., 1990).

MISATTRIBUTED CONFLICT

This connects with the inaccurate task of causes (ways of behaving, gatherings, or issues) to struggle. For instance, a worker may wrongly credit to their boss a cut in the representative's specialization spending plan, which might have been finished by more significant level directors over the dissent of the manager (Deutsch, M., 1977).

DISPLACED CONFLICT

This sort of contention happens while the clashing gatherings either direct their disappointments or threats toward social elements that are not engaged with struggle or quarrel about optional, not major, issues (Deutsch, 1977).

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson (1996) hold that Compromise and friend intervention programs are in many cases advanced as a way to reduce brutality (and disastrously oversaw clashes) in schools 28.Management of contention is a human relations idea long perceived in business and industry as an important part of the formative cycle (Cora Elaine, Harper, 2004). Sweeney and Caruthers (1996) describe conflict resolution in almost common and short way, "the process used by parties in conflict toreach a settlement" (Sweeney, B. & Caruthers, W. L., 1996).

Hocker and Wilmot (1985) at first examine conflict management styles regarding suppositions. Their suspicions are:

1. Individuals foster designed reaction to conflict
2. Individuals foster conflict styles because of reasons that check out to them.
3. Nobody style is consequently better compared to another.
4. Individuals' styles go through change to adjust to the requests of new circumstances.

Simon and Schuster (1998) focus on systems explicitly named as goal procedures. He records eight strategies as: (1) Critical thinking (2) Super ordinate objectives (3) Evasion (4)Smoothing (5) Split the difference (6) Legitimate order (7) Changing the human variable (8) Adjusting underlying factors (Simon &Schuster, 1998).

Thomas (1971) looks at peace promotion techniques by focusing on broad methodologies utilized by executives in an educational setting. In his examination he brings up that there is no distinction between management and administration; subsequently, director is inseparable from pioneer.

Thomas eight procedures for the management are: (1) Citizen advisories (2) Conflict meetings (3) Responsiveness training (4) Process involvement (5) Instructive pluralism (6) Volunteerism (7) Cooperative studies (8) Disappointment (Thomas & Donald, 1971).

Since conflict is apparently undeniable, especially in a scholarly setting, it is clearly important for administrators to be capable to recognize conflict, to see its helpful as well as destructive potential, to figure out how to oversee conflict, and to apply conflict management systems in a down to earth way (Karen L. Fleetwood A, 1987).

3. METHODOLOGY

The research has been constructed according to a quantitative method. Quantitative research methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques (Creswell, 2013).

POPULATION

All 117 teachersof special education institutions of District Attock were the population of the study.The study was based in province Punjab, District Attock. (Source: Sampled Schools, 2022)

SAMPLE AND SAMPLE TECHNIQUE

Sample of the study consist of 6 special education schools located in the Attock city. From these 6 special education schools, 84 teachers were given questionnaire for data collection.

According to the nature of study, researcher used random sampling technique in which each and every individual in the population is having equal chance of participation.

INSTRUMENT

A five likert scale questionnaire was used as a research instrument. There were 18 items in the questionnaire. Each item of the questionnaire had five options i.e, Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Strongly Disagree and Disagree. The reliability of the instrument was found by applying Cronbach's Alpha formula.

DATA COLLECTION

The data for this research was collected from the teachers of special education institutions of District Attock. Researchers personally distributed questionnaires amongst the 60 teachers. Each question of the questionnaire was properly explained to the respondents for the accurate and specific information.

DATA ANALYSIS

Chi Square Test (χ^2) was used for data analysis.A chi-square (χ^2) calculation is the collection of questions that calculate how expectations compare to actual observed data (or model results). The data for calculating a chi-square statistic must be mutually exclusive, drawn, random, raw, from independent variables, and drawn from a large enough sample.

The calculation of the Chi-Square statistic is quite straight-forward and intuitive:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(fo - fe)^2}{fe}$$

Where

f_o = the observed frequency (the observed counts in the cells).

f_e = the expected frequency.

$\sum$ = Sum of equation.

4.   ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Table 1: Demographic variable

Gender			Teacher's Experience			Teacher's Qualification		
Male	16	19.0%	1 – 10 Years	49	58.3%	BA/B.Sc	6	7.1%
Female	68	81.0%						
Age			11 – 20 Years	29	34.5%	M.A/M.Sc	49	58.3%
20 – 30 Years	33	39.3%	21 – 30 Years	4	4.8%	MS/M.Phil	23	27.4%
31 – 40 Years	22	26.2%						
41 – 50 Years	24	28.6%	Above 30 Years	2	2.4%	Ph.D*	6	7.1%
51 – 60 Years	5	6.0%						

Table 1 shows the demographic variables firstly with respect to Gender consisted of two categories. First category that was Male and second category that was Female, there were 16 (19.0%) Male respondents and 68 (81.0%) respondents were Female.

With respect to Age, there were four categories. First category range was from 1 to 10 years, second category was from 11 to 20 years, third category was from 21 to 30 years and the last category was from 31 to 40 years. There were 33 (39.3%) respondents having age from 20 to 30 years, 22 (26.2%) respondents have age from 31 to 40 years, 24 (28.6%) respondents have age from 41 to 50 years and only 5 (6%) respondents have age from 51 to 60 years.

With respect to Teacher's Experience, there were four categories. First category range

was from 1 to 10 years, second category was from 11 to 20 years, third category was from 21 to 30 years and the last category was above 30 years. There were 49 (58.3%) respondents having age from 20 to 30 years, 29 (34.5%) respondents have age from 31 to 40 years, 4 (4.8%) respondents have age from 41 to 50 years and only 2 (2.4%) respondents have age from 51 to 60 years.

With respect to Teacher Qualification, there were four categories. First category was BA/B,Sc, second category was MA/MSc, third category was MS/M.Phil and the last category was Either enrolled in or completedPhD. There were 6 (7.1%) respondents havequalification BA/BSc, 49 (58.3%) respondents have qualification MA/MSc, 23 (27.4%) respondents have qualification MS/MPhil and only 6 (7.1%) respondents have got enrolled.

Table 2:

S.No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	χ^2
1	I explore issues with others to find solutions that meet everyone's needs.	**47**	**24**	**5**	**5**	**3**	**84.29**
		56%	28.6%	6%	6%	3.6%	
2	I try to negotiate and adopt a "give-and-take" approach to problem situations.	**42**	**29**	**8**	**3**	**2**	**74.76**
		50%	34.5%	9.5%	3.6%	2.4%	
3	I try to meet the expectations of others.	**17**	**47**	**11**	**3**	**6**	**73.71**
		20.2%	56%	13.1%	3.6%	7.1%	

Degree of Freedom=4,   Significant Level=0.05,   Table Value=9.488

Table 2 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square(x^2) value of respondents for statement 1 was 84.29 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Table 2 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square(x^2) value of respondents for statement 2 was 74.76 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Table 2 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square(x^2) value of respondents for statement 3 was 73.71 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Table 3:

S.No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	χ^2
1	I try to see conflict from both sides, What do I need? What does other person need	**36**	**33**	**8**	**4**	**3**	**62.53**
		42.9%	39.3%	9.5%	4.8%	3.6%	
2	Being at odds with other people makes me feel uncomfortable and anxious	**6**	**24**	**36**	**11**	**7**	**39.23**
		7.1%	28.6%	42.9%	13.1%	8.3%	
3	I have flexible nature, change my nature according to need of the situations	**30**	**36**	**10**	**4**	**4**	**53.94**
		35.7%	42.9%	11.9%	4.8%	4.8%	

Degree of Freedom=4,   Significant Level=0.05,   Table Value=9.488

Table 3 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square(x^2) value of respondents for statement 1 was 62.53 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Table 3 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square(x^2) value of respondents for statement 2 was 39.23 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Table 3 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square(x^2) value of respondents for statement 3 was 53.94 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Table 4:

S.No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	χ^2
1	Task Conflict is mostly exists in your institution.	**28**	**10**	**11**	**11**	**24**	**17.12**
		33.3%	11.9%	13.1%	13.1%	28.6%	
2	Relationship Conflict is mostly exists in your institution.	**21**	**11**	**30**	**11**	**11**	**17.23**
		25.0%	13.1%	35.7%	13.1%	13.1%	
3	Value Conflict is mostly exists in your institution.	**23**	**22**	**18**	**17**	**4**	**13.59**
		27.4%	26.2%	21.4%	20.2%	4.8%	

Degree of Freedom=4,   Significant Level=0.05,   Table Value=9.488

Table 4 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square(x^2) value of respondents for statement 1 was 17.12 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Table 4 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square(x^2) value of respondents for statement 2 was 17.23 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Table 4 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square(x^2) value of respondents for statement 3 was 13.59 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Types of Conflicts

Task	Relationship	Value
33.3	25	23

Percent
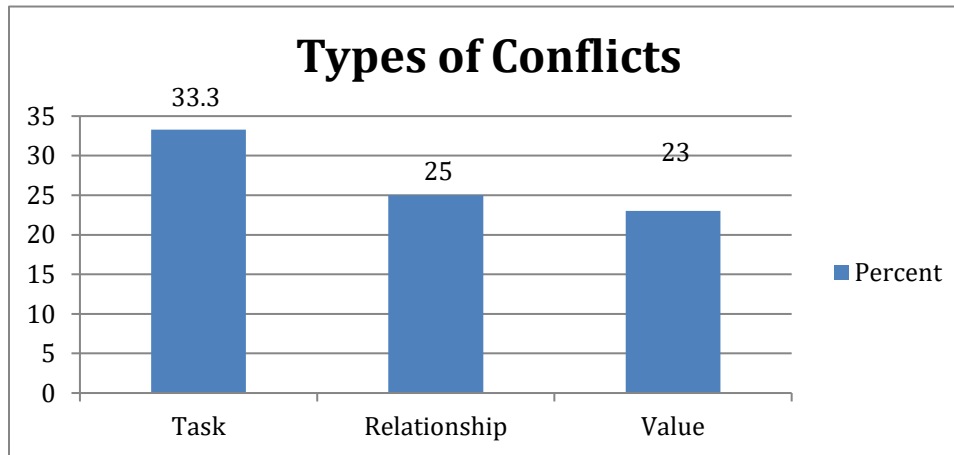
Table 5

S.No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	χ^2
1	I try to accommodate the wishes of my colleagues.	**23**	**39**	**10**	**8**	**4**	**48.18**
		27.1%	46.4%	11.9%	9.5%	4.8%	
2	I prefer compromise to break the deadlocks.	**11**	**43**	**11**	**7**	**12**	**51.35**
		13.1%	51.2%	13.1%	8.3%	14.3%	
3	I prefer to have equal relationship with all my colleagues.	**33**	**32**	**5**	**9**	**5**	**49.0**
		39.3%	38.1%	6%	10.7%	6%	
4	I accept new tasks for my experiences and knowledge.	**47**	**18**	**9**	**7**	**3**	**74.18**
		56%	21.4%	10.7%	8.3%	3.6%	

Degree of Freedom=4,   Significant Level=0.05,   Table Value=9.488

Table 5 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square(x^2) value of respondents for statement 1 was 48.18 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Table 5 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square(x^2) value of respondents for statement 2 was 51.35 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Table 5 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square(x^2) value of respondents for statement 3 was 49.0 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Table 5 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square(x^2) value of respondents for statement 4 was 74.18 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Table 6: Types of Conflict Management Strategy

S.No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	χ^2
1	Collaborating conflict management strategy is mostly used in your institution.	**20**	**46**	**7**	**7**	**4**	**71.71**
		23.8%	54.8%	8.3%	8.3%	4.8%	

2	Competing conflict management strategy is mostly used in your institution.	**26**	**29**	**11**	**6**	**12**	**23.94**
		31%	34.5%	13.1%	7.1%	14.3%	
3	Avoiding conflict management strategy is mostly used in your institution.	**12**	**31**	**16**	**13**	**12**	**15.47**
		14.3%	36.9%	19%	15.5%	14.3%	
4	Accommodating conflict management strategy is mostly used in your institution.	**30**	**35**	**10**	**5**	**4**	**50.29**
		35.7%	41.7%	11.9%	6%	4.8%	
5	Compromising conflict management strategy is mostly used in your institution.	**12**	**36**	**23**	**10**	**3**	**39.23**
		14.3%	42.9%	27.4%	11.9%	3.6%	

Degree of Freedom=4,   Significant Level=0.05,   Table Value=9.488

Table 6 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square (x^2) value of respondents for statement 1 was 71.71 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Table 6 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square (x^2) value of respondents for statement 2 was 23.94 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Table 6 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square (x^2) value of respondents for statement 3 was 15.47 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Table 6 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square (x^2) value of respondents for statement 4 was 50.29 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Table 6 indicates that's the calculated Chi-Square (x^2) value of respondents for statement 5 was 39.23 which is greater than the table value, hence the result was found significant and therefore the statement was accepted.

Types of Conflict Management Strategies
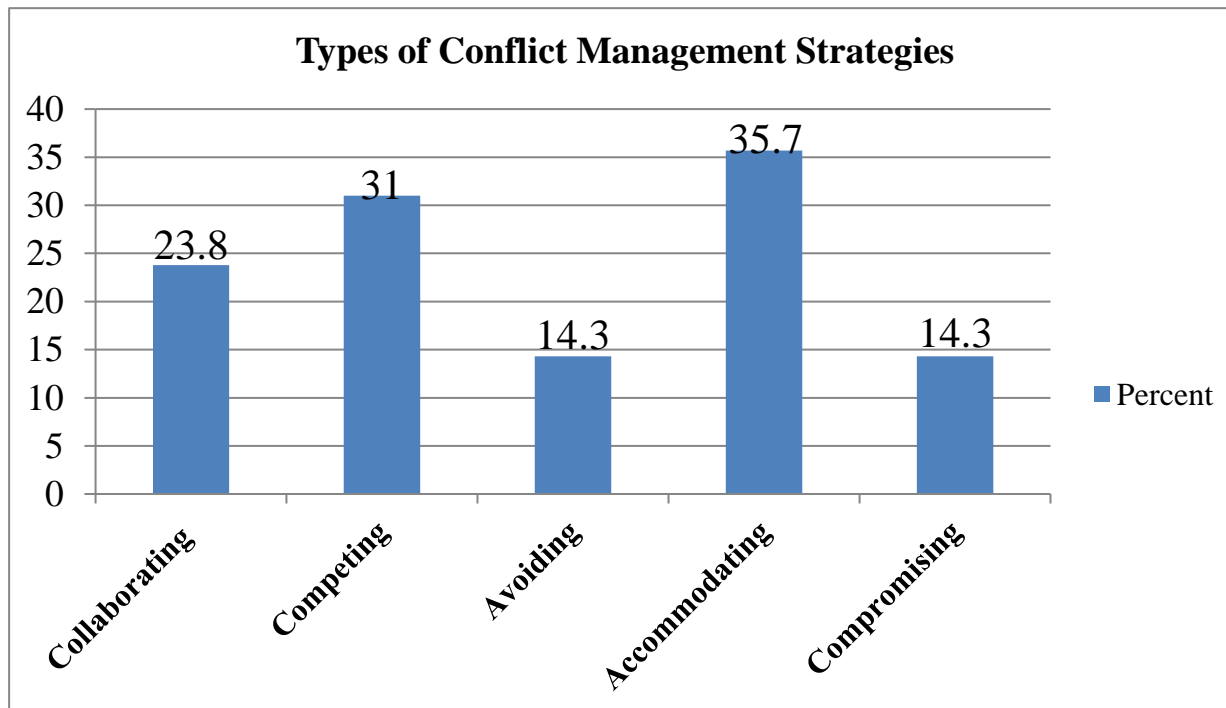
It is concluded under the light of findings of the collected data that;

1. 39.3% of the teachers are young in special education schools having age from 20 to 30 years.
2. There was big difference between the ratio (16, 68) of male and female staff.
3. 58.3% of the teachers of special education schools were having master's degree.
4. 58.3% of the teachers of special education schools were fresh graduates, having teaching experience from 1 to 10 years.
5. Value conflict was 33.3% in teachers of special education institute.
6. 35.7% of the teachers strongly agreed to use accommodating conflict management strategy in their institute.
7. 31% teachers of special education shows tendency towards using competing conflict management strategy in their institutes.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following recommendations are made under the light of the data of the study:

1. Most of the teachers are young in special education schools having age from 20 to 30 years. Hence it is recommended that teachers training program must be held at regular time period so that teaching skills may be improved in teachers of special education institutes.
2. There is big difference between the ratio (16, 68) of male and female staff. Hence it is recommended that male teaching staff must be encouraged to join special education institutes for providing their services to the special students.
3. Most of the teachers of special education schools are having master's degree. Hence it is recommended to encourage the teachers of special education

institutes to improve their academic qualification. However it was good sign that there were some teachers who were enrolled in PhD during their service. They must be appreciated from the administrations.

4. Most of the teachers of special education schools are fresh graduates, having teaching experience from 1 to 10 teachers of experience. Hence it is recommended that their teaching and management skill must be developed by using regular training programs.
5. Value Conflict is mostly exists in teachers of special education institute. Hence it is recommended that each teacher in the special institute must have same value of interest so that value conflict may be minimize in special education institutes.
6. Most of the teachers strongly agreed to use accommodating conflict management strategy in their institute. Hence it is recommended that teachers must be encouraged to adopt accommodating
7. Mostly teachers of special education shows tendency towards using Competing conflict management strategy in their institutes. Hence it is recommended to encourage teachers for using different conflict management strategies according to situation to improve the teaching learning environment of the special education institutions. It will also help the administration for the management of the institutes.

IMPLICATIONS

This current study will serve as a situational analysis for the special education schools to develop conflict management guidelines at

institutional and at program level in order to gain positive consequences of conflicts.

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