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Relationship between personality type and conflict management style among Teachers

Alita Sweeny Saldanha, Aneeta Mariya Johney, Crishal Vinisha D Souza, Amitha S, Allan Vijeth Rodrigues and Devina E Rodrigues *

UG final year nursing student, Father Muller College of Nursing, Mangalore, Karnataka state, India.

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Abstract

No single person doesn't have a problem at work, but confrontations should be handled tactfully to foster collaboration and productivity. A teacher has a critical duty to sustain professionalism, efficiency, and harmony at work; in addition to handling her problems, she must also understand and manage those the students face. As a result, a teacher needs to know how to put out a fire immediately where it starts. For teachers to succeed, conflict resolution skills are essential. Using a correlative research design and two structured questionnaires to gather data from teachers working in 6 nursing institutes, this study aims to identify the main personality types and their associations with conflict management strategies. Most respondents exhibit neuroticism as their primary personality trait, followed by extroverts. The conflict management strategy that stood out in the study was accommodative. The second most common strategy exercised was collaboration. The study found a relationship between neuroticism and a competing nature as a conflict management style. Found a positive relationship between extraversion and two conflict management styles—collaboration and compromise.

Keywords: Personality; Conflict management; Nurse educators; Teachers; Problem-solving; Workplace

1. Introduction

Personality is a fascinating area of study but an arduous concept. The individual's distinguished characteristics, attitudes, habits, behaviors, and qualities make up personality¹. According to Freud, personality structures are abstract mental entities. The ego part of the personality is inherited and determined by heredity, and the superego develops in adulthood when the individual senses right and wrong². Hampson described personality as stable and consistent³. Erikson's psychosocial theory reveals the role of society in the development of the ego⁴. Social Learning theories indicate that personality is learned like everything is known. Reinforcement, reward, and punishment influence personality development as it controls behavior⁵. People may not fully know what they like¹ (pg 392). Conflict management style is highly influenced by personality. Conflicts are inevitable in the work area, but managing them is an art. Awareness of which personality type one primarily belongs to would help one to know its positive and negative aspects. One can modify their actions temporarily as per the situation and resolve conflicts. This personality assessment test would help them know their complete selves. The position will dictate which conflict management style helps resolve the dispute. However, it is frequently hampered by the person's personality type in charge of the event. As a result, it's critical to train instructors to resolve conflicts efficiently and maturely, especially when dealing with issues involving students. Though plenty of studies are available on these two variables, a handful of studies have only been conducted on teaching professionals, especially nurse educators. This study aims to make nurse educators understand their personality type, and the individual may transform their big B personality component with another big B personality to reduce and regulate conflict. As Anwar says, people can change their personalities temporarily per situational demand⁶.

* Corresponding author: Devina E Rodrigues

Objectives

The study determines the relationship between personality types and conflict management styles

2. Material and methods

The study design chosen was descriptive in nature. The study was conducted among 84 nurse educators employed in six nursing institutes in Mangaluru. The selection of the institutes is merely based on their geographical proximity. All Six nursing institutes were affiliated with the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, imparting similar nursing programs. After the approval from the institution's ethics committee (FMMC/FMIEC/313/2022 dated 13-6-2022), the data on personality type was collected using Dr. Edvin van Theil's 123 test BV tool, a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 with 120 items. The tool on conflict management style is a four-point rating scale of Reginald Adkins, having 15 items. The subjects were selected by nonprobability purposive sampling technique. Their participation in the study was voluntary, basis none of them were forced to be part of the study. There were given a participant information sheet before obtaining their consent. Considering the length of the questionnaire, the subjects were instructed to take their time and return it via email within seven days. A reminder was sent on the fifth day to guarantee that the questionnaire was returned. The gathered data was placed in SPSS version 21, and Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient was analyzed to determine the relationship between variables.

3. Results

3.1. Baseline characteristics

In our study, most subjects were young adults with a Mean age of 32.8 ± 8.29 . Out of 85, we found 26(30.58%) were between 22 and 25 years of age, and nearly the same proportion of 28(32.94%) were between 26 and 35. Around half of them, 44(51.76%), were master's degree holders in nursing with less than three years of professional experience. Out of 85, More than half of the subjects, 54(63.52%), were married, and most of the subjects, 65(76.47%), were residing in a nuclear family structure. The majority of the subjects, 66(77.64%), reported not undergoing any counseling sessions; when asked about undergoing an exclusive personality development program, 70(82.35%) said that to be not exposed to such sessions—about half, 40(47.05%), also said they are stressed.

3.2. Main findings: Distribution of core Personality types

When assessed for core personality, 41(48.2%) belonged to neuroticism, 28(32.93%) were extraversion, 11(12.94%) were consciousness, 5(5.93%) were agreeableness and none exhibited their core personality an openness to new experience.

Table 1 Distribution of personality type in terms of frequency and percentage N=85

SL.NO	Personality type	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Openness	0	0
2.	Conscious	11	12.94
3.	Extraversion	28	32.93
4.	Agreeable	5	5.93
5.	Neuroticism	41	48.2

3.3. Distribution of core conflict management styles

The two commonly seen conflict management styles were accommodating and collaborating, with 39 and 34%, respectively. The least conflict management style noted was competing at 9.41%.

Table 2 Distribution of conflict management style in terms of frequency and percentage

SI No	Conflict style	Frequency	Percentage
1	Collaborating	29	34.12
2	Competing	8	9.41
3	Avoiding	22	25.89
4	Accommodating	33	38.82
5	Compromising	26	30.59

3.4. Relationship between personality type and conflict management style

- Found a correlation between neuroticism personality and competing conflict management ($p = .019$)
- Openness personality and collaboration ($p = .019$)
- Extraversion personality with collaborating conflict management ($p = .017$)
- Extraversion personality and compromising ($p = .03$)
- Conscientiousness and collaborating ($p = .003$)
- Agreeableness and collaborating ($p = .001$)
- Agreeableness and accommodating ($p = .003$)
- The rest of the personality did not correlate with management styles

Table 3 Relationship between personality type and conflict management style

Variables	r	P
Neuroticism and collaborating	-0.08	.458
Neuroticism and competing	0.253	0.019 *
Neuroticism and avoiding	0.195	0.074
Neuroticism and accommodating	0.024	0.826
Neuroticism and compromising	0.206	0.058
Openness and collaborating	0.254	0.019*
Openness and competing	-0.160	0.143
Openness and avoiding	-0.068	0.536
Openness and accommodating	0.031	0.779
Openness and compromising	0.031	0.775
Extraversion and collaborating	0.257	0.017*
Extraversion and competing	0.035	0.75
Extraversion and avoiding	-0.181	0.098
Extraversion and accommodating	0.20	0.06
Extraversion and compromising	0.230	0.034*
Conscientiousness and collaborating	0.323	0.003***
Conscientiousness and competing	-0.139	0.203
Conscientiousness and avoiding	-0.194	0.075
Conscientiousness and accommodating	0.189	0.083
Conscientiousness and compromising	0.046	0.679

Agreeableness and collaborating	0.395	0.001***
Agreeableness and competing	-0.112	0.308
Agreeableness and avoiding	-0.058	0.598
Agreeableness and accommodating	0.315	0.003**
Agreeableness and compromising	0.041	0.712

Note :P< .05 = Significant*; .01= Very Significant **;.001= Highly significant***

4. Discussion

4.1. Age

In our study, most subjects were young adults with a Mean age of 32.8± 8.29. Out of 85, we found 26(30.58%) were between 22 and 25 years of age, and nearly the same proportion of 28(32.94%) were between 26 and 35. The Mean age group reveals that most employees were Millennials from Generation Y, considered confident, self-centered, search for instant satisfaction, carrier driven personalities⁷.

4.2. Personality type

When assessed for core personality, 41(48.2%) belonged to Neuroticism), 28(32.93%) were extraversion, agreeable personality traits grounded in 5 (5.93%), and none with openness to new experience category. From this data, it can be interpreted that most of them with core characteristics of being moody, anxious, tensed, and nervous⁸. It may be evident as nearly 47.05% were said to be currently stressed in life, inheriting this type of personality as Revelle & Wilt, 2008 stated that neurotic personality is most of the time stressed in life⁹. As per Fumham¹⁰, openness to new experiences indicates creativity, imaginative, and sensitive individuals with artistic affinity. In the current study, the investigator found none belonging to this personality category. This opens a door for the employer to consider this trait people to appoint in the organization as creative arts are also needed in nursing when we call nursing a job with arts and science.

4.3. Conflict management style

In the study, the most prominent conflict management was accommodating 26(38.82%). This indicates most of them, you-win- i-lose' behavior is typically exhibited. Close to this, collaborating (I win – you – win) was found to be among 29 (34.12%), and compromising (I win some, you win some, I lose some – you lose some) conflict management style was found among 26(30.59%). There were 22(25.89%) exercised avoiding (I – lose -you – lose) conflict management and found a small percentage of 8(9.41%) with a competing conflict management style (i win you lose). From this, it can be said that the most common conflict management styles exhibited in the current study were accommodating, collaborating, and compromising. The least preferred conflict management style is competing.

The study conducted by Maria Pitsillidore among health personnel working in hospitals in Cyprus indicated the prime conflict management style as the avoiding type (73.2%). In contrast, the current study shows that avoiding is the fourth most preferred conflict management style. In both, the study compromising was third in its position¹¹.

4.4. Extraversion and conflict management styles

The current study found a positive relationship between extraversion and two conflict management styles— collaboration ($r = .257$; $p = .017$) and compromise ($r = .23$; $p = .034$). The extroverts' least preferred conflict management style was competing and avoiding ($r = .03$ and $r = -0.18$, respectively). The study results matched Ishfaq Ahmed et al.³³, who highlighted that Extraversion preferred conflict management style as compromising ($r = .156$). Leila Canaan et al.¹⁶ pointed out similar findings; in their study, extraversion had a significant positive correlation with compromising ($r = .404$ $p = .0001$) and collaborative conflict management strategies ($r = 0.35$; $p = .0001$)(16). The study results of Bartolata laus¹³ are coherent with our study, which also indicated the extrovert least preferred competing strategy for conflict management ($r = 0.04$). As per Trapnell and Wiggins, extravert is dominant in nature with high energy, self-esteem, and confidence; due to this nature, they can collaborate and compromise during any conflict.¹⁴ The study results contradicted the findings of Abdulla Azza N in his study that the most preferred conflict management style adopted by extroverts was avoiding(31%), and the least preferred conflict management strategy was accommodating(13%)¹⁵.

4.5. Neuroticism and conflict management style

Our study found a relationship between neuroticism and competing nature as a conflict management style ($r = .253$ $p = .019$). The least preferred conflict management style by the neurotics was collaborating ($r = -.08$) and accommodating ($r = 0.02$). The study conducted by Leila indicated a negative correlation between neuroticism and collaborative conflict management style ($r = -0.018$; $p = .010$). Their study denotes neurotics least preferred compromising as the conflict management style ($r = -0.030$, $p = .077$)¹⁶.

As per Bouchard et al., neurotics rarely idealize the situation. Their high negative emotions may lead them to embrace a competing conflict management style of I win- you lose strategy¹⁸. The findings support Horeny's theory on neurotics which indicates their negative emotional stability and eagerness for materialistic goods and reaching perfectionism may lead them to embrace competing conflict management strategy¹⁶.

4.6. Openness to experience and conflict management style

The individuals with openness to experience personality type showed a significant positive relationship with the collaborating type of conflict management style ($r = .254$; $p = .019$). This category of the personality least preferred conflict management style was avoiding ($r = -.068$). Ishaq Ahmed et al. supported this argument that correlated openness to a new experience with compromising conflict management strategy ($r = .056$). This personality's least preferred conflict management style was found to be avoiding ($r=.056$)¹². The Leila study also, in pace with our study, found a positive correlation between openness to new experiences and collaborative as well as compromising conflict management style ($r = 0.326$; $p = .0001$ and $r = 0.331$; $p = .0001$), respectively ¹⁶.

4.7. Consciousness and conflict management style

The study found a positive correlation between consciousness and collaborating conflict management style ($r = .323$; $p = .003$). This indicates the characteristics of this type of personality type shown are hardworking, disciplined, ambitious, and organized, thus leading them to have an I win you win kind of conflict management. (McCrae and Costa, Rothman & Certzer). Leila Canaas et al., proposed similar results. Their study illustrated that consciousness positively correlates with collaboration ($r = 0.24$; $p = .0001$) & compromising $r=0.235$; $p = .001$)^{17,16}.

4.8. Agreeableness and conflict management style

In this study, the individuals possessing agreeableness as their prime personality type were found to have a significant positive relationship with two conflict management strategies: collaborating and accommodating ($r = 0.39$; $p = .001$ & $r = 0.32$; $p = .003$), respectively. This personality did not show its relationship with strategies like competing or avoiding. Surprisingly they were also not the compromising type. The Leila study also indicated agreeableness positively related to collaboration ($r = 0.23$; $p = .001$)¹⁶.

Limitation

Most subjects were young with minimum years of professional experience. The subject selection was based on nonprobability sampling. The study opted minimum sample size; the larger cohort based on age, gender, professional experience, and salary may help to generalize the study.

Recommendation

Generation Z is already in the workplace, born after 2000; hence a study can be taken to compare the personality traits and conflict management between Generation X, Y, and Z.

Implications

The conflict management traits like competing and avoiding may ignore others' needs and may be unconcerned attitudes. The individuals with such traits are to be trained not instantly to act on situations but to think and proceed.

5. Conclusion

Neurotics with their negative core personality trait tend to select competing conflict management when they face challenges and give no room for collaborating, accommodating, and compromising. Hence, need to conduct further research studies to identify what factors lead to inheriting this personality.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Statement of informed consent

The investigators have obtained written consent from all participants included in the study.

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