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Conflict in schools: Student nurses' conflict management styles

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Summary
Background: Unless conflicts between the students and the instructors can be successfully managed, they will certainly result in negative outcomes for the students. The conflict management styles of the students should be recognized in detail in order to attain positive outcomes in regard to the conflict management styles.
Aim: The purpose of this study was to examine the conflict management styles used by nursing students in conflict with faculty members and the differences in use of style from the aspect of some variables.
Methods: This study was conducted with 151 students in a public university nursing school. Data were collected using a personal information form and the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory II (ROCI II). The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, ANOVA, Tukey test, Kruskal Wallis test, Mann—Whitney U test and Cronbach alpha coefficient analyses.
Findings: The students were found to use integrating (X = 3.82) and obliging (X = 3.81) styles the most, and dominating style (X = 3.02) the least. In addition there were differences determined in management style between classes, frequency of experiencing conflict, and feeling of success in the conflict ($p < 0.05$). It was determined that the integrating and obliging styles were used more by those who evaluated themselves as successful in conflict management, but the avoiding and compromising styles were used more by students who evaluated themselves as unsuccessful.
Conclusions: It was determined that the students preferred to use styles that produced positive results in conflict resolution and that the frequency of experiencing conflict and the feeling of success in conflict had an effect on choice of style. It will be helpful to analyze the relationship between the causes of conflict between the student and the instructor in the practice field and the uses of conflict management styles.
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Introduction

Conflict, which is a natural result of human communication, is generally defined as an internal misunderstanding that occurs from the differences in thoughts, values and feelings between two organizations or people (Marquis and Huston, 2000; Rahim et al., 2000). It is natural and unavoidable that conflict will occur in schools like it does in other work environments (Miklas and Kleiner, 2003; Çetin and Hacıfazlıoğlu, 2004). Just as conflict can occur in schools between students and faculty management, between students and managers, and between faculty management and instructors, it can also occur between students and instructors as well (Miklas and Kleiner, 2003). Conflicts between faculty management and students have a different significance because of the basic relationship that is formed in the teaching center of student—faculty relationships and because the results of these relationships have a direct effect on student outcomes (Gillespie, 2004; Ang, 2005; Frymier and Houser, 2000).

Conflicts in the relationship between students and instructors may occur for a several reasons. In a study conducted by Adrian-Taylor (2007), the reasons of conflict were found to be the lack of openness, time and feedback as well as the equivocal expectations (Adrian-Taylor (2007). In a similar study, the reasons of conflict, as defined by the students, were reported to be communication problems, difficulty in compromising with the values and the rules of the society, authority issues, anger and irritation, low performance and responsibilities, and disobedience to the rules and policies (Osinchuk, 1995).

The presence of a conflict between a student and faculty can have both negative and positive results (Rahim et al., 2000; Kaushal and Kwantes, 2006). The negative results of conflict include weak interpersonal relationships, high stress, decrease in student success, increase in absenteeism (Morris-Rothschild and Brass, 2006; Tantleff-Dunn et al., 2002; Güneri and Çoban, 2004; Sava, 2002), the potential positive results include increase in creativity and innovation, a decision to have higher quality, and the development of a reciprocal understanding (Rahim et al., 2000; Mamchur and Myrick, 2003; Longaretti and Wilson, 2000). Whether conflicts produce negative or positive results depends on the fact that how conflicts are managed (Park and Antonioni, 2007). The effective and constructive management of conflict can minimize the negative effects and decrease its negative effects on the school environment, family, students, and faculty (Kaushal and Kwantes, 2006).

One of the most important factors on effective and constructive management of interpersonal conflict is the conflict management style that individuals use to resolve conflicts (Rahim et al., 2000). Conflict management style is the general attitude reflected in responding to conflict in reciprocal interactions of individuals' (Xu and Davidhizar, 2004). During the socialization process, individuals develop their own unique conflict management styles on the basis of their personal experiences with conflict, cultural values, and education (Karip, 2000; Xu and Davidhizar, 2004).

There are many approaches for measuring individual styles in the management of interpersonal conflict. Although every one of these approaches has created its own terminology for conflict management strategies (Rahim, 1983; Kaushal and Kwantes, 2006), the conflict management conceptualization of Rahim and Bonoma (1979) is the most popular (Brewer et al., 2002). They consider interpersonal conflict in five different dimensions, integrating, obliging, dominating, compromising, and avoiding (Rahim, 2000; Rahim and Bonoma, 1979).

In *integrating* style, also known as a problem solving style, an individual shows more interest in the concerns of the self and the others. This style includes cooperation between groups (openness, sharing of ideas, examination of differences to reach a solution that can be accepted on both sides, etc.). In the *obliging* style the individual shows less concern for the self and a high level of concern for the other side. This style emphasizes shared aspects to satisfy the concerns of the other side and is combined with efforts to decrease differences. In the *dominating* style, which is also known as the competing style, the person shows a high level of concern for self and a low level of concern for the other side. This style can also be described as being consistent with a win-lose resolution or as an individual strengthening their position to win. In the *avoiding* style, the individual shows a low level of concern for the self and for the other side. This style is also known as assimilation or suppression and is a combination of withdrawal, passively assuming responsibility, avoiding or acting like ''see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.'' In the *compromising* style the individual shows intermediate level of concern for the self and the other side. This style uses give-and-take or sharing the willingness to give up something to be able to make a decision that is acceptable to both sides (Rahim, 1983, 2000; Rahim and Bonoma, 1979). Using the terminology of game theory, integrating style is identified with win—win term, obliging with