

Abstract

Conflict management styles is a phenomenon having crucial significance for academicians in universities on account of the fact that well-managed conflicts are constructive in meeting institutional goals. The current research has investigated the conflict management styles of university teachers in Punjab and Federal Capital Islamabad, Pakistan using mixed method approach (quantitative and qualitative). First study was a cross-sectional survey and its objectives were to determine the role of conflict management styles in predicting organizational commitment and to examine the role of conflict types (task conflict and relationship conflict) in moderating the relationship between conflict management styles and organizational commitment. The sample consisted of 400 faculty members working in private and public universities. Data were collected by using Rahim organizational conflict inventory (Rahim, 1983), task and relationship conflict scale (Jehn, 1995) and modified version of organizational commitment questionnaire (Jaros, 2007). Results indicated that integrating, obliging and compromising styles were positive correlates and predictors of organizational commitment. Integrating style emerged as the strongest predictor of organizational commitment followed by obliging and compromising styles respectively. Avoiding and dominating were non-significant predictors of organizational commitment. Conflict management styles also predicted continuance commitment, normative commitment and affective commitment which are domains of organizational commitment. Findings indicated that dominating and avoiding styles significantly predicted continuous commitment whereas integrating, obliging, and compromising styles significantly predicted normative commitment. Moreover, integrating, dominating and compromising styles significantly predicted affective commitment. Results further revealed that conflict types (task conflict and relationship conflict) significantly moderated the relationship between integrating

and organizational commitment. Integrating style positively predicted organizational commitment when the level of task conflict was low. Similarly, obliging and compromising styles positively predicted organizational commitment when the level of relationship conflict was low. In terms of preferences for different conflict management styles, university faculty preferred integrating the most and dominating the least in managing conflicts with chairpersons of academic departments. Results regarding the impact of demographic variables on conflict management styles indicated that faculty members serving in public universities were more obliging in managing conflicts with chairpersons than those in private universities. It was also revealed that faculty members from social sciences were high on integrating than those from natural sciences and languages. The second study consisted of 10 case studies which explored the experiences and perceptions of faculty members about their conflict management styles along with conflict antecedents and consequents. A purposive sample of 10 university teachers (females = 6; males = 4) was selected to conduct in-depth semi-structured interview with them. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyze data. Chairpersons' negative work attitudes, career related threats, co-workers' misuse of authority and launching of new academic program emerged as conflict antecedents which lead to dysfunctional outcomes at personal as well as organizational level. Conflict management styles employed by faculty members were: dominating style for career threats, chairperson's misconduct and violation of work ethics, avoiding style for poor administration and close mindedness, obliging style for discrimination in workload and compromising style for chairperson's authoritarianism. The findings of the study has important implications for vice chancellors, deans, chairpersons and faculty members of universities in improving the work environment of universities by harmonizing interpersonal relations at workplace.