

## EVALUATION OF NURSES ACUMEN REGARDING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

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**ABSTRACT****OBJECTIVES**

*The overarching objective of this study was to assess conflict and conflict resolution strategies among nurses working at a tertiary care hospital in Lahore, Pakistan.*

**METHODOLOGY**

*A cross sectional study design was used. The target population of the study was registered nurses having two years' work experience in tertiary care hospitals. Convenient sampling technique was used. A total of 86 nurses were recruited to the study. IRB approval was sought before data collection. SPSS version 23 was used for data analysis.*

**RESULTS**

*According to the finding of the study, (76.5%) nurses had positive response that conflict was negative experience for them. Conflict at work create disturbance at work place as shown in study that (75.3%) of nurses were agreed that work place conflict hurt them and slow down their work place activities. Conflict resolution strategies have vital role for the professional nurses that not only save their time but also improve professional harmony at work place setting.*

**CONCLUSION**

*Study findings revealed that only 20% nurses have knowledge about conflict and conflict resolution and can constructively settle disputes, but 90% of them had insufficient knowledge and expertise for settlement of conflict situations.*

**KEYWORDS:** Conflict, Conflict Management, Nurses, Health Care Settings, Knowledge

**INTRODUCTION**

Conflict is a state of discrepancies that can be real or imaginary between two individuals or among many individuals on their values, ideas or goals.<sup>1</sup> Conflict is an inside contention and its outcomes are differences in ideas, values or feelings between two or more people.<sup>2</sup> Conflict in nursing is common phenomenon that occurs at work place and poses negative feelings. Nurses at workplace use avoidance strategy as a coping mechanism.<sup>3</sup> As a health care member the most experienced issue faced by the nurses is conflict. Moreover, nurses have great challenges to resolve conflicts at the workplace and for this issue they spend lots of time to solve it.<sup>4</sup> Conflict may be classified as intrapersonal, interpersonal and intergroup. When two different groups or teams within an organization have a disagreement intergroup conflict occurs. This is due the competition for resources, their personal goals and interests, or some time they may encounter threat to their identity. Interpersonal conflict occurs when two persons have same goal but different approaches and different ideas, this situation leads toward conflict.<sup>5</sup> Intrapersonal conflict takes place in a person's own mind. This is a unique type of conflict thoughts and

emotions, desires, values, and principles dominant then issues. The discrepancies or disagreement between two individual within the same group or team is called intra group conflict. This conflict may be the result of their personality or hegemony of one group to another. Some time is productive because it helps to achieve group or teams goal because of their competition. Perhaps if it is not resolved properly it can make sabotage the peace full working environment.<sup>6</sup> Conflict Management is a way to mitigate negative out come and enhance positive result. If a conflict handle properly it helps to resolve issues and is beneficial for group or team goals achievement within an organization.<sup>7</sup> However, the personality and character of a leader must have ability to handle critical situation and change it into smooth environment. Moreover, there are various model of conflict management to practice for conflict management behavior. Therefore, for a leader to effectively manage "Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument" is helpful to resolve conflict behavior issues.<sup>8</sup> Successful conflict resolution strategies improved quality of care, patient safety and staff morale, as well as reduced work stress for caregivers and enhances knowledge regarding conflict management is enhanced.<sup>9,10</sup> Conflict management

styles of nurses and nurse managers may differ but understanding the basic notion of conflict management is key is successful resolution of conflict.<sup>11</sup> Conflict understanding and its management is crucial for nurses and it is important to have continuous education for nurses to update their knowledge of conflict management in their workplace.<sup>12</sup> There is a dearth of studies on nurses understanding of conflict and conflict management strategies especially from Pakistani context where the socio-demographic factors are different than developed world. Therefore, it is significant to assess the nurses' knowledge regarding conflict management. Therefore, this study was aimed to assess nurses' knowledge regarding conflict management strategies.

## METHODOLOGY

This study used a cross sectional survey design to assess nurses' knowledge of conflict and conflict resolution. The study was conducted at University of Lahore Teaching Hospital, Lahore, Pakistan. The data was collected from April, 2022 to May, 2022. Prior to data collection, IRB approval was secured. Written consent was secured from all the participants. Ethical

considerations pertinent to the study such as privacy, anonymity, confidentiality and data protection was assured. Registered nurses having at least one year work experience in a tertiary care hospital were included in the study. A total of 86 nurses were recruited to the study through convenient random sampling strategies. A self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire comprised of demographic data and knowledge of nurses about conflict and conflict resolution. The study tool was adopted from a previous study on conflict and conflict resolution (Thomas & Killman, 2018). The questionnaire was distributed to the participants in printed form where they answered the entire questions according to their own understanding. Data was analyzed through SPSS version 23. The results are presented in the form of tables, graphs, frequency and percentages etc.

## RESULTS

The demographic characteristics of participants are shown in table. 1. Majority of the participants were falling in the age bracket of 26-35 years and had work experience 6-10 years.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

Variables		Frequency	%Age
Age of participants	21-25 Years	07	8.2
	26-30 Years	33	38.8
	31-35 Years	29	34.1
	36-40 Years	16	18.8
	Total	85	100.0
Work Experience	1-5 Years	10	11.8
	6-10 Years	50	58.8
	11-15 Years	24	28.2
	16-20 years	01	1.2
	Total	85	100.0
Marital Status	Single	42	9.4
	Married	43	50.6
	Total	85	100.0
Qualification	General Nursing midwifery	39	45.8
	BSN	22	25.8
	Post RN	24	28.4

Table 2, below shows participants' responses to conflict and conflict management strategies recorded

on a five items likert state as strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree.

**Table 2: Knowledge of Nurses Regarding Conflict**

1	Knowledge of Nurses Regarding Conflict and Resolution	SD	D	N	A	SA
2	Conflict is a negative experience.	9.40%	24.70%	20%	22.40%	23.50%
3	In conflict, someone is get hurt.	9.40%	24.70%	7.10%	24.70%	34.10%
4	I am afraid to enter into confrontation	10.60%	25.90%	11.80%	31.80%	20%
5	In conflict, my reaction is based on how other peoples are perceived me.	11.80%	27.10%	16.50%	30.60%	14.10%
6	I believe there should be no upper hand.	1.20%	21.40%	20.20%	45.20%	11.90%
7	I strive to distinguish real needs and desires .	3.70%	7.40%	43%	35.90%	10%
8	I state my true feelings when dealing with conflict.	07%	9%	8.40%	40%	36.10%
9	It is important to know where the conflict takes place.	25%	34.50%	10%	21.40%	9.50%
10	I tried to be aware of my negative and positive self-perception influence the way how I deal with conflict.	20%	36.50%	12.90%	24.70%	05.90%
11	When I resolve a conflict its improve my relationship.	22.40%	16.50%	22.40%	25.90%	12.90%
12	I get disturb during conflict at my job place.	12.90%	3.50%	18.80%	40%	24.70%
13	I use my open statements when I start to discuss with parties.	20%	32.90%	05.90%	27.10%	14.10%

Table 3 illustrates knowledge of nurses regarding conflict of nurses. conflict management and different strategies to manage

**Table 3: Participants Knowledge Regarding Conflict Management**

14	Conflict management is depend upon management and staff	4.70%	4.70%	41.20%	34.10%	12.50%
15	I try to make comfortable environment when people come to resolve a conflict	4.50%	13.50%	35.50%	38.50%	08%
16	Negotiations involves give and take on various issues among the parties.	1.20%	32.90%	37.60%	27.20%	1.10%
17	Compromise is used to divide the reward between both parties.	4.7	7.5	41.2	34.1	12.5
18	It is important to help the participants to develop alternative solutions	4.90%	21.20%	25.90%	37%	11%
19	It is important to make sure that both parties listen attentively to each other.	37.10%	16.50%	28.20%	8.20%	18.20%
20	In conflict management, mediation agreement can satisfy all parties, cost less and take less time than legal remedies.	5.90%	3.50%	53.50%	27.10%	10%
21	In conflict management, win-win strategy, focuses on goals and attempt to meet the needs of both parties.	32.20%	08%	34.50%	23%	2.30%
22	In conflict management, the lose-lose strategy, result is unsatisfied of both parties.	5.9	3.5	53.5	27.1	10
23	In conflict management, win-lose strategy, parties direct their energy towards total victory for themselves and total defeat.	27.3	16	8.2	25.3	23.5

## DISCUSSION

Findings of current study highlight nurses' understanding of conflict and conflict management strategies. Due to lack of experience of expertise some nurses may not be fully incapable to deal with conflict situation and are unable to resolve their conflict.<sup>13</sup> This study also shows that they are unable to handle conflict issue in a well-mannered way. In response to the statement "Conflict management is depend upon management and staff" 4.70% the respondents were strongly agree, 4.70% were disagree, 41.20 % neutral, 34.10 % agree and 12.50% were strongly agree. In this result the participant realized that conflict management is an important issue that proves researchers thesis statement where main variable is conflict and its resolution. So that, it proves that if a conflict is resolve effectively it provide peace and harmony in smooth working environment and also necessary for cordial relation in work place setting. These findings are consistent with findings from another study which also

contends that nurses consider conflict management an important aspect of their job.<sup>14</sup> In response to the statement "I try to make comfortable environment when people come to resolve a conflict" 4.50% the respondents recorded strongly agree, 13.50% were disagree, 35.50% neutral, 38.50% agree and 8% were strongly agree as their responses. This shows participants have varied level of understanding regarding the importance of managing conflict in their environment. Other studies also note that conflict management and emotional intelligence are important for nurses as part of their job 15-16. So that, it proves that if a conflict is resolve positively it is not only beneficial for the organization but also have good effect on patients health and quality care. In response to the statement "Negotiations involves give and take on various issues among the parties" 1.20% the respondents were strongly agree, 27.20% were disagree, 37.60% neutral, agree and 32.90% and 1.10% were strongly agree. Negotiation and mediation are neither uniform processes nor they are discrete

activities. Each involves a continuous set of related processes involving actors, decisions, resources, and situations manage conflict mannerly. These findings are consistent to another study which denotes that nurses have different styles of conflict management and this also influences their colleagues.<sup>17</sup> In response to the statement “Compromise is used to divide the reward between both parties” the participants response were 4.7% the respondents were strongly agree, 7.5% were disagree, 41.2% neutral, 34.1% agree and 12.5% were strongly agree. Compromise is best strategy that balances both parties to accept their responsibilities for the settlement of conflict. In this statement the respondents’ answer were “It is important to help the participants to develop alternative solutions” 4.90% the respondents were strongly agree, 21.20% were disagree, 25.90% neutral, 37% agree and 32.90% and 11% were strongly agree. “It is important to make sure that both parties listen attentively to each other.” In response to this statement the responses of the participants were, 37.10% strongly agree, 16.50 % were disagreeing, 28.20% neutral, 8.20% agree and 18.20% were strongly agree. Educational programs may be arranged for nurses to have a better knowledge and skills of resolving conflict in healthcare settings.<sup>18,19</sup>

## LIMITATIONS

This study is based on self-reported knowledge of nurses regarding conflict management. Behavioral measures such as direct observations, peer assessment and related methods can be added in the future studies to assess the actual conflict handling strategies. The study was conducted in a tertiary care private hospital that is accredited with University of Lahore and the sample was selected conveniently. Therefore, cautions are warranted in generalization of the study findings.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study underscores that understanding conflict and its management is one of the key competencies for nurses, hence it is important to equip nurses with adequate knowledge of conflict management strategies. While individual style of conflict management may vary and may be influenced by variety of factors such as experience, education, culture and emotional intelligence if structured training programs are arranged it may enhance nurses understanding of conflict management.

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2. **Muhammad Afzal** - *Supervision*
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4. **Hajira Sarwar** - *Critical Revision*



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