



CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN STUDENT NURSES: SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Abstract

The aims of this paper are to review the current literature about conflict management of the student nurses, to determine the needs and priorities in this area. Various databases were reviewed at this literature review study and it was reached to 8 studies for purpose. The review was done with student nurse", "conflict" "conflict management", "conflict resolution" keywords. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory II and Conflict Resolution Skill Scale were used for measurement tools. The conflict management and conflict resolution styles of the students were reviewed and it was investigated whether the variables differ according to emotional intelligence, personality traits, gender, frequency of experiencing conflict and the curriculum changing in the studies. As a result, it was seen that most of the researches were descriptive and cross-sectional. There is needed high level of evidence and experimental studies to understand the conflict management of student nurses.

Key Words: student nurse, conflict, conflict management, conflict resolution, review.

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a commonly reported in educational institutions like in all organizations (Cook et al., 2014; Kantek & Gezer, 2009) and, as a natural result of human communication, it is generally defined as an internal misunderstanding that occurs from the differences in thoughts, values and feelings between two organizations or people (Marquis & Huston, 2000; Rahim, Magner, & Shapiro, 2000). Student nurses experience conflicts with their class mates, lecturers, and other medical personnel during their education (Chan, Sit, & Lau, 2014; Kantek & Gezer, 2009; Pines et al., 2012).

Conflicts in and out of the classroom in educational institutions stem from differences in personal characteristics of students and lecturers, and in their values, beliefs, and attitudes, crowded classrooms, inadequate quality of education, miscommunication between partners of education, insufficient teaching aids, and limited sources of education (Argon, 2009). Conflicts may potentially result in positive or negative consequences depending on how they are managed. If conflicts are successfully managed, student nurses have higher levels of motivation and productivity (Mrayyan et al., 2008). If not, they may suffer from high stress, problems in interpersonal relations, decrease in academic success, and increasing rates of absenteeism (Kantek & Gezer, 2009).

Conflict management requires establishing learnable behaviors through education programs (Pines et al., 2012). Understanding reactions of student nurses towards conflicts is elemental to develop efficient conflict management methods (Chan et al., 2014; Sportsman & Hamilton, 2007), which may vary according to the type



and cause of the conflict. Besides, personal characteristics and experiences of individuals (gender, education, personal traits) may also influence conflict management processes (Seren & Baykal, 2007). Conflicts may also provide an opportunity to improve values, empower personal relations, and ensure high performance (Williams-perez & Keig, 2002).

It is imperative to maintain the ways student nurses manage conflict situations and influencing factors in order to develop conflict management strategies for student nurses (Chan et al., 2014; Seren & Ustun, 2008), which created the need to carry out this particular study. This study reviewed previous studies on conflict management among student nurses and aimed to map out the requirements and priorities. It is strongly believed that study results will create a common ground for future studies.

METHOD

This literature review was conducted in January 2015 by reviewing articles published on Pubmed, EBSCO, Web of Science, Akdeniz University Library Database, and Google Scholar. The review was based on searching for certain key terms such as "student nurse", "conflict" "conflict management", and "conflict resolution". The review included original full research articles in English published between 2000- 2015. Anecdotes, commentaries, dissertations, conference proceedings, and articles with less than 10 references were excluded from the study. Consequently, 181 articles were selected for the study and 8 of them were considered to comply with the inclusion criteria.

FINDINGS

3 articles in this review were published in 2007, 1 article in 2008, 1 article in 2009, 1 article in 2012, and 2 articles in 2014. Sample groups of all reviews were composed of student nurses and one review was a semi-experimental and seven reviews were descriptive studies. The review data were analysed with The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument(TKI) (4 reviews), Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory II (ROCI II) (2 reviews) and Conflict Resolution Skill Scale (CRSS) (2 reviews).

One common theme in most studies was conflict management styles of student nurses and these studies particularly focused on determining the most and the least popular styles of conflict management. One of these studies was conducted by Kantek and Gezer (2009) with 151 nursing students and teaching staff to investigate the conflict management styles of student nurses, which concluded that the most common styles were integrating and obliging and the least common style was dominating style (Kantek & Gezer, 2009). Sportsman and Hamilton (2007) carried out a study in the USA and found that the most popular style of conflict management among nursing students was Compromise (Sportsman & Hamilton, 2007). In another study conducted in the USA, it was reported that more than 60% of the participant student nurses commonly used "avoiding" and "accommodating" styles to deal with challenges while they least used "competing" or "collaborating" styles (Pines et al., 2012). In a similar study completed in Jordan, it was noted that the most popular conflict management style among student nurses was "collaboration" whereas the least popular was "Accommodation" (Mrayyan et al., 2008).

Another research question in selected studies was if student nurses were any different than other student groups in their preferences of conflict management styles. The nursing students were usually compared with students from the faculty of medicine and students from several other departments of the health school. Seren and Baykal (2007) similarly compared the trends in conflict management among 359 nursing students and 367 medical faculty students, which suggested that there was a difference between the conflict management styles of both groups and that nursing students were more inclined to resolve conflicts in comparison to medical students (Seren & Baykal, 2007). Sportsman and Hamilton (2007) compared the conflict management styles of nursing students, radiologic science students and respiratory care students in the USA. The study sample included 65 nursing students, 52 radiologic science students, and 9 respiratory care students, which did not indicate any difference between the conflict management styles (Sportsman & Hamilton, 2007).

Two more studies focused on conflict management styles according to their conflict experiences. Kantek and Gezer (2009) reported that 63.58% of the students had conflicts with the teaching staff among whom 61.46% of students had conflicts rarely (Kantek & Gezer, 2009). Additionally, they reported that students who had “often” and “always” conflicts commonly used avoiding style and those who “occasionally” had conflicts used compromising style and those who “rarely” had conflicts used obliging and integrating styles (Kantek & Gezer, 2009). Pines et al. (2012), on the other hand, asserted that there was no difference between the conflict management styles according to their conflict experiences.

Gender was another variable in the studies on conflict management styles of student nurses. Pines et al., (2012) reported that male students reported more frequent conflict situations than female students (Pines et al., 2012). Seren & Baykal (2007) conducted a study with nursing and medical students and found that female students, rather than male students, tended to resolve conflicts (Seren & Baykal, 2007). Sportsman & Hamilton (2007) pointed out that female students most usually preferred compromise and avoidance styles, respectively, while male students mostly used avoidance and compromise styles (Sportsman & Hamilton, 2007).

Seren and Ustun (2008) comparatively discussed the conflict management styles of 141 nursing students following a problem-based curriculum and 291 nursing students following a traditional curriculum. It was indicated that total scores and subdimension scores (empathy, listening skills, requirement-based approach, social adaptation and anger management) of the former were higher than the latter (Seren & Ustun, 2008).

Chan, Sit and Lau (2014) analyzed the correlation between the conflict management styles and emotional intelligence and implicit theories of personality (Chan et al., 2014) and stated that emotional intelligence was a significant predictor of five conflict management styles, students with high EQ used integrating, obliging, compromising and dominating styles relatively more, and students with low EQ preferred avoiding style. They further pointed out a substantial correlation between implicit theories of personality and compromising style and suggested that students who defined themselves as less malleable more frequently used compromising style (Chan et al., 2014).

Pines et al. (2014) designed a semi-experimental study to investigate the conflict management styles of student nurses and measured stress flexibility, empowerment, and conflict management styles of students before and after taking Psychiatric-Mental Health Nursing (PMHN) and Leadership/Management in Nursing (LMN) courses. The most popular style was found to be compromising and the least popular was avoiding. It was further found that the scores of “collaboration”, “accommodating” “avoiding” decreased while “competing” and “compromising” scores gradually increased (Cook et al., 2014).

Table 1: Studies on Conflict Management

Author (s)	Place and Sample	Method and Scales	Key Findings
Seren and Ustun (2007)	Turkey 141 PBL students 291 Traditional Curriculum Students	Descriptive Conflict Resolution Skill Scale.	Students in the Problem Based Learning (PBL) model had higher total and subdimension scores (empathy, listening skills, requirement-based approach, social adaptation and anger management) than those in the traditional curriculum model.
Chan et al (2014)	Hong Kong 568 undergraduate nursing students	Descriptive The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II	Emotional intelligence was significantly associated with all five conflict management styles while implicit theories of personality were significantly associated with compromising style only.
Seren and Baykal (2007)	Turkey 359 nursing students 367 medical school students	Descriptive Conflict Resolution Skill Scale	It was reported that there was a significant difference between the conflict management styles of nursing students and medical school students, nursing students were more inclined to follow conflict resolution strategies, and female students more frequently tended to resolve conflicts.

Sportsman and Hamilton (2007)	USA 65 nursing students, 52 radiologic science students, 9 respiratory care students.	Descriptive Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument	There was no significant difference between the prevalent conflict management styles chosen by nursing, radiologic science, and respiratory care undergraduate or graduate students.
Kantek and Gezer (2009)	Turkey 151 nursing students	Descriptive Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory II	The most popular styles were integrating and obliging and the least popular was dominating style. Use of conflict management styles was found to differ according to student’s grade, frequency of conflict experiences, and the degree of the sense of achievement.
Mrayyan et al. (2008)	Jordan 62 nursing students	Descriptive Soru formu	The senior nursing students were motivated by “achievement” and used “collaboration” as a primary conflict-handling technique. the students lessen the use of “avoiding” and “compromising” at the end of the course. This could be explained by the increased use of “collaboration” and being more achievement-oriented.
Pines et al (2012)	USA 166 nursing students	Descriptive -A correlational design Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument	As a group, students more often used avoiding and accommodating styles than competing and collaborating styles, Early career students with fewer semesters in nursing school were more likely to use the avoiding style and older students were more likely to use the collaborating style of managing difficult people and situations,
Pines et al (2014)	USA 60 undergraduate nursing students	A quasi-experimental pre-post design Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument	Scores on the compromising subscale of the TKI were significantly higher ($t_{59} = -2.388, P \leq .02$) and significantly lower on the accommodating subscale ($t_{59} = 2.835, P \leq .006$) at the end of the intervention. There were no significant relationships between age and gender, whether participants had experienced conflict in the workplace, and perceptions of resiliency, psychological empowerment, and conflict management style.

CONCLUSION

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory II and Conflict Resolution Skill Scale were commonly used to measure conflict management style of nursing students. A majority of the studies were designed as descriptive or cross-sectional studies. Furthermore, it can reasonably be argued that the study results didn’t allow any generalizations about the conflict management styles of nursing students and there need be further experimental studies with high levels of evidence to elaborate conflict management styles of nursing students.

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