Determinant Factors that Lead to Conflict between Students and Academic Staff at Wolkite University, Ethiopia

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Abstract

In most research findings, Conflict between students and academic staff is a significant issue in many educational institutions, including universities. In this regard, the aim of this study was to determine factors that lead to conflict between students and academic staff members in Wolkite University. For this research survey, 186 regular students were selected from 3531 students who are in different colleges at Wolkite University. The survey instruments were descriptive statistics like frequency table, pie chart and inferential statistics like chi-square test and binary logistic regression. The data analyses were done using SPSS version 27 software output. The independent variables included in this research survey were Communication skill, CGPA, Age, Coming area, Batch, Religion, Leave out of exam and Sex of student. Therefore, the finding of this study revealed that the respondent's sex, coming area, communication skills, and leaving out of exams are significant factors influencing the presence of conflicts between students and academic staff members at Wolkite University. Finally, my finding suggests that promoting effective communication, addressing academic challenges, fostering a supportive environment, and conducting further research are essential to reducing conflicts and fostering peaceful coexistence among students and academic staffs.

Keywords: Conflict, Binary Logistic Regression Model, Wolkite University, Ethiopia.

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Background of the Study

According to Robbins (2003) conflict can be considered as expression of hostility, negative attitude, aggression and gross misunderstanding. It is caused due to varying interest of individual and group. When an individual and communication problems causes misunderstanding and leads to individual conflict situation. It is also true of groups. Group conflict indicates that the way of inter group behavior in an organization, intergroup conflict occurs due to group competition and group cohesiveness. These leads to feeling of We are always right and they are always wrong.

For any organization to perform effectively interdependent individual and groups must establish work interrelation shape across organizational boundaries between individuals and among groups, individuals or groups may depend on one another for information assistance or coordinated action. But the fact is that they are interdependent. Such interdependent may foster either cooperation or conflict (vancevichy, etal, 2005).

Work conflict is very common. One of the most cases of conflict is work interdependences. Conflict that is rise in work place has some problem such as loss of attention to work, feeling of frustration and stress, job dissatisfaction, turnover of employees from job, absenteeism and also has poor communication among management and workers (coch, etal, 2005).

University of Colorado–Boulder cites as primary causes of workplace conflict poor communication, different values, differing interests, scarce resources, personality clashes, and poor performance. And also, The Boulder suggests that "some personal conflicts arise when employees are unable to accept personal differences, which can involve such things as race, religion or ethnic (Jeong, 2020).

Wolkite University is one of the learning University in Ethiopia. It offers program and research which lead toward degree in different fields of study. Almost every academic discipline has its theoretical approach of understanding on conflicts. Economists are focused on game-theory and decision-making, when Psychologist explore interpersonal conflicts, and sociologists take status and class conflicts as the focal point, while political science is centered on intra-national and international conflicts (Wells, 2011).

Conflict between students and academic staff is a significant issue in many educational institutions, including universities. Addressing these aspects within the context of Wolkite University will provide valuable insights to the factors that contribute to conflicts between students and academic staff members.

Methodology

Structured questionnaires were used to gather and record primary data from students at Wolkite University. The target population is focused third year and above regular students in nine colleges. Sample students were selected using proportional allocation method from different colleges based on priority information about the variation (Table 1 Appendix).

Independent variables included in this survey are Communication skill, CGPA, Age, Coming area, Batch, Religion, Leave out of exam, Sex of a student. The dependent variable has the value "1" with probability of success for the presence of conflict personally for a student and the values "0" with the probability of failure (no personal conflict) with academic staff. For this study the dependent variable (Y_i) is represented as:

$$Y_i = \begin{cases} 1 = \text{if personal conflict present,} \\ 0 = \text{if no personal conflict with academic staff} \end{cases}$$

Binary logistic regression was employed to perform logistic regression on a binary response variable (Y_i). A model with one or more predictors is fit using an iterative-reweighed least squares. The logistic regression function: Logit $(Pi) = log\ (pi/1-pi) = \beta o + \beta 1 X 1 i + \beta 2 X 2 i + \ldots\ldots\ldots + \beta k X$ Where, $Pi = E(yi = 1/xi) = e\lambda i/(1 + e\lambda i)$ (presence conflict personally) and $1 - pi = 1/(1 + e\ \lambda i)$ (not presence conflict personally). Then the $Odds\ of\ success\ is\ (Yi\ =\ 1) = \left(\frac{pi}{1-pi}\right) = e\lambda i,\ i\ =\ 1, 2, 3, \ldots, k.$

Results and Discussion

The data considered in this survey were 186 regular students who are learning in different colleges of academic year 2023/2024 at Wolkite University.

Among male respondents, 64.5% of them reported no conflict with academic staff, while 35.5% reported conflict. Among females, a higher percentage (78.9%) of them reported no conflict, while 21.1% of them reported conflict (Table 2 Appendix).

Among those below 20 and aged 20-24, approximately 70% reported no conflict, while the remaining 30% reported conflict. Among those aged 25 and above, approximately 73% reported no conflict, while the remaining 27% reported conflict.

Respondents of different religions reported varying levels of conflict with academic staff. Among Orthodox and Muslim students, around 72% and 78%, respectively, of them reported no conflict. Among Protestant students, approximately 62% of them reported no conflict, while 38.5% of them reported conflict. Among students with other religions students, 50% of them reported having conflict with academic staff.

Among students who came from urban areas, 57.7% of them reported no conflict, while 42.3% of them reported conflict. Among students who came from rural areas, a higher percentage (89.3%) reported no conflict, while 10.7% of them reported conflict with conflict with academic staff.

Among students who have a GPA below 2.5, approximately 47% of them reported no conflict, while 53% of them reported conflict. Among those with a GPA between 2.5 and 3.0, around 74% of them reported no conflict, while 26% of them reported conflict. Among those with a GPA above 3.0, approximately 82% of them reported no conflict, while 17.6% of them reported conflict with academic staff. Hence, Students who have higher cumulative grade point averages tended to report lower levels of conflict.

Among respondents who rated their communication as poor, only 37.8% of them reported no conflict, while 62.2% of them reported conflict with academic staff. Among those who rated their communication as excellent, respondents (90%) reported no conflict. Hence, students who rated their communication with academic staff as better tended to report lower levels of conflict.

Among respondents who did not leave out of exams, 83.9% of them reported no conflict, while 16.1% of them

reported conflict with academic staff. Among those who left out of exams, only 32.7% of them reported no conflict, while 67.3% of them reported conflict with academic staff.
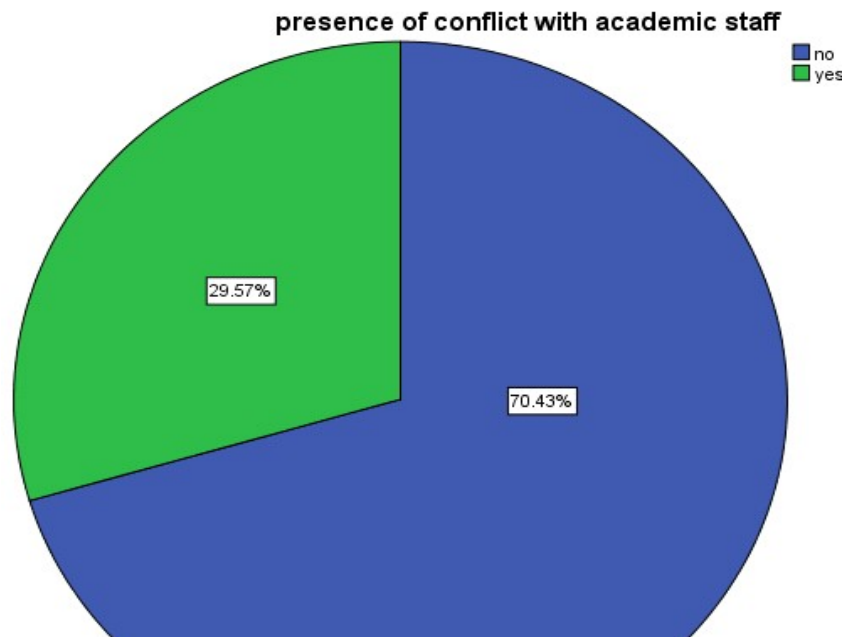

Figure 1. Pie-chart of the percentage Presence of conflict with academic staff

Among the 186 students, 29.6% of them have conflict, while the remaining 70.4% of them have no conflict with academic staff. Hence, the majority of respondents have no conflict with academic staff.

The chi-square test was conducted to examine the association between various factors related to the presence of conflict with academic staff at 5% significance level. Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no association between the independent variable (sex, age, religion, coming area, CGPA, communication, leave out of exam, and batch) related to the presence of conflict with academic staff.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is association between the independent variable (sex, age, religion, coming area, CGPA, communication, leave out of exam, and batch) related to the presence of conflict with academic staff.

The results indicate that there is a significant association between sex (p = 0.034), coming area (p = 0.000), CGPA (p = 0.000), communication (p = 0.000), and leaving out of exams (p = 0.000) related with the presence of conflict with academic staff. However, age (p = 0.917), religion (p = 0.249), and batch (p = 0.066) did not show significant associations. In summary, for respondent sex, coming area, CGPA, communication, and leaving out of exams has significant association to conflicts with academic staff, while age, religion, and batch did not demonstrate significant associations.

According to the result of sex, the estimated odds of a female student who have conflict with academic staff is approximately 0.322 times that of a male student. So that, a female student has less likely in experiencing conflict with academic staff compared to those a male student (Table 3 Appendix).

The estimated odds of a Student aged 20-24, who has conflict with academic staff, is approximately 0.866 times compared to under 20 while a student whose age 25 and above roughly 0.646 times compared to those under 20. So that, lower aged student seems more likely to experience conflict with academic staff compared to that of higher aged student.

Religion-wise, the estimated odds that a student whose religion following the Muslim has experienced conflict with academic staff is 0.880 times compared to the reference category (orthodox). Similarly, a student following the Protestant religion have roughly 0.764 times compared to the reference category, while a student following other religions has around 2.966 times compared to orthodox.

The estimated odds a Student who came from rural areas experienced conflict with academic staff is roughly 0.177 times compared to a Student who came from urban areas.

In terms of GPA, the estimated odds a student with a GPA between 2.5 and 3 have 0.457 times to experience

conflict compared to a student who has a GPA below 2.5, while a student with a GPA of 3 and above has 0.437 times to experience conflict compared to a student who have a GPA below 2.5.

Regarding communication skills, the estimated odds of a Student whose communication skill is good, very good, and excellent is 0.333, 0.115, and 0.167 times respectively to experience conflict with academic staff compared to a student whose communication skills is poor. That is a student who has better in communication skills is less likely in experiencing conflict with academic staff.

The estimated odds of a student who leave out of exams 10.198 times of who have a conflict with academic staff compared to a student who don't leave out of exams.

Finally, the estimated odds of a student in the 4th year is 1.093 times to a student in the 3rd year, while the estimated odds of a student in the 5th year and above is 0.242 times to a student in the 3rd year.

The results of the Wald tests conducted at a significance level of 0.05 are as follows: Null Hypothesis (H$_0$): $\beta_i = 0$ Versus Alternative Hypothesis (H1): $\beta_i \neq 0$. In this regard, sex, coming areas, communication skills, and leaving out of exams of respondents have significant coefficients (β)'s in one of their categories. Therefore, these variables are considered predictors which have significant effects on conflicts with academic staff for regular students at Wolkite University. But age, religion, GPA, and batch of students are not significant predictors for this survey.

The Hosmer-Lemeshow test statistic is 5.077 with resulting in a p-value of 0.749. Since the p-value is greater than the significance level of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, we do not have sufficient evidence to suggest a lack of fit for the logistic regression model. Therefore, the binary logistic regression model appears to fit the data well for this study (Table 5 Appendix).

Conclusions

The aim of this study was to determine factors that lead to conflict between regular students and academic staff members at Wolkite University. Based on the findings of this survey, the respondent's sex, coming area, communication skills, and leaving out of exams were found to be significant factors influencing the presence of conflicts between regular students and academic staff members.

And also one of the findings shows that a student who has better communication skill is less likely in experiencing conflict with academic staff compared to a student whose communication skill is poor.

Based on the findings of this survey, the following recommendations are made to reduce conflicts among students and academic staffs: encourage open and respectful dialogue among students and academic staffs from diverse backgrounds; provide opportunities for students to practice conflict resolution skills through role-playing and simulations.

Finally, my findings suggest that promoting effective communication, addressing academic challenges, fostering a supportive environment, and conducting further research are essential to reducing conflicts and fostering peaceful coexistence among students and academic staffs.

Appendix

Table 1: Sample size determination using proportional allocation

Colleges	Total Number of Students	Sample size
Agriculture	458	24
Business & economics	402	21
Computing & informatics	239	16
Behavioral science	131	6
Engineering & technology	573	30
Medicine &health science	1004	50
Natural & computational science	370	20
Social science & humanity	304	16
School of law	50	3
Total	3531	186

Table 2: Cross-tabulation of respondents for the Presence of conflict with academic staff

Variable	Category	Presence of conflict with academic staff				total
		No		Yes		
sex		frequency	percent	frequency	percent	
	Male	71	64.5	39	35.5	110
	Female	60	78.9	16	21.1	76
	total	131	70.4	55	29.6	186
age	Below 20	4	66.7	2	33.3	6
	20-24	95	69.9	41	30.1	136
	25&above	32	72.7	12	27.3	44
	total	131	70.4	55	29.6	186
religion	orthodox	59	72.0	23.0	28	82
	Muslim	42	77.8	12	22.2	54
	protestant	24	61.5	15	38.5	39
	others	5	50.0	5	50.0	10
	total	131	70.4	55	29.6	186
Coming area	urban	64	57.7	47	42.3	111
	rural	67	89.3	8	10.7	75
	total	131	70.4	55	29.6	186
Cumulative grade point average	Below 2.5	22	46.8	25	53.2	47
	2.5-3.0	48	73.8	17	26.2	65
	Above 3.0	61	82.4	13	17.6	74
	total	131	70.4	55	29.6	186
Communication of students with academic staff	poor	14	37.8	23	62.2	37
	good	66	73.3	24	26.7	90
	Very good	41	83.7	8	16.3	49
	excellent	9	90.0	1	10.0	10
	total	131	70.4	55	29.6	186
Leave out of exam	no	115	83.9	22	16.1	137
	yes	16	32.7	33	67.3	49
	total	131	70.4	55	29.6	186
Batch of student	3rd year	50	67.6	24	32.4	74
	4th year	53	66.3	27	33.7	80

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| | 5th & above | 28 | 87.5 | 4 | 12.5 | 32 |
| | total | 131 | 70.4 | 55 | 29.6 | 186 |

Table 3: Chi-Square association of independent variables and presence of conflict

Variables	Pearson chi-square	df	Asymptotic significance
sex	4.476[a]	1	.034
age	.174[a]	2	.917
religion	5.396[a]	4	.249
Coming area	21.563[a]	1	.000
CGPA	18.075[a]	2	.000
communication	27.561[a]	3	.000
Leave out of exam	45.587[a]	1	.000
batch	5.440[a]	2	.066

Table 4: Parameter Estimation and Testing

Variables	Ref.							95%C.I.for EXP(B)	
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
Sex(female)	male	-1.132	.480	5.570	1	.018	.322	.126	.825
Age				.315	2	.854			
Age (20-24)	Under 20	-.144	1.139	.016	1	.900	.866	.093	8.078
Age (25 & above)	Under 20	-.437	1.217	.129	1	.719	.646	.059	7.020
Religion				2.076	3	.557			
Religion (Muslim)	orthodox	-.128	.552	.054	1	.817	.880	.298	2.598
Religion (protestant)	orthodox	-.270	.595	.206	1	.650	.764	.238	2.449
Religion (others)	orthodox	1.087	.875	1.545	1	.214	2.966	.534	16.480
Coming area(rural)	urban	-1.732	.527	10.777	1	.001	.177	.063	.498
Cumulative grade point average				2.639	2	.267			

Cumulative grade point average (2.5-3)	Below 2.5	-.784	.543	2.082	1	.149	.457	.158	1.324
Cumulative grade point average (3&above)	Below 2.5	-.827	.584	2.007	1	.157	.437	.139	1.374
Communication				10.174	3	.017			
Communication(good	poor	-1.100	.547	4.040	1	.044	.333	.114	.973
Communication (very good)	poor	-2.159	.693	9.719	1	.002	.115	.030	.449
Communication (excellent)	poor	-1.789	1.245	2.067	1	.151	.167	.015	1.916
Leave out of exam(yes)	no	2.322	.496	21.900	1	.000	10.198	3.856	26.970
Batch				4.140	2	.126			
Batch (4th year)	3rd year	.089	.477	.035	1	.852	1.093	.429	2.786
Batch (5th &a above)	3rd year	-1.418	.773	3.362	1	.067	.242	.053	1.103
Constants	1.451	1.326	1.198	1	.24	0.008	1.451		

Table 5: Hosmer and Lemeshow test

Step	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1	5.077	8	0.749

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