

Communication Conflicts among Students Residing in Higher Education Dormitories

Yükseköğretim Yurtlarında Kalan Öğrenciler Arasındaki İletişim Çatışmaları

Nuray YILMAZ SERT 

Abstract

Conflict, regarded as an inevitable process in research, is a state of disagreement that arises from parties having different goals, expectations, needs, values, and perceptions. Although conflicts often evoke negative connotations, when managed effectively, they can contribute to individual, institutional, and societal development, whereas if not handled properly, they may lead to various levels of problems. Therefore, research focusing on nature and management of conflict holds significance within academic literature. This study aims to identify the underlying sources and typologies of communication conflicts among students residing in higher education dormitories, and to explore the predominant strategies employed in resolving these conflicts within shared living environments. This research uses a case study approach, a qualitative research method, together with data collected through focus group interviews. Semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted with students residing in higher education dormitories located on the Prof. Dr. İlhan Varank Campus of Manisa Celal Bayar University in Manisa, Türkiye. The obtained data were systematized and analyzed using the content analysis method. According to the findings of the study, students most frequently experience content-related conflicts, which predominantly stem from differing values, and avoidance strategies are most commonly employed as a means of conflict resolution.

Keywords: Communication, Conflict, Higher Education, Dormitory, Conflict Management

* Prof. Dr., Manisa Celal Bayar University, Faculty of Communication, Department of Public Relations, Manisa, Türkiye, E-mail: nuray.sert@cbu.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-5329-5469

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Öz

Araştırmalarda kaçınılmaz bir süreç olarak ele alınan çatışma, tarafların farklı hedefler, beklentiler, ihtiyaçlar, değerler ve algılara sahip olmalarından kaynaklanan bir anlaşmazlık durumudur. Çatışmalar genellikle olumsuz bir çağrışım uyandırır da doğru yönetildiğinde bireysel, kurumsal ve toplumsal gelişime katkı sağlarken, etkili bir şekilde ele alınmadığında ise çeşitli düzeylerde sorunlara yol açabilmektedir. Bu nedenle, çatışmanın doğası ve yönetimine odaklanan araştırmalar, akademik literatürde önemli bir yere sahiptir. Bu çalışma, yükseköğretim yurtlarında kalan öğrenciler arasında ortaya çıkan iletişim çatışmalarının temel kaynaklarını ve türlerini belirlemeyi; ayrıca bu çatışmaların paylaşımlı yaşam alanlarında nasıl çözümlendiğini ve öğrenciler tarafından en yaygın olarak benimsenen çözüm stratejilerini analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmanın yaklaşımı nitel araştırma modellerinden durum çalışmasıdır ve veriler odak grup görüşmeleri kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Yarı yapılandırılmış odak grup görüşmeleri Türkiye’de Manisa Celal Bayar Üniversitesi Prof. Dr. İlhan Varank Kampüsü içerisinde yer alan Yükseköğrenim yurtlarında kalan öğrencilerle gerçekleştirilmiştir. Elde edilen veriler, sistematik hale getirilerek içerik analizi yöntemiyle analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmanın bulgularına göre; öğrenciler en çok içerik temelli çatışmalar yaşamaktadır ve bu çatışmalar çoğunlukla farklı değerlerden kaynaklanmaktadır; çatışmaları çözmeye yönelik olarak ise en yaygın şekilde kaçınma stratejileri kullanılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İletişim, Çatışma, Yükseköğretim, Yurt, Çatışma Yönetimi

Introduction

The expansion of higher education institutions across all provinces in Türkiye and the increasing accessibility of universities have led to greater student mobility and, consequently, a rising demand for student dormitories. According to Günay and Günay (2016, p. 23), since 2006, the rapid establishment of new public and foundation universities, along with policies aimed at increasing access to higher education, has significantly increased the number of students. Türkiye has reached a gross enrollment rate of 94%, marking its transition from the mass to the universal stage of higher education (Günay & Günay, 2016, p. 24), as outlined in Trow’s (1973, p. 17) typology, which classifies higher education systems into three stages –elite (0–15%), mass (15–50%), and universal (50% and above)– based on enrollment rates. This model suggests that as access to higher education expands, the system undergoes a structural transformation and begins to serve a broader segment of society. This long-term expansion has also resulted in a growing number of students studying away from home –particularly in different cities or abroad– which, in turn, has intensified the need for dormitories and accommodation facilities. In this regard, university dormitories are not merely spaces for accommodation, but also dynamic environments where intense social interactions among students take place. However, when many individuals with diverse opinions, interests, perspectives, and cultures start interacting and working together toward common goals, conflicts become inevitable (Wellington, 2011, p. 168). Therefore, conflicts among students residing in dormitories are regarded as a natural part of daily life. Conflict is defined as a state of disagreement that arises due to the incompatibility of differing expectations, needs, values, or perceptions among individuals or groups (Stoner et al., 1995, p. 539). Particularly in shared living spaces, individuals tend to allocate a significant portion of their energy to emotions related to these conflicts and to developing resolution strategies (Hocker & Wilmot, 2018, p. 11). In this context, ensuring a healthy communication

environment in higher education dormitories emerges as a critical factor that not only supports students' academic performance but also enhances their social adaptation.

This study aims to identify the underlying types and sources of communication conflicts experienced by students residing in higher education dormitories and to examine the conflict resolution strategies most frequently employed in these shared living environments. For this purpose, a literature review was first conducted to provide a fundamental framework on the concept of conflict. International literature on the subject predominantly focuses on the adverse effects of communication conflicts on students; however, research addressing the causes, dynamics, and resolution processes of these conflicts is noted to be both quantitatively insufficient and methodologically limited (Erb et al., 2014, p. 52; Halpin, 2009; McCorkle & Mason, 2009). On the other hand, the majority of national-level studies, rather than directly examining communicative processes in dormitories, focus primarily on the concept of satisfaction, which is predominantly assessed through physical facilities. Additionally, there is a notably limited number of studies that directly focus on communication conflicts experienced within higher education dormitories (Demirbilek, 2012; Özkaleli & Tengirşek, 2000). In this context, this study aims to address the identified theoretical and methodological gaps in both national and international literature by developing an original perspective on communication conflicts experienced in higher education dormitories, thereby contributing to the existing scholarly discourse. Accordingly, a case study design, as a qualitative research method, was adopted to conduct an in-depth investigation of communication conflicts among students residing in higher education dormitories, employing focus group discussions as the primary data collection technique.

Semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted to collect the data. The findings were systematically organized using the content analysis method and interpreted in light of the existing literature. According to the study's findings, students residing in higher education dormitories most frequently experienced content-related conflicts. These conflicts were found to primarily stem from issues related to personal space, which arise due to inadequate physical conditions and the complex dynamics of communal living. Furthermore, the findings reveal that value-based conflicts represent the most prominent underlying cause of communication problems in dormitory settings, primarily driven by cultural differences among students. In addition, students most frequently adopt avoidance as a conflict management strategy; this behavior typically begins with the cessation of communication and is followed by social and physical withdrawal. Moreover, the findings indicate that conflict situations lead to a range of negative emotional states among students. In light of these findings, this research is expected to make significant contributions to the development of policies and practices aimed at improving the quality of life of students by addressing the communication conflicts experienced in higher education dormitories.

Conflict Management: From Negative Perceptions to Constructive Strategies

Conflict, from the perspective of communication science, is defined as a disagreement between two or more individuals or ideas, especially when perceived differences in goals, values, resources, or needs create incompatibility (Shapiro, 2004, p. 3). When considered in a broader context, conflict

is not only a disagreement but also involves confrontation and discord, manifesting as an inevitable phenomenon when individuals' needs, desires, values, or intentions conflict with those of others, ranging from simple differences of opinion to political disputes and even war (Bingöl, 2022, p. 13; Wellington, 2011, p. 166).

Therefore, conflicts arising from this diversity are a complex phenomenon that can develop at different levels, ranging from individuals' inner worlds to inter-organizational relationships, and are influenced by various factors. According to Böhm et al., (2020, p. 950), conflicts arise due to limited economic resources (e.g., money or land), differing values (e.g., perceptions of what is "right" and "wrong"), disparities in power (e.g., the extent of influence one party holds over another's actions or outcomes), or a combination of these elements. Regardless of their source, conflicts can occur in all areas of social life and extend across different timeframes. The important thing is recognizing conflict as a natural part of life and approaching it constructively.

In general, conflict carries a strong negative connotation, often associated with concepts such as tension, fighting, violence, stress, hostility, distress, and anxiety. Therefore, according to White and Bednar (1986, p. 458), conflict has the potential to lead to adverse or dysfunctional outcomes. Particularly, emotionally driven conflicts can generate insecurity, fear, resentment, and anger, while prolonged conflicts may distance individuals from their task performance and create a negative atmosphere in the environment. However, in recent years, experts have emphasized that conflict should not always be perceived as a negative experience.

In this context, approaches that focus on the positive aspects of conflict argue that recognizing it as an inevitable process contributes to the development of constructive solutions rather than blame or avoidance. Conflict helps individuals utilize their problem-solving skills while also making unresolved issues within relationships more visible and allowing weak points to be identified and improved. Furthermore, conflict encourages individuals to question routine ways of doing things, prompting them to clarify their priorities, resources, and goals when disagreements arise. Additionally, although conflict can be a challenging process, it draws attention to different perspectives, enabling individuals to better understand one another (Hocker & Wilmot, 2018, p. 49; White & Bednar, 1986, p. 458). This process, in turn, facilitates the development of empathy skills, promoting healthier and more harmonious relationships. Consequently if conflicts are not managed effectively and quickly, they can impose significant costs on the involved parties. On the other hand, when managed correctly, they can add value to the lives of individuals and the relevant parties. The outcomes of conflicts can be constructive or destructive, depending on the way they are managed. In this regard, rather than avoiding conflicts, learning effective management strategies will help increase their positive effects and minimize their negative effects.

Lane (2010, p. 296) states that some types of conflict are easier to resolve than others, so knowing the type of conflict we are in can help us decide on the most appropriate and effective conflict management strategy. According to this typology, conflicts can be categorized from the easiest to manage to the most difficult as pseudo-conflict, content conflict, value conflict, and ego conflict. Pseudo-conflict occurs when one party mistakenly believes that the other has incompatible goals or

is obstructing their own objectives. These conflicts typically arise from misunderstandings and can be resolved when the parties acknowledge that no actual disagreement exists. In contrast, content conflict emerges when disagreements arise due to differences in information between the parties. Such conflicts are considered “simple” because they can often be resolved by verifying disputed facts. However, unlike content conflicts, value conflicts occur when individuals hold differing perspectives on personal value systems and moral judgments. While pseudo-conflicts and content conflicts are generally resolved quickly, value conflicts tend to remain unresolved due to deep-seated differences. Another type of conflict, ego conflict, occurs when parties transform the dispute into a personal rivalry, often driven by the need to protect their reputation or assert dominance. When discussions about facts or values become dominated by judgmental statements and personal attacks, ego conflicts intensify. Compared to other types of conflict, ego conflicts are considered the most destructive to relationships and the most difficult to resolve (Lane, 2010, pp. 296–297). As observed, conflicts in relationships can be experienced in various ways. Although it is not always possible to distinguish conflict types with absolute clarity, identifying the category of a particular conflict contributes to structuring management and resolution processes in a more systematic and effective manner.

While the effective management of conflict provides individuals with opportunities to gain deeper insights into others and collaboratively explore more effective communication patterns, the mismanagement of conflict often leads to increased hostility and damaged relationships (Dai & Chen, 2017, p. 1). Various approaches to conflict management are discussed in the literature; however, one of the most widely recognized is the Conflict Mode Instrument developed by Thomas and Kilmann (1976). This model identifies five conflict-handling styles—collaboration, compromise, avoidance, competition, and accommodation—which are outlined below along with their defining characteristics.

1. The collaborative approach emphasizes common goals and mutual benefits, prioritizing the needs of both parties (Bingöl, 2022, p. 245). In this approach, parties actively participate in constructively seeking the most effective resolution to the conflict. Problems are addressed in a manner that enables both parties to fully develop a mutually satisfying solution. The concerns, desires, and emotions of both parties are taken into account, ensuring a fair resolution (Obi & Obineli, 2015, p. 47).

2. The compromising strategy aims to resolve the conflict by reaching a solution that partially satisfies both parties (Bingöl, 2022, p. 245). In this case, each party concedes part of their demands to maintain the relationship. However, since compromisers focus on a practical rather than an “optimal” solution, neither party may be entirely satisfied with the outcome, and unresolved core issues may lead to ongoing tensions (Obi & Obineli, 2015, p. 48).

3. The avoidance strategy includes concealing grievances, making irrelevant comments to divert attention from the conflict, and outright denying its existence. In such cases, both parties often avoid addressing the underlying issues and fail to confront the reality of the conflict, either by rationalizing their stance or shifting the problem onto another party (Lane, 2010, p. 301; Obi & Obineli, 2015, p. 48).

4. In the competitive strategy, parties prioritize their own needs while disregarding the concerns of the other. Individuals adopting this approach may employ various tactics, regardless of their ethical appropriateness, to achieve their objectives. These tactics may include manipulating facts, outright lying, verbal attacks, or even making threats (Lane, 2010, p. 301). The accommodation strategy involves one party prioritizing the needs of the other, often at the expense of their own. While this approach helps preserve relationships, it may prevent individuals from achieving their personal goals.

5. Accommodation can lead to ineffective decision-making when individuals refrain from expressing their perspectives. Furthermore, when used repeatedly, this strategy can lead to one party benefiting at the expense of the other, creating an imbalance in the relationship (Lane, 2010, p. 301).

Individuals' experiences and, consequently, their perspectives on phenomena vary. Thus, each individual is unique, and this uniqueness enables them to develop different perspectives. However, differences in how individuals perceive the world shape their cognitive and emotional responses, potentially leading to conflict and problems (Shapiro, 2004, p. 43). Due to their multi-actor structure, academic institutions are environments where the diversity among individuals becomes increasingly pronounced. Stakeholder groups within these institutions tend to perceive each other not as collaborative actors pursuing common goals, but rather as adversaries. This perception positions academic institutions, unlike other organizational structures, within a more intense and persistent conflict dynamic (Fleetwood, 1987, p. 1). In this context, campus environments—where individuals with diverse social, cultural, and educational backgrounds coexist—provide a conducive ground for the emergence of interpersonal tensions. Especially in higher education dormitories, where academic and everyday life are closely intertwined, differences in spatial sharing, responsibilities, and expectations increase the likelihood of conflicts.

Conflicts in Higher Education Dormitories

Academic success in higher education institutions holds significant global importance. Among the key factors influencing students' academic performance are the learning environment and various services that support this environment. One of these essential services is accommodation (Attigbe et al., 2024, p. 228). In this regard, higher education dormitories are established to meet students' accommodation needs. Therefore, these facilities are typically located near academic units to reduce students' commuting time and facilitate their learning processes (Etikan, 2017, p. 409). However, accommodation is not merely a physical necessity; it is also considered a fundamental right that enables individuals to live in security, comfort, and dignity (Attigbe et al., 2024, p. 228). In this context, accommodation is not only an individual necessity but also assumes significance as an environment where social relationships are established and maintained. Room sharing in university dormitories, in particular, necessitates frequent and continuous interaction among students, making roommate relationships a distinctive and crucial aspect of university life. Globally, in most universities, students share a room with other students (Jobbehdar Nourafkan et al., 2020, p. 33; Yıldırım, 2016, p. 32). One of the most significant relationships students establish is with

their roommates (Duran & Zakahi, 1988, p. 136). University roommate relationships constitute a significant dimension of students' social functioning and university life. Roommate relationships are a distinctive and commonly experienced form of interpersonal connection among university students. Unlike other friendships, these relationships are fundamentally based on co-residence. Therefore, frequent interaction, sharing of responsibilities, and agreements regarding the living environment (such as noise levels, sleeping/waking hours, visitors, and decoration) inevitably become necessary among roommates. However, shared living spaces often lead to conflicts —particularly regarding bedtime, room cleanliness, noise, and visitors— which at times create tension among students (Erb et al., 2014, p. 44; Jobbehdar Nourafkan et al., 2020, p. 37).

University dormitory conflicts refer to the contradictions that arise among individuals living together in a dormitory environment (Yang et al., 2024, p. 1730). McCorkle and Mason (2009, p. 5) state that the increasing multicultural composition of university environments potentially creates a sensitive and conflict-prone mixture of values, traditions, expectations, and sensitivities within shared living spaces such as dormitory life. According to research on the subject, peers from different cultural backgrounds tend to interpret each other's behavior both behaviorally and cognitively in ways that align with their own cultural values. This situation may lead to disagreements and misunderstandings among individuals or groups who adhere to different cultural value systems (Burgos-Cienfuegos et al., 2015, p. 368). In contrast, Tong and Kim (2025, pp. 8–10) argue that spatial and administrative arrangements that would adequately promote cultural integration and interaction —particularly between domestic and international students in dormitories— have not been sufficiently implemented. Research indicates that all these conflicts lead to increased stress levels and a rise in negative emotions and behaviors, exerting a constraining impact on students' lifestyles and academic performance.

Studies generally indicate that the dormitory experience is not merely a physical living space for students but also a critical environment for cultural interaction, personal development, and social adjustment. Communication skills play a crucial role in students' overall social and academic adjustment to university life. The literature contains findings indicating that the quality of relationships between roommates is closely related to the interpersonal communication that occurs among them (Waldo, 1985, p. 126). Students' abilities to communicate with their roommates, peers, faculty members, and others influence both their capacity to develop satisfying relationships and their overall satisfaction with university life. Among these relationships, the roommate relationship is often the most critical, especially for first-year students (Hawken et al., 1991, p. 298). Roommates are often the first non-family individuals with whom students live and the first people with whom they share an equal status (unlike parent-child relationships). These initial experiences introduce additional complexities to students' interpersonal competence and their ability to coexist harmoniously (Erb et al., 2014, p. 44). Despite the numerous variables involved in roommate matching, there is one constant: "Freshmen arrive on campus and begin to sleep, study, and live their lives in close proximity with strangers" (McCorkle & Mason, 2009, p. 2). Students often have limited control over the selection of their roommates. This frequently results in incompatibilities rooted in personality differences, rendering roommate conflicts a prevalent issue among university students

(Erb et al., 2014, p. 44). Students living in dormitories are prone to various interpersonal conflicts, including communication barriers, differences in daily routines, competition over shared resources, infringement of personal interests, and discrepancies in social interaction styles (Yang et al., 2024, p. 1730). According to the findings of the study conducted by Jordyn and Byrd (2003, p. 271), students residing in university dormitories report the highest average scores in friendship problems compared to those living in other settings, such as with family or in private housing.

McCorkle and Mason (2009, p. 3) emphasize that comprehensive studies on university success, retention, and satisfaction provide valuable insights into the adverse effects of conflict on university students. However, they note that roommate conflict is often treated as a secondary issue in the literature and is rarely the primary focus of research. Halpin (2009, p. 4) highlights the scarcity of literature on the topic by stating, “There were a handful of resources on roommate conflicts and solutions.” In a similar vein, Erb et al. (2014, p. 52) assert that research on university roommate relationships remains limited in quantity and is characterized by notable methodological shortcomings: most studies collect data from only one roommate, focus on a single variable, predominantly employ cross-sectional datasets, and provide methodologically weak analyses. Moreover, the lack of reliable and valid measurement instruments addressing the causes of problems in roommate relationships is also notable. This limitation hinders a comprehensive understanding of the issues encountered in dormitory environments where individuals with diverse cultural and personality traits coexist (Erb et al., 2014, p. 52).

A review of the literature conducted in Türkiye on the subject reveals the following findings: a majority of studies focusing on students residing in higher education dormitories examine students’ satisfaction levels with dormitory life, typically evaluating this satisfaction through service quality variables such as physical facilities, staff attitudes, meal services, security, and cleanliness (Etikan, 2017; İbil & Uyanık, 2018; Turan & Ünsel, 2014). Moreover, some studies do not directly focus on the specific dynamics of shared living spaces such as dormitories; instead, they primarily examine the conflict resolution strategies adopted by university students in various interpersonal conflict situations encountered across different social settings (Arslan, 2005; Bilgin, 1999; Koç, 2016). In the limited number of studies examining relationships and conflicts among students residing in higher education dormitories, quantitative research methods are predominantly preferred; consequently, research that provides an in-depth analysis of the conflict phenomenon remains insufficient in the literature (Demirbilek, 2012; Özkaleli & Tengirşek, 2000).

As a result, this shared living arrangement necessitates interpersonal communication while also introducing various communication processes and potential conflicts. In recent years, various incidents of violence occurring in higher education dormitories in Türkiye have demonstrated that conflicts between roommates are not confined to verbal disputes but can escalate to physical violence and, in some cases, even result in fatalities. Media reports reveal that conflicts occurring in dormitories are not merely issues confined to academic success and quality of life but also constitute a serious risk area threatening the physical safety of students (2 Mart Gazetesi, 2024; Burdur Gazetesi, 2024; Haber Anlık, 2025; Sözcü Gazetesi, 2023). Therefore, it can be asserted that studies addressing roommate conflicts within a multidimensional framework serve a crucial function not only in terms

of academic knowledge production but also in ensuring the safe and healthy continuation of student life.

Method

Purpose and Significance of the Research

The primary objective of this study is to identify the sources and types of communication conflicts among students residing in higher education dormitories, as well as the most commonly used methods of conflict resolution.

To address this issue, the study formulated the following research question:

“What are the most common causes and types of communication conflicts among students residing in higher education dormitories, and which conflict management strategies are applied by these students in such situations?”

It is observed that most studies on communication conflicts experienced by students are conducted based on educational levels (e.g., primary school students, secondary school students). However, the effects of the conflicts experienced by students residing in higher education dormitories extend to all areas of their lives. Despite the significance of this subject, a noticeable gap exists in the related literature. The lack of sufficient studies on the research population highlights the originality of this study, which not only addresses this gap but also contributes to the development of policies and practices aimed at improving students' quality of life. With the decision of the Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Manisa Celal Bayar University, located in Manisa, Türkiye, dated 30.11.2023 and numbered E-050.01.04-674516, the research was approved as ethically appropriate.

Research Data Collection Tool

A qualitative case study design was adopted as the research approach. The data of the research were collected using focus group interviews. Focus group interviews are prominent in qualitative studies due to their low cost, rapid data collection, the ability to provide reliable information in an appropriate environment, and their effectiveness, especially for community research (Gülcan, 2021, p. 97). Within the scope of this research, three separate focus group interviews were conducted. The semi-structured focus group interviews were carried out with students residing in higher education dormitories located within the Prof. Dr. İlhan Varank Campus of Manisa Celal Bayar University in Manisa, Türkiye. In order to prevent data loss, the interviews were recorded with the knowledge and permission of the participants, and then these recordings were transcribed into written form. The obtained data were systematically organized and analyzed using content analysis method. The findings were interpreted in the light of the information obtained from the literature review and within the scope of the research question. Suggestions have been developed based on the findings obtained.

Population-Sample

The population of this research consists of students residing in dormitories during their university education. Undergraduate students residing in dormitories on the Şehit Prof. Dr. İlhan Varank Campus of Manisa Celal Bayar University in Türkiye constitute the study population of this research. There are only three dormitories for girls on campus, affiliated with the Higher Education Credit and Dormitories Institution. These are Muradiye Female Student Dormitory, Hüma Hatun Female Student Dormitory, and Yunusemre Female Student Dormitory. The details of the participants are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Demographic Data of Participants

| Participant | Department | Class | Dormitory |
|-------------|---|-------|-------------------------------------|
| P1. | Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation | 3 | Hüma Hatun Female Student Dormitory |
| P2. | Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Social Work | 4 | Hüma Hatun Female Student Dormitory |
| P3. | Faculty of Communication, Department of Public Relations and Publicity | 1 | Muradiye Female Student Dormitory |
| P4. | Faculty of Communication, Department of Public Relations and Publicity | 1 | Muradiye Female Student Dormitory |
| P5. | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of English Translation and Interpreting | 2 | Yunusemre Female Student Dormitory |
| P6. | Faculty of Business, Department of Economics and Finance | 1 | Yunusemre Female Student Dormitory |
| P7. | Faculty of Engineering, Department of Bioengineering | 3 | Hüma Hatun Female Student Dormitory |
| P8. | Faculty of Engineering, Department of Bioengineering | 3 | Hüma Hatun Female Student Dormitory |
| P9. | Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Social Work | 2 | Hüma Hatun Female Student Dormitory |
| P10. | Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Social Work | 2 | Yunusemre Female Student Dormitory |
| P11. | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of English Translation and Interpreting | 2 | Hüma Hatun Female Student Dormitory |
| P12. | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of English Translation and Interpreting | 2 | Hüma Hatun Female Student Dormitory |
| P13. | Faculty of Business, Department of Economics and Finance | 1 | Yunus Emre Female Student Dormitory |
| P14. | Faculty of Communication, Department of Public Relations and Publicity | 4 | Muradiye Female Student Dormitory |
| P15. | Faculty of Communication, Department of Public Relations and Publicity | 4 | Hüma Hatun Female Student Dormitory |

In qualitative methodology, the sample size may or may not be determined prior to data collection, depending on the study's objectives, available resources, and time constraints. In short, once the researcher reaches theoretical saturation —when new data no longer contribute additional insights or answers to the research questions — it indicates that the sample size is adequate (Jobbehdar Nourafkan et al., 2020, p. 35). In this study, three focus group interviews were held on February 5, 12, and 19, 2024, with five participants each. The sample size was not predetermined, and the interviews were concluded once data saturation was achieved.

Limitations

This study was limited to the dormitories located within Şehit Prof. Dr. İlhan Varank Campus of Manisa Celal Bayar University, Türkiye. Since there are only three dormitories affiliated to the Higher Education Credit and Dormitories Institution within the campus, only these dormitories were included in the study. Moreover, these dormitories accommodate only female students, as there are no dormitories for male students on the campus. Therefore, the study focuses solely on the communication conflicts experienced by female students in dormitories.

Analysis/Discussion of Findings

The findings obtained from the focus group interviews were analyzed under three main headings: types of conflict, causes of conflict, and conflict management strategies.

Findings on Types of Conflicts

In this study, conflict types were examined under four themes based on the framework proposed by Lane (2010, p. 296). These include content conflict, ego conflict, value conflict, and pseudo-conflict. The findings related to the theme are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Types of Conflict Experienced by Participants

| Theme: Type of conflict | Number of codes | Categories and codes |
|-------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Content conflict | 37 | <i>Irresponsible behaviour</i> : Disregard for shared space cleanliness (n=10). <i>Private space issues</i> : Limitations of physical space (n=11), Dynamics of communal living (n=3). <i>Communication problems</i> : One-way communication (n=5), Obstruction of communication (n=1). |
| Ego conflict | 10 | <i>Demonstration of power</i> : Psychological intimidation (n=1), Retaliation (n=1). <i>Status preservation</i> : Relational distancing (n=4). <i>Assertion of superiority</i> : Desire for attention (n=2), Verbal exclusion (n=1), Egocentric relationship (n=1). |

| | | |
|-----------------|----|--|
| Value conflict | 30 | <p><i>Different behavioural patterns:</i> Hygiene–etiquette incompatibility (n=5), Social interaction preference (n=4), Behaviour that violates the principle of reciprocity (n=2), Belief–based sensitivity (n=1), Lack of empathy (n=1).</p> <p><i>Different lifestyles:</i> Social deviance (n=2), Life stage difference (n=2), Mismatch in daily routines (n=2).</p> <p><i>Different modes of thinking:</i> Discrepancy between discourse and action (n=1), Conflict in communication style (n=1), Difference in mindset (n=1).</p> <p><i>Non–recognition of adulthood:</i> Infantilization (n=4).</p> <p><i>Disrespect for human dignity:</i> Inducing feelings of worthlessness (n=2), Violation of privacy (n=2).</p> |
| Pseudo–conflict | 7 | <p><i>Misunderstanding:</i> Fast and excited speech (n=1), Premature judgment (n=1), Personalization (n=1).</p> <p><i>Lack of communication:</i> Passive tension (n=2), Reluctance to communicate (n=1), Disproportionate reaction (n=1).</p> |

Content conflict pertains to the clash of tangible needs and has been identified as the most frequently occurring type of conflict in higher education dormitories. Physical space limitations emerge as the most commonly reported issue within the dormitory environment (n=11), indicating that spatial insufficiency significantly restricts individuals’ need for personal space. For example:

Some people don’t really understand communal living. Like, I can share a room with four or five people, but only if they belong to my room. I wouldn’t want someone else to come and sleep in my room. Why do they bring someone else in, for example? If necessary, I can live with ten people, but those ten people have to belong to my room—they each have a locker, a desk, and a sense of ownership... (P2)

In this example, Participant 2 places strong emphasis on the concept of personal space. Despite the physical space limitations, she indicates acceptance of sharing a room with multiple people, provided that those individuals are assigned to the room. However, she clearly expresses discomfort when others enter the room without permission, even if they are not assigned to it. This attitude demonstrates that her perception of personal space is related not only to the size of the physical area but also to a sense of ownership and belonging. Following the physical space limitations, the most frequently encountered issue in content conflicts is disregard for shared space cleanliness (n=10), which manifests as irresponsible behavior and fuels conflict dynamics among residents. For example, Participants 5 remarks:

One of the biggest issues is, for example, hair in the shower... Just take it out and throw it away when you leave; I mean, why make things difficult for people, why make them have to say something... Then things happen... bad things happen... Then it’s like: ‘You’re doing this and that, you’re telling me this and that!’ No, you’re not doing it, that’s why I’m telling you.

The findings of this study indicate that, alongside content conflicts, value conflicts occur with high frequency. Value conflicts stem from discrepancies in fundamental beliefs and attitudes — such as differing behavioral patterns, lifestyles, and ways of thinking— among individuals sharing a communal living space. These conflicts arise from differences between social norms and individual

habits, generating tension between the collective order of communal living and personal expectations. For example:

It's not with my roommates, but my other friends have experienced such problems... The girls in the room were really into nightlife. There's a place called *Afitap*, maybe you've heard of it... I have certain sensitivities due to my family background. I just can't stay in the same place if someone comes in drunk. We would have a big conflict. For instance, they used to get ready around 10 PM and come back at 4 or 5 AM — precisely when the girls were in deep sleep. You can do this once or twice for fun, but you can't keep coming back completely hammered to the room all the time. (P4)

The findings indicate that “difference” is the most prominent concept in value conflicts. However, within this category, it has been revealed that students experience conflicts not only within their rooms but also with the dormitory administration. This situation stems from the violation of fundamental values, including the non-recognition of adulthood and disrespect for human dignity. For instance, Participant 7 states, “I am 22 years old. My peers are getting married and having children. We are not at an age where we have to answer to our parents”, highlighting the issue of denial of adult status and infantilization (n=4). These types of conflicts are generally among the most challenging problems to resolve, and fostering empathy and understanding between parties is crucial for their resolution.

According to the study's findings, conflict types may replace one another over the course of the process. For example:

I'm especially bothered by this: I am never really respected when I'm sleeping. When they're asleep, sometimes I intentionally make extra noise so that they understand me and don't do it again. But then what happens is, when I make that noise, the next day it happens twice as much. (P9)

This statement reflects a situation that begins as a content conflict and evolves into an ego conflict. It has been determined that intervention through retaliation acts as a triggering factor for this transformation. Ego conflicts generally arise in the form of demonstration of power, status preservation, or assertion of superiority. The absence of an initial intention to foster understanding renders the attainment of compromise particularly challenging. For example:

I was in a different block from my friend... I kept going back and forth, but I was feeling too lazy. Then I changed my block... As soon as I arrived at the room, someone stood firmly at the door and said, ‘You came to the completely wrong room.’ I was left stunned. (P2)

In this example, there is an attempt to establish ego-based superiority through verbal exclusion. This situation simultaneously creates a perception of threat. In such conflicts, resolution can be challenging because individuals tend to personalize the dispute.

Although not frequent, pseudo-conflicts have also been observed in dormitories. Pseudo-conflict is a term used to describe perceived conflicts that arise not from genuine disagreements or competing interests, but rather from misunderstandings or communication deficiencies between parties. For example:

I'm very aggressive, I have a lot of problems. I experience some things very deeply inside myself. For example, a girl is laughing but not at me —I know that— but I feel as if she's laughing at me, and that's

related to my psychology. At that moment, there are five of us in the same room, and inevitably that feeling is noticed. You feel some things as if they are about yourself... (P3)

This statement exemplifies a pseudo-conflict that develops entirely based on perceptual illusions. In resolving such conflicts, it is considered crucial for the parties to engage in open communication to eliminate misunderstandings.

Findings on Causes of Conflict

Based on the study by Böhm et al., (2020, p. 950), causes of conflict are classified under three themes: scarce resources, values, and power. According to the findings obtained from the conducted research, it was revealed that communication conflicts experienced in higher education dormitories are primarily based on value-based, followed by resource- and power-based conflicts. All findings related to this theme are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Causes of Conflict Experienced by Participants

| Theme: Causes of conflict | Number of codes | Categories and codes |
|---------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Resources | 30 | Inadequate physical space: Constrained comfort zone (n=8), Violation of personal space (n=3), Lack of private space (n=6), Insecure private space (n=1). Lack of alternative spaces: Necessity to use the room multifunctionally (n=7), Need for psychological space (n=2), Lack of shared social spaces (n=1). Institutional/administrative issues: Unauthorized and forceful interventions (n=1), Lack of solutions for inadequate services (n=1). |
| Values | 38 | <i>Cultural differences</i> : Differences in life practices (n=7), Differences in perspectives (n=6), Differences in lifestyles (n=4), Differences in living habits (n=4), Differences in faith-based behaviour (n=2). <i>Shared living responsibilities</i> : Hygiene and cleanliness (n=5), Disorderliness (n=4), Indifference and disrespect (n=3). <i>Personal space</i> : Violation of security and privacy (n=3). |
| Power | 28 | <i>Sense of powerlessness</i> : Feeling vulnerable (n=7), Loss of control (n=5), Feeling unsafe (n=1). <i>Micro authority</i> : Unilateral decision-making (n=4), Physical threat (n=1), Territorial behaviour (n=1). <i>Authority power</i> : Lack of recognition of adult status (n=4), Absence of privacy and security (n=3), Insensitive use of power (n=1), Harsh exercise of authority (n=1). |

Value conflicts have been identified as one of the most common sources of conflict in interpersonal communication. The findings reveal that students from varying cultural contexts differ markedly in their life practices, lifestyles, daily habits, faith-based behaviors, and perspectives on events and phenomena. These differences often lead to conflicts among students who are required to share communal living spaces such as dormitories. For example:

Because of my sect, I can't touch dogs. If it touches my clothes, for instance, I can't wash them under dormitory conditions. And you bring dogs into the place where I eat. Ugh! It's just nauseating. The dog comes in, shakes itself off right there, and you're eating your food. (P2)

Such faith-based sensitivities can lead to tension and a sense of exclusion in shared living environments when they come into conflict with the lifestyles of others. However, cultural differences stem not only from religious beliefs but also from broader variations in individuals' lifestyles and daily habits, often leading to tension in everyday life. Participant 12 expresses this situation as follows:

Different cultures really need to be separated. They don't put foreign nationals in the same room, and my friend had serious issues because of this... Sure, the other person is a foreigner, and we're supposed to be understanding, but then that person tries to kick you out of the room. They say things like 'If you're not happy, leave.' And then they complain about you just because you said something verbally. But if you leave your dirty food container on the table for three days, wash your shoes in the sink, or eat with your hands in the room... okay, maybe that's your culture, but it's just not appropriate...

As illustrated in the examples above, issues related to shared living responsibilities —particularly hygiene and cleanliness— have been identified as one of the most frequently mentioned sources of conflict among students residing in higher education dormitories.

According to the findings, the limited availability of resources in higher education dormitories creates a foundation for communication conflicts among students. In particular, the inadequacy of physical living space has been identified as a primary source of tension. The presence of multiple students sharing the same room in higher education dormitories results in constrained comfort zones, violations of personal space, and a lack of private areas. Furthermore, the absence of alternative spaces compels students to use their rooms for multiple purposes, thereby limiting opportunities for social interaction and psychological relaxation. Participant 13 describes how the lack of physical space compels individuals to engage in communication —whether they want to or not— as follows:

There is no personal space for anyone; just one room. I really like my roommates, but even if you don't, you have to communicate, because no one has their own private space. Five beds, one table in the middle... You either gather around that table or talk while lying on your bed. It's almost impossible to spend time there without talking. No one has any private space.

Another significant finding of this study reveals that resource scarcity is not limited to inadequate physical space; rather, it also encompasses poor service quality and administrative shortcomings, which contribute to conflicts between students and dormitory management. Students not only express dissatisfaction with unresolved issues but also report restrictions on their right to voice these concerns. Participant 2 articulates this situation as follows:

After all, this is a dormitory, a communal living space; problems can happen, but they are also taking away our right to communicate. 'Don't record, don't speak up, don't talk to anyone, don't post anything...' I tell you, 'There's no electricity,' and you say, 'It will come.' I say, 'There's no water,' and you say, 'That's not our responsibility, call the municipality.' I call the municipality, and they say, 'That's not our responsibility...'

This account points not only to service failures but also to a managerial culture in which students' efforts to raise their voices are systematically silenced.

Another major cause of the conflicts experienced by students in dormitory settings is directly related to the concept of power and how it is exercised. Power refers to how authority, influence, pressure, and control mechanisms are constructed and implemented within communication processes. Based on the interviews conducted, it can be argued that the conflicts under this category predominantly stem from a sense of powerlessness, which emerges when students feel vulnerable, perceive a lack of control over their surroundings, and experience a diminished sense of safety. For example:

I had a roommate, professor. She was either a psychopath or had some very serious psychological problems. She would wake up around 3 a.m. and stare at herself in the bathroom mirror. She would even go into the bathroom without turning on the lights. I was honestly really scared. In fact, while talking about these issues, I became very close with my other roommate. I asked her questions, but she never answered. We didn't even learn her name until three or four weeks later. (P5)

According to the findings, insufficient or inadequate communication leads to a sense of uncertainty and increases individuals' feelings of insecurity. In contrast, accurate and timely information allows individuals to anticipate environmental threats, respond more effectively, and feel safer. Participant 15 describes this situation as follows:

Sometimes someone in our room screams while sleeping. The other night, when she screamed, I got really scared. The next day I asked, 'Did you have a bad dream? You suddenly screamed.' She didn't remember. Another roommate joined our room. I warned her, saying, 'Look, one of our roommates sometimes screams suddenly; stay calm. I also grind my teeth when I'm very stressed.' But when she screamed that night, I was really frightened — I wish someone had warned me...

This account illustrates how even a simple lack of prior communication can trigger intense fear and anxiety, highlighting that the sense of safety in a dormitory environment is shaped not only by physical conditions but also by interpersonal communication. In addition to conflicts among students, the administration's tendency to prioritize authority under all circumstances and to use institutional power as a means of control also contributes to the emergence of conflicts. This situation appears to be related not only to the previously mentioned lack of recognition of students' adult status but also to the absence of privacy and security within the dormitory environment. Participant 7 describes their experience regarding the administration's intervention in private spaces as follows: "There was a search recently — they went through our drawers and looked inside our closets while we weren't there. I don't think that's ethical at all. We should be present if they want to open our things."

Findings on Conflict Management Strategies

Conflict management strategy refers to the approach individuals or groups take to resolve conflicts. The conflict management strategies used by students were analyzed based on Thomas and Kilmann's 1976 Conflict Resolution Model. According to the findings, students primarily employ

avoidance, accommodation, competition, collaboration, and compromise strategies, respectively, as instruments in conflict situations. All findings related to this theme are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4
Conflict Management Strategies Used by Participants

| Theme: Conflict management strategy | Number of codes | Categories and codes |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Avoidance | 31 | <i>Creating distance</i> : Social withdrawal (n=5), Cutting off communication (n=7), Physical withdrawal (n=5), Setting boundaries (n=4), Acceptance (n=1). <i>Ignoring</i> : Becoming indifferent (n=3), Lack of response (n=2). <i>Taking precautions</i> : Authoritative intervention (n=2), Self-restriction (n=1), Physical obstruction (n=1). |
| Accommodation | 14 | <i>Administrative authority</i> : Forced submission (n=5). <i>Acceptance</i> : Passive tolerance (n=4), Resigned acceptance (n=2). <i>Extending personal boundaries</i> : Granting concessions (n=3). |
| Competition | 13 | <i>Destructive competition</i> : Physical intervention (n=3), Verbal intervention (n=3), Exerting pressure through exposure (n=1). <i>Passive competition</i> : Passive harassment (n=2), Emotional manipulation (n=1), Space occupation (n=1). <i>Reciprocity-based competition</i> : Retaliation (n=2). |
| Collaboration | 7 | <i>Mutual understanding</i> : Providing information (n=3), Empathy (n=2). <i>Mutual trust</i> : Open communication (n=1), Solidarity (n=1). |
| Compromise | 6 | <i>Finding common ground</i> : Sharing responsibilities (n=2), Complying with rules (n=1). <i>Restorative approach</i> : Caring for the relationship (n=2). <i>Forced compromise</i> : External pressure (n=1). |

Avoidance was observed as the most frequently used conflict management strategy in this study. It typically involves cutting off communication entirely or withdrawing from conflict situations, both physically and emotionally, in order to avoid confrontation. According to the findings, avoidance most often manifests through individuals creating distance between themselves and others. For example:

I learned to stay silent and to leave others to themselves there. Because no matter how much I spoke, let us say that environment, that conversation, it never went the way I said. So then I started to withdraw into my own shell and tried to continue with people in my own style. (P5)

Participant 5's statement indicates that withdrawing from communication and engaging in emotional retreat are used as strategies to avoid conflict. In contrast, Participant 1's account reflects a process that goes beyond avoidance, demonstrating the act of setting personal boundaries and developing a self-protective response:

I believe there should be boundaries. Being able to say to the other person, 'Stop, don't enter my space, don't disturb me this much,' is very important. Because when you don't do that, you start to wear yourself out. Then you begin to build your own walls and start changing yourself... (P1)

Moreover, when students residing in dormitories are unable to cope with specific problems, they may choose to ignore them and gradually become desensitized to the issues over time. For example:

No one in our room cares about these things. For example, I look around and there's hair everywhere – I don't care anymore, and neither do they. When I first arrived, I clung to cleaning, but then I realized no one else was doing it. Instead of warning them, I chose to stop doing it too. (P3)

The research findings reveal that, following avoidance, accommodation is the conflict management strategy most frequently employed by students to navigate conflicts within the dormitory environment. Accommodation behavior is observed to manifest as passive tolerance (n=4) predominantly and resigned acceptance (n=2). For example:

We are studying, and a loud music sound comes from the next room. We don't say anything, but once midnight passes and we make a bit of noise, they immediately start banging on the wall with full force. We experience this constantly. When they make noise, we don't say anything. At some point, there's nothing we can do. It's normal to have some noise while doing things, but they don't accept that. (P13)

As evidenced by the following statement, students demonstrate forced submission behaviors in response to the authoritative practices of dormitory management and staff. Participant 9 recounts the following experience:

You can't lock the doors from the inside; they only lock from the outside. Currently, my roommates have gone back to their hometowns, and I am alone in my room. Because I was scared, I placed a chair behind the door. I woke up to noises in the morning. Security personnel came and sternly warned me... I explained, 'I had to do this because no one was there and there have been thefts in the dormitory, sorry,' but they didn't listen at all. They said it was prohibited. They told me they would file a report if I did it again.

Competition ranks as the third most frequently employed conflict management strategy among students. The findings indicate that students who utilize this strategy tend to prioritize achieving their objectives regardless of the cost, often resorting to destructive forms of competition characterized by verbal and, at times, physical interventions, which raise ethical concerns. Such conflicts may occur not only among students sharing the same room but also between different rooms. For example:

Something happened to us recently: The girls next door were chatting, and someone upstairs kicked the ceiling to make them quiet because it was very noisy... They blamed us and came to our door. They banged on the door very violently. We were shocked sitting there... Because we were frozen in shock, they banged again. When we opened the door, this is what we saw: a girl was hugging her friend, holding her back so she wouldn't attack us... (P15)

Within the framework of competition strategies, it has been observed that students also resort to passive competition tactics in managing conflicts. These tactics include passive harassment, emotional manipulation, and space occupation. Participant 13 states that: "When no one has personal space, these conflicts increase. Like I said earlier, we are studying and suddenly the lights go off. This requires communication. Someone might say, 'Girls, should I turn it off?' but there's nothing

like that". As the conflict progresses, a tendency to respond with similar or more intense actions to the opposing party's behavior emerges; as part of the competition strategy, students' efforts to assert dominance can further escalate conflicts, rendering them cyclical.

Collaboration is a strategy in which students work together toward common goals, focusing on mutual benefits. Although not frequently employed, it has been observed that students utilize this approach in conflict resolution primarily through behaviors such as providing information (n=3) and demonstrating empathy (n=2). The following account from Participant 14 exemplifies how providing information and empathetic understanding help to mitigate potential conflict:

A friend of mine talks in her sleep, and she told me this on the very first day I came to the dormitory. She said, 'You might get scared or disturbed, just so you know.' She said she doesn't do it consciously. Since I know this, I don't mind, but it's good that she told me beforehand; otherwise, I would have been very scared.

According to the research findings, compromise has been identified as the least frequently employed conflict management strategy among students. Within the compromise approach, reaching consensus on common ground is recognized as the most essential element, which in the dormitory context is realized through students sharing responsibilities and complying with rules. The following statement by Participants 14 encompasses a compromise strategy that includes both the sharing of collective responsibilities and adherence to rules:

My roommates are great. I get along well with all of them. In the beginning, we had a discussion about things like cleaning and groceries. For example, even something as simple as toilet paper, we buy together and split the cost four ways without any problems.

Additional Findings

Beyond the predetermined research questions, this study also revealed notable expressions regarding how students define the concept of conflict. In this context, the definitions of conflict provided by the students are presented below:

1. "Inability to experience shared feelings simultaneously." (P3)
2. "In my opinion, conflict is when two or more people present opposing views." (P1)
3. "I think conflict is disagreements that arise while people communicate." (P11)
4. "Not looking at an event from the same perspective, thinking differently." (P2)
5. "At its core, not reaching a common agreement." (P8)
6. "I see this as a disagreement. Two ideas not aligning. One wants it to be one way, the other wants it differently, and both insist, failing to find a common ground." (P7)

A common element emerging from students' definitions of conflict is the perception of conflict as a state of cognitive and emotional discord. Alongside cognitive factors such as opposing views, failure to reach common ground, and insistence, emotional dimensions rooted in a lack of empathy

and difficulties with emotional synchronization are also emphasized. These definitions indicate that students experience conflict as a multidimensional issue. Notably, expressions like “insistence” or “inability to share the same emotion” highlight relational dynamics that sustain conflict rather than resolve it.

In this study, students’ accounts of their conflict experiences reveal not only the definition of conflict but also the negative impacts of such situations. Findings related to the negative impacts of conflict on students are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5
Negative Effects of Conflict on Students

| Theme: Negative effects of conflict | Number of codes | Categories and codes |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Emotional burden | 11 | <i>Damage to self-perception: Loss of self-esteem (n=2), Loss of self-confidence (n=1).</i> <i>Emotional response: Sadness (n=6), Stress (n=5), Mental fatigue (n=4), Anger (n=3), Anxiety (n=3), Emotional hurt (n=2), Disappointment (n=1).</i> |
| Hybrid burden | 11 | <i>Emotional > Cognitive (n=8): Damage to self-perception (n=6), Sadness (n=5), Emotional hurt (n=4), Anger (n=3), Mental fatigue (n=4), Stress (n=3), Disappointment (n=1).</i> <i>Cognitive > Emotional (n=3): Damage to self-perception (n=1), Emotional hurt (n=2), Anger (n=2), Anxiety (n=2), Stress (n=2), Sadness (n=1), Disappointment (n=1).</i> |

According to the study’s data, conflict has two primary negative impacts: emotional and hybrid effects. The hybrid effect encompasses both emotional and cognitive dimensions, with the intensity of these effects varying depending on the nature of the situation. It has been determined that conflicts adversely affect students’ self-perception, leading to a significant decrease in their self-esteem and self-confidence; consequently, this results in the emergence of profound feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy among students. For example:

When I experience an incident in the dormitory, I immediately tell Büşra. I wonder, does Büşra understand me? Or is this trouble only mine? My morale gets affected, and I want to confide. I tell my close friend: ‘These things are happening in the dormitory; do you think the problem is with me, or am I misunderstanding?’ (P15)

The student’s reflection on their position and perception within the conflict underscores the fundamental role that individual subjective experiences and social interactions play in shaping self-perception. However, this process also triggers negative emotions such as anxiety and uncertainty, adversely affecting the student’s psychosocial well-being; this phenomenon is clearly evident according to the findings of our study.

The various emotions that arise during conflict situations are important indicators of how students perceive and experience these events. According to the table and data, the most prominent

emotions during conflict are sadness, stress, mental fatigue, anger, anxiety, emotional hurt, and disappointment. These emotions reveal that conflict is not merely a superficial disagreement but creates a deep emotional burden and psychological distress. The high prevalence of sadness (e.g., P2: “I cry during a conflict.”) and stress (e.g., P4: “The biggest feeling I have when I experience conflict is stress.”) indicates that conflict imposes intense emotional pressure on students, while mental fatigue points to the persistence of this emotional burden. Responses such as anger and anxiety demonstrate that conflict increases tension in social relationships, as one student expressed, “I had a fight with one of my roommates. My whole day went very badly”. (P15)

Conclusion and Suggestions

Conflicts constitute an unavoidable aspect of human interaction across various spheres of life. In any context where individuals coexist —whether within families, educational settings, or professional environments— communication problems and disagreements may arise due to a range of factors. This study examines the communication conflicts encountered by students residing in higher education dormitories. Within this framework, the central research question guiding the study is as follows: “What are the most common causes and types of communication conflicts among students residing in higher education dormitories, and which conflict management strategies are applied by these students in such situations?”

In this context, focus group discussions were conducted with students residing in higher education dormitories in order to explore the answers to the research question outlined above. According to the analysis of the data obtained, the most frequently experienced type of conflict among these students was identified as content-related conflict. Content conflicts are defined as disagreements that arise over tangible needs or responsibilities. The analysis revealed that such conflicts most frequently emerge due to inadequate physical space within dormitories, which, in turn, creates issues related to personal boundaries. Additionally, the failure to fulfill responsibilities regarding the cleanliness of shared living areas was identified as another significant factor contributing to content-related conflicts. Regarding the underlying causes of conflicts, it has been observed that value-based conflicts —primarily stemming from cultural differences among students— are particularly prevalent in higher education dormitories. These conflicts encompass a broad spectrum of factors, including divergent lifestyles, daily practices, personal habits, and differing perspectives. In conflict situations, students most frequently resort to the avoidance strategy. This approach typically manifests first through the cessation of communication, followed by complete physical or emotional withdrawal from the conflict.

Moreover, the study revealed that students residing in higher education dormitories experience not only interpersonal communication conflicts but also organizational-level conflicts with dormitory management and administrative staff, stemming from various underlying factors. In such cases, students are generally observed to adopt avoidance and accommodation strategies in response to institutional authority. The findings further indicate that students face a series of conflicts arising from diverse causes, which negatively affect their quality of life through emotional states such as

sadness, anxiety, and stress. These conflicts primarily impose a significant mental and emotional burden on students. This burden contributes to the deterioration of their self-perception, referring to their feelings, thoughts, and beliefs about themselves, and ultimately leads to a loss of self-confidence and self-esteem. In this regard, the following recommendations have been developed based on both the literature and students' feedback:

- An orientation training addressing topics such as communal living culture, etiquette rules, stress management, and related areas should be provided to newly arriving dormitory students.

P2: "There should be communal living training."

P5: "I think there should be a stress management course as well; maybe everyone could take at least one step closer to understanding each other."

- Spaces should be created where students can gather and socialize outside of their dormitory rooms.

P15: "But if such spaces existed, it might make them feel more at home. For example, they could sit on those sofas with different people and have tea together."

P8: "Yes, I mean, if there was a room where we could chat and socialize, being outside is fine up to a point, but with winter and cold, at least having a social room where we can sit and talk would be great."

- Social activities (such as movie nights, board games, etc.) that facilitate bonding among students should be organized.

P13: "There could be a few board games in a youth office-style space within our school, where everyone can sit together and have an enjoyable time. For example, a heater could be installed to allow them to have tea or coffee comfortably."

P1: "There could be movie nights—events that help us bond with each other and provide opportunities for conversation."

- Suitable spaces should be allocated for students to engage in activities such as sports, playing musical instruments, and similar pursuits.

P15: "I am interested in musical instruments; I play the violin, but there is no room in the dormitory where I can practice."

P13: "For young people, for example, a space could be provided where they can do sports. We remain very inactive."

In conclusion, the principal contribution of this study lies in its integrative approach to the phenomenon of conflict, examining its types, underlying causes, and resolution strategies as interconnected dimensions within a unified analytical framework. This approach offers a more holistic perspective compared to previous studies, which have predominantly addressed these elements in isolation. This framework facilitates a deeper, more comprehensive, and multidimensional analysis of student conflicts. Moreover, by applying Thomas and Kilmann's Conflict Management Model to the

context of higher education dormitories, the study yields novel, context-specific empirical insights into the applicability of this theoretical model within such a distinct environment. In addition, through its qualitative focus on communication conflicts in higher education dormitories, the study makes a unique contribution to addressing a gap in both national and international literature. It is expected to provide a conceptual foundation for future research.

Author Declarations

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