

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE OF TEACHERS  
AND THE QUALITY OF TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP IN ELEMENTARY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**A Thesis submitted to the Department of Psychology, Education, and Physical  
Education for a Master of Arts in Education, Notre Dame University - Louaize**

**Mirna Ghandour**

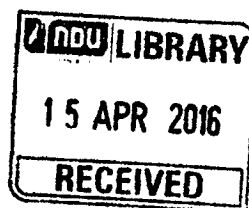
**Department of Psychology, Education, and Physical Education  
Notre Dame University-Louaize  
Lebanon**

**Fall, 2015**

**Thesis Advisor: Dr. Wessam Al Chibani**

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FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
DEPT. OF PSYCHOLOGY,  
EDUCATION & PHYSICAL EDUCATION

-LOUAIZE-

Department of Psychology, Education and Physical Education  
Faculty of Humanities  
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Name: Mirna Hajj Ghandour

ID Number: 20107039

Thesis Title:

The Relationship between Conflict Management Style of Teachers and the Quality of Teacher Student Relationship in Elementary public Schools in North Lebanon

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The Relationship between Conflict Management Style of Teachers and the Quality of Teacher-Student Relationships in Elementary Public Schools in North Lebanon

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## MANAGEMENT STYLE AND TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

### **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to the soul of my father Alexis Ghandour who would have been definitely happy to witness my success....

## MANAGEMENT STYLE AND TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

### **Acknowledgment**

I would like to express my deep appreciation to all the people who supported me to bring this thesis to a successful end; without their assistance, the completion of this paper could not have been possible.

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Finally, I thank my daughters, Celine, Cynthia, and Perla who inspired me to complete this work.



# MANAGEMENT STYLE AND TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

## Abstract

This study explored the relationship between the conflict management style of elementary teachers and the quality of teacher-student relationship in four public schools in the North of Lebanon. A mixed method research, including two questionnaires and one interview, was conducted. Seventy five teachers from grade 1 to grade 4 participated in the study. The Thomas-Kilmann Instrument (TKI) was used to measure teachers' conflict management style and the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale, Short Form (STRS-SF) to assess the quality of the teacher-student relationship. After the respondents answered the interview, data were collected and statistics including Chi Square Tests and one way ANOVA were performed. The results showed that each of the five conflict management styles (Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, Avoiding, and Accommodating) significantly differs in terms of closeness and conflict in the teacher-student relationship. In addition, the collaborating style was proved to be the most appropriate one since it had the highest percentage in closeness. Moreover, factors including teachers' age, level of education and years of experience were also tested and interpreted in relation to the quality of teacher-student relationship. Finally, recommendations for improving the teacher-student relationship were made.

**Keywords:** *conflict management, conflict management styles, teacher-student relationship, close, conflict.*

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Teachers play an important role in students' life. Much research has pointed to the powerful and direct effect of teacher-student relationship (closeness or conflict) on students' affective and cognitive outcomes (Baker, 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Pianta, 2001), in particular, at an early age to promote school adjustment and success in the first years of schools (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). Teachers' interpersonal behavior including teachers' support, willingness to help, and cooperation and teachers' behaviour management efficacy were proved to be important aspects of a successful learning environment (Baker, 1999). Today, teacher-student conflicts are usual and common in each classroom (Pinchevsky & Bogler, 2014). Problems in the class may escalate and damage teacher-student relationship when conflicts are mismanaged and when certain behavior management practices are improperly used. Disputes that are not settled immediately and appropriately become time and effort consuming (Ramani & Zhimin, 2010) and lead to a threatening learning atmosphere and to poor social relations in the school. People in general, including teachers, have different ways of handling interpersonal conflicts; everyone adopts one dominant conflict management style that reflects his/her behavior (Rahim, 2001; Thomas, 1976). By using effective conflict management strategies and selecting the appropriate style, educators can make the most of each conflict situation, maintain relations, and turn it into learning opportunity.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Several studies analyzed essential features of a healthy teacher-student relationship. Distinctive characteristics of a positive relationship are related to high levels of connection and low levels of conflict between teachers and students (Baker, 1999; Pianta, 2001). Well-known theorists such as Piaget, Erikson, and Vygotsky agreed that the relationship between children and adults contribute to their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Others ascertain that teacher-child relationships and interactions are prominent for students' academic and social lives in the preschool, elementary, and middle school-years (Pianta, 2001). Past research considered that children's characteristics and a number of environmental and demographic factors, influence relationships with teachers from kindergarten through grade sixth (Jerome, Hamre, & Pianta, 2009). For example, findings have explored higher levels of conflicts between boys and teachers than girls and teachers (Pianta & Hamre, 2001) and poor relations between children coming from low socio economic status (SES) and low maternal education and their teachers (Pianta, 2001). It has been also demonstrated that students who experience a positive teacher-student relationship get better grades and show higher levels of participation and engagement than those who don't (Hamre & Pianta, 2005), particularly exhibiting more appropriate behavior in the classroom and greater acceptance by their peers (Hughes, Cavell, & Jackson, 1999). Baker (1999) believed that all children develop specific skills about schooling and school attainment while interacting with their peers and teachers. Poor, at risk, and low achievers are not exception. According to Baker (1999), a lot of students coming from low economic income and urban schools and having low performance are not able to cope with members of the school community and to develop competencies without teachers' personal and academic support. Moreover, studies revealed that a warm teacher-student relationship promotes a secure classroom and provides essential support for learning (Boucher, 2013; Rimm-Kaufman, 2011). Students who enjoy a strong



relationship with their teachers will explore the classroom and the school setting and develop self-esteem and self-concept and form bonds with peers (Pianta & Hamre, 2001). To add, researchers believed that teachers need to establish sustaining rapport with children at risk for behavioral problems in order to change their defiant patterns (Hughes, et al., 1999). Experts report a high level of conflicts in schools of today, particularly between teachers and students. Although conflict has been proved to be natural and unavoidable, attempting to resolve it requires the “art of conflict management” which involves knowledge, skills, and effective utilisation of techniques (Ramani & Zhimin, 2010, p.243). Conflict makes teams live a “form, storm, norm, and perform” period (Ghaffar, 2010, p. 213). Involved parties need to think deeply about the root causes of the problem and analyze the circumstances before finding possible solutions. Therefore, the way people respond to conflict will limit or enable their success. It is acknowledged, through literature, that unresolved conflicts have negative effects ranging “from short term to long term dysfunction”, whereas settled disputes may “have long term benefits” for all involved individuals and provide opportunities for growth and progress (Zia & Sayed, 2013, p. 299).

Researchers have identified several factors that influence conflict management in schools. School manager’s personal characteristics including age, gender, teaching experience, marital status, and academic qualification were found reflecting the way conflicts are managed in schools (Akinnubi, Oyeniran, Fashiku, & Durosaro, 2012). In addition, more studies in this field include investigating causes of conflict (Yuan & Che, 2012) and recognizing principals’, teachers’ and schools administrators’ lack of resolution skills and trainings in conflict management (Barmao, 2013; D’Oosterlinck, & Broekaert, 2003; Msila, 2012).

In parallel, several studies on the five conflict management styles also called conflict handling modes (competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating)

were carried out in various organizations, including schools, to measure individual's behavior in conflict situations (Rahim, 2002; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974) and their influence on performance and satisfaction with superiors (Lee, 2009), on school climate (Boucher, 2013) on discipline in schools (Kisinga, 2012), and on teachers' performance (Kiuri, 2009). Further research investigated differences between conflict management style chosen between men and women in organizations and among leaders in various organizational levels (Schaubhut, 2007). It was generally assumed that when facing a conflict, people may rely on one style or they may develop more skills that empower them to make more effective choices and get the best out of this experience (Rahim, 2001; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974).

Finally, most findings stress on developing conflict management skills for school teachers and administrators to enable them to minimize and resolve conflicts (D'Oosterlinck, & Broekaert, 2003; Pinchevsky & Bogler, 2014). This can be enhanced through dialogue, effective communication, and building a strong teacher-student relationship (Rahim, 2002; Ramani & Zhimin, 2010).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Managing conflicts has been a challenge for educators for decades and has become an area for study for researchers in this field. Conflict is common in schools; it happens at any time as a result of teachers' interaction with various members. Conflicts may arise between teachers, between teachers and administrators, and most frequently between teachers and students (Pinchevsky & Bogler, 2014) for the reason that teachers often encounter students for a longer period of time than that devoted for other stakeholders in the school (Cornille, Pestle, & Vanwy 1999). Teachers have suffered a lot from wasting their teaching time dealing with students' conflicts (Ramani & Zhimin, 2010), and this has negatively affected their relationship with their students and the outcomes of the educational process. In general,

teachers tend to rely on one conflict handling style in a situation (Cornille, et al., 1999), while another style may be more appropriate (Rahim, 2002). The literature indicated that the way teachers choose to settle disputes in the class shapes relationships and greatly affects school performance (Pinchevsky & Bogler, 2014). In parallel, at school level, conflicts emerge because of poor communication skills, and lack of proper conflict management skills, and lack of self-knowledge (Rahim, 2002; Ramani & Zhimin, 2010). They may accumulate also because of the lack of trainings in this domain (Msila, 2012; Rahim, 2002) and because of the use of the wrong conflict management style (Kisinga, 2012; Rahim, 2002). Kisinga (2012), in her study in a secondary school in Kenya, affirmed that collaboration and accommodation styles maintain relations between parties, and avoidance, compromise, and competition styles negatively affect students' discipline. Hence, failure to resolve conflicts constructively was associated with impoverished teacher-student relationship and probably increased levels of students' drop out from schools (Lee & Burkam, 2000).

In addition, schools of today focus on how to improve students' performance and overlook the effect of teacher-student relationship in students' life. They tend to neglect the emotional needs of children (Baker, 1999) although a lot of studies have drawn the attention to the importance of building caring interactions between teachers and students for their strong and powerful effect. Therefore, teachers' practices, attitudes, and behaviors are variables that also affect the teacher-student relationship (Yuan & Che, 2012).

For example, some teachers don't provide students with same opportunities to develop sustaining relationships with them. They interact differently with high-achieving and low-achieving students (Baker, 1999) and increase conflict in the class. Teachers feel more likely connected to high achievers; whereas, they try to avoid low achievers (Hamre & Pianta, 2005) who basically call for more care and attention and need to benefit from positive relationships to improve their social, emotional, and academic outcomes (Murray &

Malmgren, 2005). Moreover, traditional discipline programs (punishments such as deducting grades, reprimanding students, suspension...) in particular, in the Lebanese schools, are still an inherent part of the pedagogic process and may undermine the teacher-student relationship. Also, the absence of dialogue and effective communication skills and the traditional mode of instruction as one way communication are linked to conflictual relationships.

In our public schools, a lot of significant obstacles to establishing a healthy classroom environment are related to teachers' practices, qualifications, age, professional development, and level of productivity (Hashash, 2013). Baker (2006) declared that the ability to build relationships with students is associated to teachers' personalities, types, and experiences. Statistics in Lebanon showed that teachers aged between 51-60 years are mostly found in public schools (2933 teachers in public schools vs. 2156 in private schools) (Center for Educational Research and Development, Statistical Bulletin, 2012-2013). And, 47.1% of teachers in all the Lebanese schools don't hold university degrees, 50.7% of them are in public schools (Center for Educational Research and Development, 2010-2011). Moreover, weak relations among students, teachers, administration, and parents were also reported in public schools (National Educational Strategy in Lebanon, 2006), and few investigations about this relation were conducted (Hashash, 2013). This fact undermines student-teacher interaction from three perspectives: educational, psychological, and social (Hashash, 2013). Hashash concluded that some teachers have limited professional skills; they set low expectations for students and always provide them with negative feedback. Students, on the other hand, become less engaged and lack self-confidence. The researcher further added that some teachers exhibit nonchalance and lack of concern toward their students who in return express uncomfortable feeling in their classes. In addition, the dropout rates in public schools have attained 18.7% between the years 2002 and 2010, according to Center of Educational

Research and Development (2011). The lack of teachers' social skills could be also a reason for increasing the dropout rates in public schools. According to Hashash (2013), students in public schools have social, psychological, and academic problems that are hard to manage. Therefore, developing conflict management programs for teachers and training sessions could be one way to ameliorate students' social and academic performance, in particular, in the north of Lebanon, area of conflict, and tension for the last few years. Well-trained educators in conflict management would promote social integration in schools and enhance students' capacity on handling conflicts constructively.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

Based on the above synthesis, it would be interesting to investigate the conflict management styles adopted by elementary public school teachers in the class, and to find out the quality of the relationship that is nurtured with students. The main purpose of the study is to determine the relationship between conflict management style of teachers and the quality of teacher-student relationship. We will analyze the five conflict management styles (competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating) (Thomas-Kilmann, 1974) in relation to the teacher-student relationship (closeness or conflict) (Pianta, 2001). Teachers' demographic factors (age of teachers, level of education, and years of experience) will be also examined and interpreted.

### **1.4 Objective of the Study**

The objectives of the study are:

- 1- To determine the conflict management style applied by elementary teachers to resolve conflicts.
- 2- To determine the relationship between the various conflict management styles adopted in class and the quality of teacher-student relationship.
- 3- To examine teachers' perception of conflict.

- 4- To measure teachers' perception of their relationship with a particular student (conflict, closeness).
- 5- To analyze the effect of demographic variables (age of teachers, level of education, years of experience) on the teacher-student relationship.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study is valuable for the management of the school because it seeks to provide information about the conflict management style of teachers applied in our public schools. It will also show how the nature and the quality of teacher-student relationship (closeness, conflict) vary with particular students according to teachers' qualifications, behaviors, and self-knowledge of the different styles for handling interpersonal conflicts. This, in turn, would help teachers use various conflict management styles, establish possible preventive conflict management approaches, and identify relationships that need early intervention and support in their class. In other words, through this study, teachers of elementary schools will reflect on their ability to settle problems in the class, increase their self-awareness of the values of conflict and conflict management modes, and understand that applying certain specific approaches may provide them with creative and innovative ideas to bring to an end all the troubles that emerge unexpectedly. This study could be also beneficial for the school leaders who would be able to identify teachers who lack social skills and abilities to deal constructively with conflicts and propose suggestions for improvement and for more professional development (Workshops, seminars, adequate trainings in conflict management...).

### **1.6 Contribution to Knowledge**

This study will highlight certain issues pertaining to weak relations among students and teachers in our Lebanese public schools. This could probably be due to the teachers' lack of conflict management skills that are vital in the foundation of a good relationship.

Researchers considered that individuals in general tend to stick to one dominant conflict handling mode during confrontation in all situations without finding the suitable resolution (Rahim, 2002; Thomas, 1976). Therefore, knowing the various conflict management styles and which style to use that best fits the demanding situation would affect the quality of teacher-student relationship. Therefore, building a caring relationship with various students is essential for students' success. When students feel that their instructors care about them, respect and motivate them constantly, they are more apt to like school than those who do not (Hallinan, 2008). As a result, they will show greater progress in their academic and social life (Pianta, 2001). Therefore, this relational support may improve students' performance in public schools, given that the instructional practices are age and content appropriate. Finally, this study will enhance the teachers' abilities to modify their conflict resolution styles, which leads to a better development of the school. The study will also shed the light on implementing proactive strategies for addressing conflicts adequately and immediately in the class and changing pupils' hostile behaviors into prosocial ones. It will also offer recommendations which will be hopefully considered in order to maximize positive relationships and to create a positive school environment.

### **1.7 Research Questions**

The study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What is the dominant conflict management style of the elementary teachers of public schools in North Lebanon?
2. To what extent does each of the five conflict management styles predict close or conflict teacher-student relationships?
3. How do teachers of public schools perceive conflict?
4. How do teachers of public schools perceive their relationships with their students (conflict, closeness)?

5. What is the influence of teachers' demographic variables (age, years of experience, level of education) on their relationship with students?

### **1.8 Hypotheses of the Study**

This study predicts that the quality of teacher-student relationship relies on how teachers at large attempt to manage conflict situations. It is intended to prove that the means used to handle conflict, and the choice of conflict management style adopted by the teacher will determine the outcome. Constructive outcomes are reached when the needs of both teachers and students are mutually satisfied. Therefore, it is hypothesized that collaborating, compromising, and accommodating styles predict closeness, whereas competing and avoiding styles predict conflictual relations. As a result, a positive teacher- student relationship is built, a safe learning environment is maintained, and opportunities for students' success are optimized. Therefore, the hypotheses were developed as follows:

1. The conflict management style of teachers is significantly related to the quality of teacher-student relationship (close or conflictual relationship).
2. There is a significant difference between the effect of each of the five conflict management styles (competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating) on the teacher-student relationship (conflict/ closeness).
3. Teachers' conflict management style and demographic factors (age, years of experience, level of education) are significantly related to the quality of teacher-student relationship.



## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

This section discusses literature and research results related to teacher-student relationship from two perspectives: closeness and conflictual relationship. Also, an overview concerning conflicts in schools, conflict management strategies, and conflict management styles will be provided and a logical connection between the two topics in the current study will be made.

#### 2.1 Teacher-Student Relationship

In the last few decades, a lot of concentration on the complexity and the importance of the teacher-child relationship has been addressed, given its influence on children's cognitive and affective outcomes (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Pianta, 1999, 2001). Pianta (2001) described the types of teacher-student interaction in the classroom in terms of conflict, and closeness. A close teacher-child relationship is characterized by high levels of teacher's support, affection, and trust. A conflictual teacher-child relationship is recognized by high levels of struggle and disagreement between teachers and students and low levels of affection (Pianta, 2001).

##### 2.1.1 Close teacher-student relationship.

Studies revealed that early years of schooling shape children's early development; therefore, the foundation of a good relationship is prominent and more focused from kindergarten to grade three (Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995). Positive teachers' interpersonal behaviors with students such as cooperativeness, amicability, and support are a key for improving students' affective and cognitive outcomes (Baker, 1999). The issue of building positive teacher-student relationships has been generally addressed in terms of theory, research, and measurement over the last few decades. In a caring relationship, as reported by theorists and researchers, teachers understand their students' needs, listen to them, show care, interact with respect, and foster a positive climate where open

communication is established. Students also feel at ease, accepted by others, and comfortable to share their concern and worries with their teachers. In addition, much research has explored the outcomes that are influenced by the quality of teacher-child relationship in preschool and elementary school from social and academic perspectives. Pianta and Stuhlman (2004) declared that the success in the first years of school rely on the quality of teacher-student relationship. They concluded after their work with 490 children from first grade that students who experienced a close relationship with their teachers had higher academic achievement and higher social competence than those who were in conflict (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004).

In their book, *Approaches to Behaviour and Classroom Management: Integrating Discipline and Care*, Scarlett, Ponte, & Singh, (2009) shed the light on the influence of age on building teacher- student rapport. They considered that young children (3 to 6 years old) need to feel secure and attached to their teachers as they are attached to their parents. They also seek comfort when hurt and guidance when confused (Scarlett et al., 2009). When these feelings are missing, children are expected to misbehave. In reality, teachers of Kindergarten and elementary schools spend a lot of time with students on a daily basis; this enables the formers to be more connected to the latter than teachers of middle and high school simply because of the schools' system. Students who have many teachers don't have the same opportunity to establish caring relationships with their individual teachers (De Tesco, 2011). In parallel, data collected from 420 teachers working in 10 primary schools and 5 secondary schools in the city center of Van revealed that teachers who share their students with personal feelings and values make them feel happy and comfortable in their school life (Ipek & Terzi, 2010). Conversely, those who limited their contact with students to instructional duties and never share feelings with them lead students to express negative attitudes and behaviors against them (Ipek & Terzi, 2010). Similarly, according to Canter (1996), before setting rules

in the class, effective teachers build relationships based on respect and trust with children. Children form the first impression about their teachers from the first day of the school. Thus, everything starts with establishing relationship and strengthening rapport between children and teachers in order to create a pleasant environment in the class. On the other hand, Yuan & Che (2012) believed that an effective teacher cannot be friendly with students without making his authority accepted in the class. In other words, in order to limit students' misbehaviours and to maintain discipline, teachers have to inspire respect first and then form a positive relationship with students (Yan & Che, 2012).

Hamre and Pianta (2006) also believed that improving this relationship should begin with developing a caring atmosphere which in turn contributes to child's psychosocial adjustment at school (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). In their study, Buyse, Verschueren, Verachtert, & Van Damme, (2009) proved that teacher-child closeness is coupled with improved psychosocial adjustment while a conflictual relationship decreases children's psychosocial adjustment and lowers their academic achievement in primary school. The authors pointed out to children's aggressive behaviour, popularity with peers, and feeling of well-being as aspects of school adjustment. It was also noticeable that a high quality relationship influences the performance of at risk students and those having learning difficulties (Baker, 2006). The more supportive relationship is nurtured in the class, the higher students' adaptation to school is demonstrated, regardless of the gender and the grade level in elementary school (Baker, 2006).

Similarly, older students aged between 7 and 17, develop a relationship that depends on teachers' care and guidance and, even, on teachers' sense of humour (Scarlett et al., 2009). In a study conducted by Konell (2012), students of grade 5 were asked to list the most valued characteristics of their teachers. Sense of humour was enumerated among other characteristics such as consistent help, active listening, and continuous encouragement

(Konell, 2012). All these indicators lead to more advantageous student-teacher relationship, and consequently raise students' performance. Birch and Ladd (1997) demonstrated that in a close teacher-student relationship, students had better academic performance on standardized test measures. Moreover, De Tesco (2011) measured reading comprehension gains in second grade students in relation to specific variables such as the teacher-student relationship (closeness and conflict), peer relatedness, and classroom instruction. All these variables, including teacher-student relationship, were shown related to academic outcomes. The researcher added that improving the teacher-student relationship should be an area of focus for teachers, school administrators, and school districts.

Finally, teachers may have a powerful impact on reducing conflicts in the class through a strong relationship with students having behavioural problems. Berry & Oconor (2010), demonstrated, in their study, that a high quality relationship will undergo a change in the life of high internalizing children who become less internalizing over time. Such students normally do not interact with others, display social withdrawal, and have feelings of loneliness, sadness, and fear. Only supportive teachers can provide them with security and cause a positive transformation in their behaviour (Berry & Oconor, 2010). On the other hand, according to the authors, a low quality teacher-child relationship is dangerous even for children who do not have behavioural risk and negatively affect their social skills development. Furthermore, Pianta and Hamre, (2001) considered that connectedness, between children with early behavioural problem and their teachers, is very important to decrease conflicts in the educational settings. Their longitudinal study of children from kindergarten through eighth grade showed the positive influence of a good relationship with internalizing children. For example, children, who had high level of teacher conflict and dependency in kindergarten, improved their behaviour late in the elementary and middle school after building a better rapport with teachers (Pianta & Hamre, 2001). In other words,

such findings confirm that a strong teacher-student relationship might reduce conflicts, in particular, with at risk children for behavioral problem. Hughes et al. (1999) declared that these children exhibit an improving conduct when provided concern and care.

To conclude, a close teacher-student relationship has positive effects on students' emotional and academic outcomes, in particular, for children at risk of school failure and on their attitudes towards school (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Theorists and practitioners reported also pertinent link between the quality of teacher- child relationship and peer acceptance (Howes, 2000), engagement and motivation (Hughes, Kwok, & Loyd, 2008; Montavlo, Mansfield, & Miller, 2007), and satisfaction with school (Baker, 1999). Children who felt warmth and affection from their teachers in preschool, participated more in the class and showed more school adaptation and interacted in a constructive way with their peers later in the elementary and middle school. At the end, Pianta (1999) considered each student as unique; therefore, the relationship starts when the teacher first understands the individual personality, second develops an individual teacher-student relationship, and finally, builds multiple relationships in the classroom. He added educators who display a high level of support and trust, increase children's desire to learn, help them regulate their emotions and foster a prosocial behaviour between the child and the teacher and between the child and his peers (Pianta, 1999).

### **2.1.2 Conflict teacher-student relationship.**

As mentioned before, associations between teacher-child relationships and children's psychological functioning were acknowledged. A negative one may increase children's risk for school maladjustment, may intensify their aggressive behaviors and lower their academic attainment (Birch & Ladd, 1997). Hence, a conflictual relationship is considered a source of stress for both teachers and students. When the relationship between teachers and students lacks positive connections, young children are unable to depend on their teachers in any

confused situation; they become less engaged, more anxious, isolated, and may be placed on a trajectory of school failure (Birch & Ladd, 1997). The level of cortisol, as indicator of stress, was tested in preschool during teacher-child interaction (Lisonbee, Mize, Payne, & Granger, 2008). Results indicated an increase in stress hormones, both in the classroom and during a dyadic teacher-child interaction outside the classroom, with children who exhibit discomfort and anxiety with their teachers (Lisonbee et al., 2008). In addition, Mantzicopoulos (2005) related high levels of conflicts with kindergarten children to some classroom context variables such as problem behaviors and teachers' perceptions of workload stress. He, further, added that teachers who cannot bear the stress in the class may interact more negatively with children and affect their school adjustment in a negative manner. It was also found that students care more about their teachers' behaviors rather than their physical appearance (Konell, 2012). For instance, teachers who criticize and humiliate students to correct their inappropriate behavior tend to break connectedness with them (Rimm-Kaufman, 2011), whereas teachers who use affectionate words, maintain students' dignity, treat students fairly, and correct improper behavior in private, gain students respect, and may turn any conflict into opportunity for growth. At the end, teachers act as role models; when they demonstrate respectful attitudes and professionalism in settling unusual situation, students will acquire specific skills and achieve greater self-control through interaction. Unfortunately, research showed impoverished interactions between teachers and at-risk students and also students coming from urban schools (Baker, 1999). Weak students are source of tension for some teachers because they need increasing teaching time and effort than their peers. Many students are able to perceive negative attitudes from their teachers and feel rejected by them. Therefore, when a relationship is endorsed by friction, the rate of drop out of school will be raised (Lee & Burkan, 2000).

In addition, previous research suggested that teacher-student relationships are not affected by the gender of instructors nevertheless they are significantly influenced by teachers' experiences and teaching levels (Ipek, & Terzi, 2010). The study of Ipek, & Terzi indicated that teachers with 10 years and more experiences have expressed higher teacher-student relationship scores at classroom and school levels than other teachers having 1-5 years of experience. Baker (2006) also declared that the ability to build relationships with students is associated to teachers' personalities, types, and experiences.

## **2.2 Conflict, Conflict Management, and Conflict Management Style**

Conflict is the expression of disagreement between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals (The Foundation Coalition, 2003). It is "a tension between two or more social entities (individuals, groups, or large organizations) that arise from incompatibility of actual and desired responses" (Akinubi et al., 2012, p.169). It is a characteristic of human existence and a part of the dynamic of life in all organizations. Conflict in teams is unavoidable, and highly depends on how involved people understand it, find ways to predict it, prevent it, and resolve it.

According to Crawford & Bodine (1996), origins of conflict are related to basic psychological needs, limited resources, different values, and beliefs of different entities. Basically, conflict results because of misunderstanding of its deep-rooted causes and miscommunication between people. A number of studies have shown that, like organizations, conflict affects schools also almost all the time (D'Oosterlinck, & Broekaert, 2003; Ghaffar, 2010; Iordanides & Mitsara, 2014; Pinchevsky & Bogler, 2014). When students interact with their peers, with their teachers, and the educational staff, they may have incompatible goals that trigger conflicts. Sociologists identified several types of conflicts in schools; student-teacher conflict, student-principal conflict, student-student conflict, and student-staff conflict (Akinubi et al., 2012).

Most of the student-student conflicts that occur on a daily basis involve name calling, teasing, fighting, gossiping, disrespect, property issues, and friendship problems (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). It is the teachers' role to act as a third neutral party, also called mediator, to help the parties exchange information and achieve possible solutions rather than expelling the misbehaving students (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Interpersonal conflicts between teachers and students may also arise from unclear teachers' expectations, students' disobedience of rules, students' distraction, and lacking of interest in the class.

Conflict management or conflict resolution is the process by which adversaries find ways to handle conflicts sensibly, fairly, and efficiently. The various behaviors or strategies in struggling time are categorized as conflict style or mode, which are best described according to Thomas (1992) as "intentions"; it is how an individual intends or attempts at large to resolve conflict (p.269). Acquiring skills related to conflict resolution and problem solving, developing self-awareness about conflict modes and conflict communication skills are prominent parts of the conflict resolution process (The Foundation Coalition, 2003). In schools, principals visualize building trust, listening to others, and addressing conflict issues directly, as effective conflict management practices (Boucher, 2013).

Conflict resolution was first conceptualized in 1964 in the Managerial Grid by Blake and Mouton who suggested that conflict situations require a balance between the needs of one's own goals (concern for production) and the needs for maintaining a good relationship with others (concern for people). Their studies were extended later by Thomas (1974) who identified five different orientations in terms assertiveness (satisfying one's own concerns) and cooperativeness (satisfying other's needs) in a conflict situation. These five handling modes are: competing or forcing (high in assertiveness, low in cooperativeness); accommodating (low in assertiveness, high in cooperativeness); avoiding (low in both assertiveness and cooperativeness); collaborating (high in both assertiveness and



cooperativeness); and compromising (midway in both assertiveness and cooperativeness).

(See figure 1)

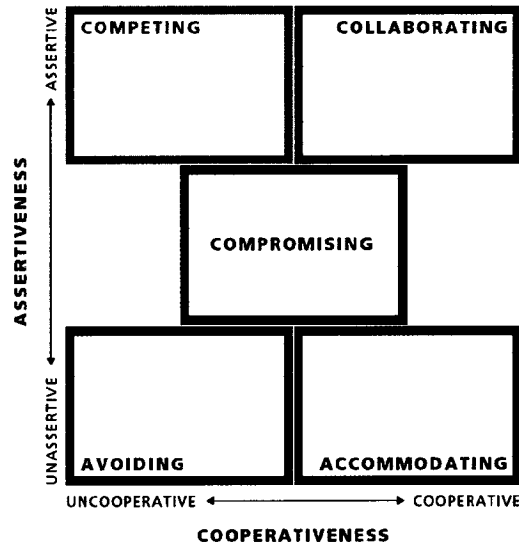


Figure 2. 1. Two-dimensional model of conflict-handling behavior. Adapted from “Technical Brief for the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument”, by Schaubhut, (2007), Mountain View, CA: CPP, Inc, p.8

Rahim and Bonoma (1979) reinterpreted both Thomas and Blake & Mouton schemes and proposed five styles of handling interpersonal conflicts from two perspectives: concern for self and concern for others. The Rahim’s five styles model which were more focused in organizations are: integrating (collaborating, win-win solution), obliging (accommodating), dominating (competing), avoiding (lose-lose solution) and compromising (win-lose solution).

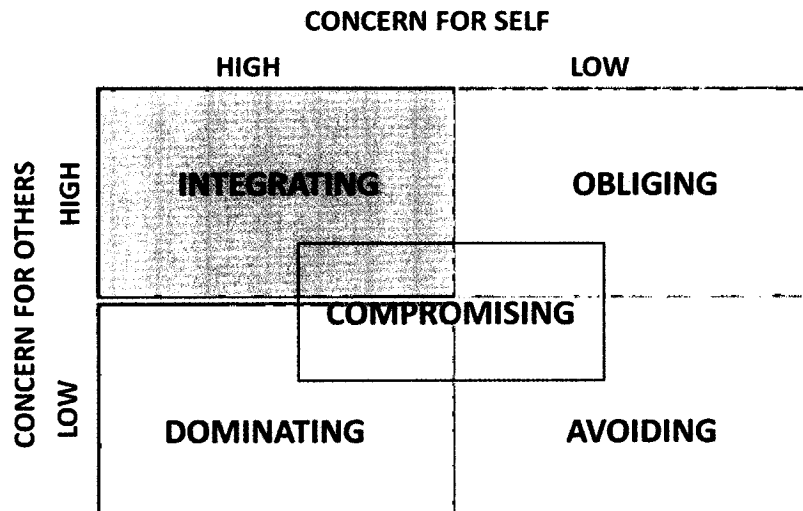


Figure 2. 2. Rahim and Bonoma's two-dimensional model of five styles of handling interpersonal conflict. Adapted from "Managing organizational conflict: A model diagnosis and intervention", by Rahim & Bonoma, (1979). *Psychological Reports*, 44, p1327.

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the work of Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann which was first published in 1974. On the basis of the literature and other researchers' reports, the five conflict management styles, also called the five handling conflict modes are defined as follow: (Rahim, 2001; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979; Thomas, 1976; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974, 2007).

### 2.2.1 The competing style.

Competing is a power-oriented mode. Usually individuals attempt to satisfy their own concern at the other person's expense (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). This style is associated with aggressive style of communication where individuals exercise power to win their position. Usually, those using a competitive style overlook the needs of others and fail to maintain future relationships (Rahim, 2002). They defend what they think is right. Basically, the competing style is perceived as inappropriate. As a result, the expected consequence of this style is a raise of the level of threat. This approach is to be applied when quick decisions should be made.

### 2.2.2 The collaborating style.

Collaborating is recognized by a high concern for self and others, often called “problem solving.” It involves working on finding creative solution to interpersonal problems to meet the needs of all concerned people (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). This approach is a structured and goal directed process that follows different steps to resolve disputes constructively. Usually, individuals with this style face conflicts directly, try to exchange information and examine differences to reach an acceptable solution that satisfies the concern of both. Most importantly, parties have a strong capacity in using acquired problem-solving skills and information (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979; Rahim, 2002). Thus, this style is conceived as highly competent and effective (Rahim, 2002).

According to Thomas (1976), steps in the collaboration between parties are as follow:

- 1- State the problem
- 2- Recognize both commonalities
- 3- Focus on your need not your position
- 4- Identify the others’ needs
- 5- Identify alternative resolutions
- 6- Select the alternative resolution that accomplish the goal of both, implement and evaluate the results.

More recent studies focus on implementing creative problem-solving procedures that involve the processes of:

“-Problem recognition: problem sensing and problem formulation.

-Solving problems: recommending solutions to problems and preparing plans for intervention.

-Implementation: putting plans into action and review of outcomes.” (Rahim, 2002, p.213). (See Figure 2.3).

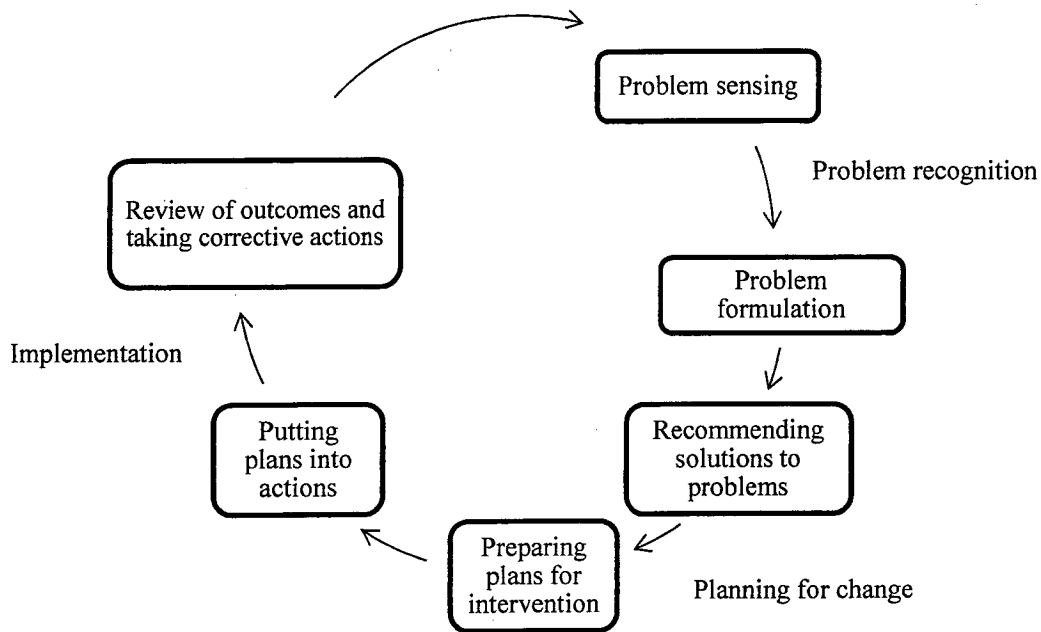


Figure 2. 3. Problem-Solving Process. Adapted from “Toward a Theory of Managing Organizational conflict”, by Rahim, (2002), *The International Journal of Conflict Management*, 13, p214.

**2.2.3 The compromising style.**

Compromising is an approach to conflict in which people work on reaching a middle ground that partially satisfies both parties. It involves give and take between the disputing parties who abandon some of their needs to reach a mutually acceptable solution. This style is intermediate between competing and accommodating styles (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). Usually, when both sides have the same potential in the dispute, and when negotiation fails, compromise can be the most appropriate mode (Rahim, 2002).

**2.2.4 The avoiding style.**

Avoiding is known as unassertive and uncooperative style. An avoiding person frequently refrains from finding a resolution when facing a problem because he fails to satisfy his own concern as well as the concern of the other party or because he is trying to postpone the issue until a better time (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). This mode is practical and functional

only when matters are of little importance. Otherwise, conflicts increase and relationships are ruined when serious problem remain unresolved.

### **2.2.5 The accommodating style.**

Accommodating is the opposite of competing. In this mode, people sacrifice their own concern to satisfy the others' needs (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). They are often diplomatic; they tend to please the others by ignoring their own concerns and passively accepting the partners' decisions. They are smooth and have cooperative and accommodating behaviors in conflict episodes. This mode allows individuals to give up something in order to get something else in exchange (Rahim, 2002).

However, the wrong implementation of any or all of these five conflict management styles will aggravate the conflict. Organizational behavior studies view unresolved conflicts as having negative effects ranging "from short term to long term dysfunction", whereas settled disputes may "have long term benefits" for all involved individuals (Zia & Sayed, 2013, p. 299). Unresolved conflicts may also impede important activities and increase the level of stress and confrontation. Studies revealed that relationships are fortified and constructive conflict outcomes occur in the short-term when positive solutions are suggested, and consequences are taken into consideration when cooperative strategies are employed (Tjosvold, 2007). Iordanides and Mitsara, (2014) divided conflicts into functional and dysfunctional based on their effect in the operations within an organization. In functional conflicts, partners find various means to achieve the operational goals of the organization through collective decision-making. The respect for the diversity of opinions, and the feeling of participation in the search for solution of the problem, will result in a healthy and strong relationship of the employee (Iordanides & Mitsara, 2014). On the other hand, in dysfunctional conflicts, most of the disputes occur because of incompatibilities among members whose emotions are full of tension, mistrust, anger, and frustration that lead to

negative environment that damages harmony among employee, reduces performance and job satisfaction, and harms relationships. It is only through suitable management that dysfunctional conflict turns to be functional and beneficial and helps in improving the quality of decision-making by putting together many points of views (Iordanides & Mitsara, 2014).

In line with what has been stated before, it is almost impossible and even undesirable to encounter a “conflict-free work environment” because interaction in the workplace is often coupled with conflict (Tsojvold, 2007, p.20). However, in schools, it is very necessary to principals, educators, and administrators to diagnose reasons behind conflicts, to intervene early and, in particular, to learn how to use various styles of behaviour to maintain a moderate amount of conflicts and to hold on positive relations. In other words, effort and skills are required to reduce, prevent, and resolve conflicts (Akinubi et al., 2012, p.169). This justifies Rahim’s (2002) request to organize training sessions for all organizational members to teach them how to make the right choice and use of the styles of handling interpersonal conflicts, in order to appropriately face and manage conflicts rather than eradicate them. In a qualitative study conducted by Msila (2012), in South Africa, eight school principals from four primary and four secondary schools were interviewed and observed with the purpose of investigating their ability to address conflicts. Few principals were found ready for conflict management whereas most of them were not equipped with skills of handling disagreements and they are not able to train their teams (Msila, 2012). Conflict resolution is, therefore, a key for group performance. Msila (2012) added, “Teachers who lack skills of managing conflict will hardly be satisfied with their job” (p.33). This is why school principals should be empowered with conflict management skills, to “build more teacher leaders in schools” who get to know how to react adequately during conflict time and to “learn fairness, justice, and moral uprightness” (Msila, 2012). The lack of trainings in conflict resolution in public primary schools in Eldoret was also a challenge for head teachers (Barmao, 2013) and in

South Regions of Botswana (Morake , Monobe, & Dingwe, 2011). Moreover, findings in previous studies showed that more experienced teachers are more effective than less experienced teachers in classroom communication (Ipek, & Terzi, 2010).

Rahim (2001) also indicated that the style of any member may be “affected by his or her referent role as superior, subordinate or peer” (p.80). He found out that managers may be obliging with superiors, integrating with subordinate, and compromising with peers.

Teachers, therefore, would act differently with head teachers as their superior, with other teachers as peers, and with students as their subordinates. He added that integrating or problem solving style is highly recommended to foster learning and effectiveness.

Zia & Zyed (2013) realized that in some circumstances when proactive approaches are not possible, successful reactive approaches should be based on the actor’s skills in using the “contingent” style of conflict management that would most importantly reserve relationships and maintain sociability among the conflicting parties. On the other hand, personal characteristics of principal (including qualification, teaching experience, sex) along with conflict management skills are prominent for ameliorating the situation of schools in conflicts (Akinubi et al., 2012). However, findings in elementary school in South Carolina showed no significant relationship between the integrating management style of principals and school climate (Boucher 2013).

In parallel, Lee (2009) declared that the level of job satisfaction is diminished when superiors used some conflict management strategies such as avoiding and dominating. She declared that avoiding and dominating styles are found correlated to decrease in the job satisfaction. This might be similar for teachers as superiors and students as subordinates. Teachers who use avoiding and dominating styles may lower students’ satisfaction with the school. The integrating, compromising, and obliging styles of handling conflict showed

positive relationships and were highly correlated with satisfaction with supervision (Lee, 2009).

Investigations about conflicts in our public schools indicated that conflicts may arise for several reasons. First, according to Hashash (2013), some teachers deal with students unequally. Moreover, Hashash, after an observation in five public schools, concluded that some grade 6 teachers showed less concern for weak students than their high achievers peers. They don't care for their participation in the class as they perceive them as persons who don't want to learn. Second, they blame students for their weakness rather than taking into consideration the traditional teaching methods they used in the class. Bored and demotivated students become source of distraction in the class. Third, teachers' practices such as yelling, criticizing, using rude words with students, punishing (sometimes physical punishments) and even ignoring disruptive behaviors in the class, are all considered as negative interactions that may lead to conflict.

Finally, acquiring skills in conflict management resolution has been proved to be essential for reducing conflict, creating more orderly and peaceful school environment and improving instruction. In the Lebanese context, according to Jabbour (2013), the tension that has shaped political and social groups in the last few decades could not be remediated unless new generations learn how to resolve conflicts constructively. This can be achieved when educators develop approaches that involve teaching students to solve problems emerging in the class through dialogue, negotiation, and communication. A teacher's guide, *Education for human rights, peace, and democracy*, was distributed to some Lebanese schools for raising teachers' abilities and competences in this domain (Frayha, 2003).

At the end, based on the above literature, previous reports showed that the various conflict management styles are essential to minimize conflicts and that the selection of one style may be appropriate for a given situation. In parallel, experts in the field of education



shed the light on the importance of positive teacher-student relationships for students' well-being in schools. However, no studies were carried out to investigate the relation between the conflict management style of teachers and their relationships with students, in particular in elementary schools. Our research intends to prove that the collaborating, compromising, and accommodating teachers' styles predict a close teacher-student relationship, whereas, the competing and avoiding styles predict a conflictual relationship. Explanation pertaining to demographic factors will be interpreted as well.

### Chapter 3

#### Methodology

The purpose of this research is to identify the conflict management style of elementary teachers and to examine the extent to which teacher's conflict management style (competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating) predicts close student-teacher relationships, as well as conflictual relationships in four elementary public schools in the north of Lebanon. In this study, the researcher, specifically, predicts teachers who have collaborating, compromising, and accommodating styles have closer relations with children than those having competing and avoiding styles. This study also investigates demographic variables.

Seventy-five teachers from grade 1 through grade 4 participated in this study. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) was used to measure the conflict management style, and the Short Form version of the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS- SF) was used to measure the quality of teacher-child relationship (closeness or conflictual). Teachers rated 15 statements in terms of how applicable each statement was to their current relationship with a particular child. They were supposed to randomly choose five students in their classes and to assess their perception of different qualities of their relationship with these students.

After collecting data, I conducted interviews, a face-to-face survey; including open-ended questions as a two-way conversation, to obtain better information. In order to fit the research problem or questions, and for a complete understanding of the collected data, I used a mixed method research since qualitative data may provide additional explanation to quantitative outcomes. One approach may be sometimes useless to fulfil the requirements of a research study. For example, qualitative explorations are needed when some factors such as diversity among population (age, culture, ethnicity) and behavioral

factors affect quantitative measures. Furthermore, by merging qualitative and quantitative data, more information about individuals are added and as a result a more complete understanding of the problem is developed and interpreted (Creswell, Klassen, Plano Clark, & Smith, 2011). Our mixed method research focuses on finding responses to our research questions that emerge from real life context by applying multiple methods (questionnaire and face-to-face interviews). We also intentionally integrate both research methods to maximize the strengths of each method so that we develop multiple perspectives of the results and investigate new questions.

According to Opdenakker (2006), face-to-face interviews have many advantages in a survey. First, these interviews are characterized by synchronous communication in time and place, a fact that increases the ability of the interviewer to get a lot of extra information through social cues such as voice, intonation, and body language of the interviewee that can be added to their verbal answers. Second, since the interviewees are supposed to directly reply to the researcher questions, their answers are more spontaneous. Third, by creating a good interview ambiance, the interviewer can profit, to a greater extent, from the situation to gain additional data.

### **3.1 Hypotheses of the Study**

As mentioned earlier, this study tries to test the following hypotheses:

1. The conflict management style of teachers is significantly related to the quality of teacher-student relationship (close or conflictual relationship).
2. There is a significant difference between the effect of each of the five conflict management styles (competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating) on the teacher-student relationship (conflict / closeness).

3. Teachers' conflict management style and demographic factors (age, years of experience, level of education) are significantly related to the quality of teacher-student relationship.

### 3.2 Population

The population of this study consists of Elementary teachers in north Lebanon, in four public schools.

### 3.3 Sample

The study was carried out in four public schools in North Lebanon. The schools are in the same geographic location, and have almost the same size, and the same religious affiliations. Elementary teachers who were supposed to participate in the study were 81, however, three teachers were reluctant, and three teachers didn't complete correctly the questionnaire. Therefore, the number of the respondents was 75 all of whom were females.

Table 3.1  
*Ages of Respondents*

Age in years	Frequency	Percentage
20-30	6	8
31- 40	35	46.7
41-50	11	14.7
>51	23	30.6
Total	75	100

Table 3.1 presents the ages of the respondents; the majority 46.7% (n = 35) of the respondents were between 31 and 40 years, 30.6 % (n =23) were above 51 years, 14.7% (n= 11) were between 41 and 50 years and only 8% (n =6) were between 20 and 30 years.

Table 3.2  
*Educational Level of Respondents*

Educational level	Frequency	Percentage
< BA Degree	39	52
BA Degree	20	26.7
> BA Degree	16	21.3
Total	75	100

Similarly, Table 3.2 presents the educational levels of the respondents. Table 3.2 shows that half of the respondents in this study 52% (n =39) didn't have a bachelor degree, one fourth 26.7% (n =19) had a bachelor's degree in various majors, and also only 21.3% (n=16) had a diploma higher than a bachelor degree, (9 of them holding a master's degree).

Table 3.3  
*Years of Experience of Respondents*

Years of experience	Frequency	Percentage
<10	9	12
11-20	39	52
21-30	7	9.3
31-40	14	18.7
>41	6	8
Total	75	100

Table 3.3 presents the years of experience of the respondents. It is clear through the table that the majority of the respondents in this study 52% (n =39) had between 11 and 20 years of experience, while 18.7 %(n =14) of the respondents had between 31 and 40 years of experience, 9.3% (n =7) of the respondents had between 21 and 30 years of experience, also

12% (n =9) of the respondents had less than 10 years of experience, and only 8% (n =6) had more than 41 years of experience.

### 3.4 Instruments

There are two variables in this research; the independent variable is the conflict management style, and the dependent variable is the quality of teacher-student relationship (closeness, conflict).

The relationship between the conflict management style of teachers and the quality of teacher-student relationship was determined by using two questionnaires on the basis of the literature survey: The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) maintained by its publishers, CPP, Inc. (see Appendix B) and the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale, Short Form version (STRS- SF) (see Appendix C).

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) is an established measure of conflict styles that is widely used in managerial training and organization development interventions.

The TKI model is based on a five-category scheme for classifying interpersonal conflict-handling modes: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating.

It has been adopted since 1974, and is the leading measure of conflict-handling behavior for more than 35 years. This instrument was available in a self-scorable paper-and pencil format which made its use easy and accessible. Since 2002, the TKI has become widespread and easily obtained through the internet using the CPP's online assessment delivery system.

This self- assessment includes 30 pairs of forced-choice statements. Respondents are supposed to identify the one they consider the closet to their behavior in times of conflict. The five conflict management modes were paired with each other (10 combinations) three

times. Each pair includes two ways of reactions that a respondent might adopt in a conflict with another person. For example, one pairing is between “I sometimes avoid taking positions that would create controversy” (avoiding) and “If it makes other people happy, I might let them maintain their views” (accommodating). Another is between “I am firm in pursuing my goals” (competing) and “I try to find a compromise solution” (compromising). Each style is paired with each of the other four styles three times, so that scores on any style can range from 0 to 12.

This instrument has been demonstrated to have satisfactory test-retest and internal consistency reliabilities. The test-retest reliability of the TKI ranges from .61 to .68. The coefficient alphas reported, in 1977, for the subscales include competing at .61, accommodating at .62, avoiding at .68, collaborating at .63, and compromising at .66 (Thomas & Kilmann, 1977, as cited in Schaubhut, 2007). As for the validity, a study examining the ability of the instrument to control social desirability found that the TKI significantly reduces the social desirability response bias when compared to three similar tools assessing conflict behavior (Thomas & Kilmann, 1977, as cited in Schaubhut, 2007). In addition, in 1990, studies comparing and validating the two best-known self-report measures of conflict management styles; the Thomas and Kilmann (1974) and the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory (1983a) supported the validity of the TKI (Van de Vliert & Kabanoff, 1990). Later on, in order to broaden the representative numbers of people by organizational level, race, and ethnicity, a renorming project used a sample of 8000 full-time employed individuals between 2002 and 2005. All the respondents (50% women, 50% men) aged between 20 through 70 completed the assessment in the USA. The analyses reported showed that median differences on TKI scores between men and women, different ethnic groups, organizational levels, and educational levels are meaningless in terms of its practical importance (Schaubhut, 2007). Therefore, the TKI norms were demonstrated to be applicable

across age, ethnic groups, and gender, and to be relevant at many organizational levels and across a broad range of occupational categories.

Today, the TKI is available in multiple languages-except the Arabic-and used in a wide variety of applications, including management and supervisory trainings, negotiation trainings, team building, leadership development, and safety training.

The quality of teacher-child relationship in elementary classes (closeness or conflictual) was measured by a short form version of the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS- SF; Pianta, 2001). The short form of the STRS is a self-report instrument composed of 15 items rated on 5-point Likert type scales (1= *does not apply at all*), (5= *definitely applies*) that assesses a teacher's perception of her/his relationship with a particular student. The STRS was divided into two groups of items ratings that are referred to as the conflict and closeness subscales (Pianta, 2001). The conflict subscale, composed of 7 items, was developed to measure to what degree a teacher feels disharmonious interactions with a particular student. For example, "This child and I always seem to be struggling with each other".

The closeness subscale (8 items) will measure the degree of warmth and open communication present in the teacher-child relationship. For example, "I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child". The STRS is a teacher-report instrument designed for teachers of children between the ages of 3 and 12, and typical to assess a teacher's perception of her relationship with a particular student from preschool through grade 3. It was basically developed in 1991 to identify relationships that need early intervention and support, and since then it has been used over more than 1500 students and 275 teachers and has been proved to be psychometrically valid and reliable. It was also used later to evaluate improvement in the quality of the teacher-student relationship after the use of a program developed by Pianta entitled STARS or Students, Teachers, and Relationship



Support (Pianta & Hamre, 2001). Pianta (2001) estimated test-retest reliability after completing the STRS twice during a four-week interval. Significant test-retest correlation (closeness .88; conflict .92) has been demonstrated. In addition, high internal consistency for both conflict and closeness subscales were reported. Pianta (2001) demonstrated that STRS is a psychometrically valid and reliable instrument. The predictive and concurrent validity of the STRS were accurate in a number of social and academic outcomes (Pianta, 2001). For example, the STRS was found correlated with academic skills (Pianta & Hamre, 2001), behavioral adjustment (Birch & Ladd, 1997), and risk of deflection in classroom adjustment (Pianta et al., 1995).

### **3.5 Scoring of the Instruments**

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument was scored using the average scores for the items on the scale. The TKI includes five subscales representing each of the five conflict management modes: Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, Avoiding, and Accommodating. The scores were derived by summing the items that make up the scale to obtain a value for every style. Each individual scored a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 12 on each subscale: a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 12 for Competing, 0 to 12 for Collaborating, 0 to 12 for Compromising, 0 to 12 for Avoiding and 0 to 12 for Accommodating. For Competing, scores for items 3/6/8/9/10/13/14/16/17/22/25/28 were added. For collaborating, scores for items 2/5/8/11/14/19/20/21/23/26/28/30 were added. For Compromising, scores for items 2/4/7/10/12/13/18/20/22/24/26/29 were added. For Avoiding, scores for items 1/5/6/7/9/12/15/17/19/23/27/29 were added. For Accommodating, scores for items 1/3/4/11/15/16/18/21/24/25/27/30 were added. The highest score represents the preferred style of each respondent. In case one respondent had two similar high scores, he was considered as having a mixed style.

As for scoring the STRS-SF instrument, teacher- student relationship, in terms of conflict, is computed as the sum of items 2, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14. Scores computed in this manner ranged from 7 to 35, with higher scores indicating more conflict between the teacher and the study child. Teacher-student relationship, in terms of closeness, is computed as the sum of items 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 15. Scores computed in this manner ranged from 8 to 40, with higher scores indicating more closeness between the teacher and the study child. Each child's total conflict and closeness scores were later divided by the total number of items measuring each subscale, so that conflict and closeness scores indicate the average score per item. Then, an average score was computed for each subscale by summing the children's mean scores and dividing by the number of selected children in the classroom. Each teacher had in his classroom a close, and a conflict composite score that ranged in value from 1 to 5. According to Hamre and Pianta (2001), score of both scales can be used to assess positive and negative aspects of teacher-student relationship.

### **3.6 Design**

Initially, 81 teachers were required to fill out both questionnaires. This study is a mixed method research that integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches. Chi square test for independence was utilized in this study to assess whether there is a relationship between conflict management style (independent variable) and teacher- student relationship (dependent variable) in four schools in Lebanon. In addition, a Pearson Chi-square and descriptive statistics were calculated to measure the difference between the effects of each of the five conflict management styles on the teacher-student relationship. Finally, descriptive statistics analysis including Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) techniques were used to evaluate the relationship between demographic variables such as age, years of experience, level of education of the respondents, teachers' conflict management style and the quality of teacher student relationship.

### 3.7 Procedure

Before conducting the study, the researcher received a written consent of the ministry of Education (see Appendix E) to go through four public schools in North Lebanon in Koura area. Then meetings were held with the principals of the four schools to explain the objective of the study and to have their permission to give all the teachers of grade 1 through grade 4 the two questionnaires. Each principal provided us with a list of all the teachers' names to participate in this study. In every school, I distributed the questionnaires. Every elementary teacher (from grade 1 to grade 4) received a cover letter (see Appendix A) to explain the purpose of the study, and the two questionnaires (see Appendix B and C) which need around 35 min to be filled out: The TKI, which measures teachers' conflict mode choices and the STRS-SF, which measures teachers-students relationships from two perspectives: closeness and conflict. The TKI and the STRS-SF instruments were translated into Arabic in order to conduct an accurate research within non English speaking populations. The researcher's intention was to maintain the original meaning of the questions, the content, the structure and the answer scale. Instruments were revised and compared to the original and corrected prior to the main study.

The questionnaire was submitted in April, a period of time, when the respondents had been in contact with their students for more than seven months, and when relationships were well-established. This fact would increase the validity of the teachers' assessments of their relationships with their students. Most of the teachers responded in the presence of me during the recess time. They were informed that confidentiality will be ensured. The others completed the two questionnaires at home and returned them back after one week. Only 3 teachers were reluctant and refused to participate in the study. Questionnaires were collected within five weeks from the four schools, scored, and analyzed. Later, after collecting the data, the researcher decided to conduct interviews (see Appendix D) with elementary teachers for

more accurate responses. Each interview took almost 7-10 minutes in a positive and risk-free environment. The environment in which the survey takes place contributes to the success of any survey interview (Iarossi, 2006 p. 147). It is the role of the researcher to build rapport with the respondents to ensure the highest level of survey participation. The purpose of the interview was, therefore, to gather deeper information and to observe the behavior and the attitudes of the respondents toward the subject. All statistical analyses were performed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 20.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

Means, frequencies, percentages, standard deviations, and coefficients were all produced through SPSS 20. The alpha was set at 0.05. A conflict-handling profile for each of the respondents was determined and frequency count for each mode as well. The quality of teacher-student relationship was also determined in terms of conflict and closeness. Through Cross tabulation tables (Chi-square test for independence) I evaluated the relationship between teachers' conflict management style and teacher-student relationship. Then, descriptive statistics, Pearson-Chi square and one way ANOVA were utilized to test the other hypotheses.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This part described the population, sample, instrument, scoring and reliability of instruments, design, procedure, and data analysis. This research was conducted using a mixed method approach. Out of 81 teachers, 75 filled out the questionnaires. The instruments used were TKI and STRS-SF, which were demonstrated to have high reliability. Descriptive statistics, Pearson Chi square analysis, and ANOVA techniques were computed using SPSS.

## Chapter 4

### Findings

This chapter includes the results based on the data collected through questionnaires and interviews. It also presents demographic characteristics of the respondents, their dominant conflict management styles, the testing of hypotheses of the study and important findings related to students gender and grade level. The responses were compiled, categorized, and analyzed.

This study seeks to identify the conflict management style (conflict handling mode choices) of teachers and its relation with the quality of teacher- student relationship in terms of closeness and conflict. The five possible styles of conflict are based on Thomas-Kilmann work. The competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding and accommodating styles are determined by relative scores on two axes: assertiveness and cooperation.

A competing style is assertive and uncooperative, it is a power-centred approach in which ones uses power to win one's own position. A collaborating style is assertive and cooperative; it involves a direct attempt to find a solution that fully satisfies the concerns of both persons. A compromising style is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperation, and is designed to partially satisfy the needs of both parties. An avoiding style is both unassertive and uncooperative, and is normally characterized by the individual who does not address the conflict but pretends that the conflict does not exist. Finally, an accommodating style is unassertive and cooperative, wherein the individual put his/her interest last and satisfy the concerns of other people, in other words, allows the other party to dominate.

The purpose of this study is to examine whether the conflict management style of elementary teachers in four public schools in North Lebanon and the quality of teacher-student relationship (closeness or conflict) are related. It is also an attempt to identify the preferred conflict management style of elementary teachers and its impact on the teacher-

student relationship in terms of closeness and conflict. This study examines as well the influence of teachers' age, years of experience and level of education on their relationships with pupils.

Three hypotheses are tested:

1. The conflict management style of teachers and the quality of teacher-student relationship are significantly related.
2. There is a significant difference between the effect of each of the five conflict management styles (competing, collaborating, compromising avoiding, and accommodating) on the teacher-student relationship (conflict/ closeness).
3. Teachers' conflict management style and demographic factors (age, years of experience, level of education) are significantly related to the quality of teacher-student relationship.

#### 4.1 Demographic Background

This part describes the demographics of the respondents. Table 4.1 presents the ages of all participants; the majority 46.7% (n=35) of the respondents are between 31 and 40 years, while 30.6 % (n= 23) are above 51 years, 14.7% (n=11) are between 41 and 50 years, and only 8% (n=6) are between 20 and 30 years.

Table 4. 1  
*Ages of Respondents*

Age in years	Frequency	Percentage
20-30	6	8
31- 40	35	46.7
41-50	11	14.7
>51	23	30.6
Total	75	100

As for the educational level, Table 4.2 shows that half of the respondents 52% (n= 39) in this study don't hold a bachelor degree, 26.3% (n= 20) hold a bachelor degree in various majors, and also 21.3% (n=16) hold more than a bachelor degree (9 of them had a master's degree).

Table 4. 2  
*Educational Level of Respondents*

Educational level	Frequency	Percentage
< BA Degree	39	52
BA Degree	20	26.7
> BA Degree	16	21.3
Total	75	100

#### 4.2 Teachers' Dominant Conflict Management Styles

In this section, we intend to identify the dominant conflict management style of teachers. Our findings reveal that not all the teachers have only one dominant style; descriptive statistics depict 73.3 % of the respondents (n= 55) as having only one dominant style in conflict management while the rest 26.7% (n=20) as having a mixed style. Therefore, respondents having a mixed style are excluded from this section, and the number of respondents was limited to 55 (N = 55). Figure 4.1 shows that accommodating is found to be the most frequent style chosen in the conflict management (M = 7.58, SD = 2.409) among elementary teachers in the four schools in North Lebanon. Avoiding is found second most frequent conflict management style (M = 7.04, SD = 2.108). The third (M = 6.87, SD = 1.588) and the fourth (M = 5.47, SD = 3.589) are, respectively, the compromising and the collaborating styles. The least frequent style is the competing style (M = 3.04, SD = 2.575).

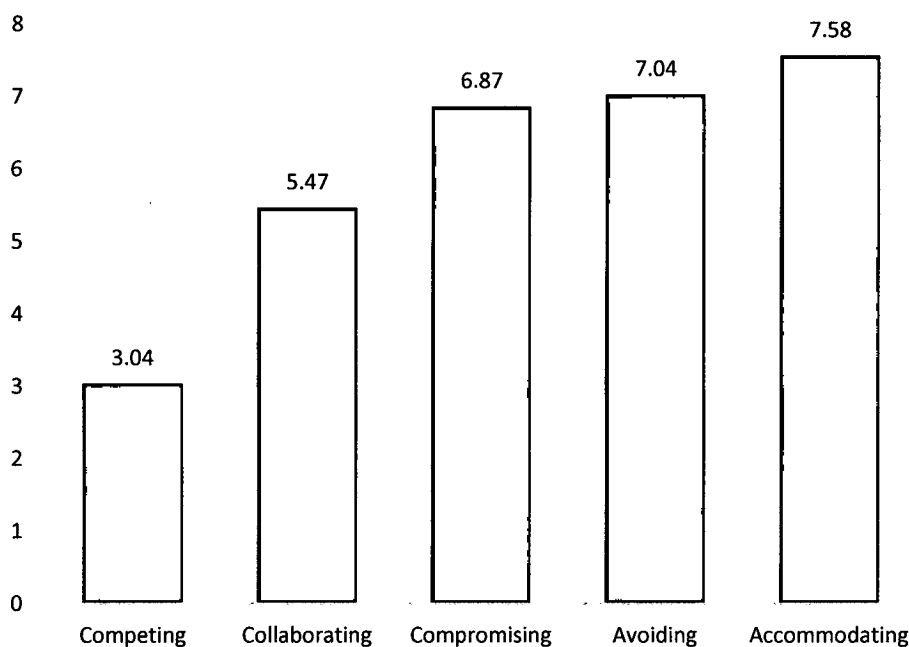


Figure 4. 1

*Mean Score of the Use of Conflict Management Styles among Teachers (N= 55)*

### 4.3 Hypotheses Testing

**Hypothesis 1: The conflict management style of teachers is significantly related to the quality of teacher-student relationship (close or conflictual relationship).**

To test this hypothesis, the two variables were first categorized including:

- Six levels for conflict management style (one level for each style and one level for the mixed style): 1 for competing, 2 for collaborating, 3 for compromising, 4 for avoiding, 5 for competing and 6 for the mixed style.
- Two levels for the quality of teacher-student relationship: 1 for close and 2 for conflict.

With two categorized variables, a Chi square test for independence was used to determine whether there is a significant relationship between variables. The significant level was set at 0.05. The null hypothesis of Chi square states that the two variables “conflict management style of teachers” and “the quality of teacher student relationship (closeness or conflict)” are independent and randomly related. However, since findings show that the



significance value is less than 5% ( $p < .05$ ), the hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, the relationship between the two variables is, not due to chance ( $p = .00$ ). In fact, the way one handles conflicts may have a direct impact on relationships. The Bar chart (See Figure 4.2) shows how the relationships of closeness and conflict vary according to the preferred conflict management style of teachers. For example, Figure 4.2 indicates that teachers who have an avoiding style show a high conflictual relationship, whereas those having a mixed style exhibit a close relationship. It can be also deduced that both collaborating and compromising styles, respectively, are almost equal in the closeness dimension. On the other hand, the collaborating style is proven to be the least style that induces conflicts and struggle between teachers and students. Therefore, it can be concluded that statistical results support the hypothesis that the conflict management style of teachers and the teacher-student relationship are significantly related.

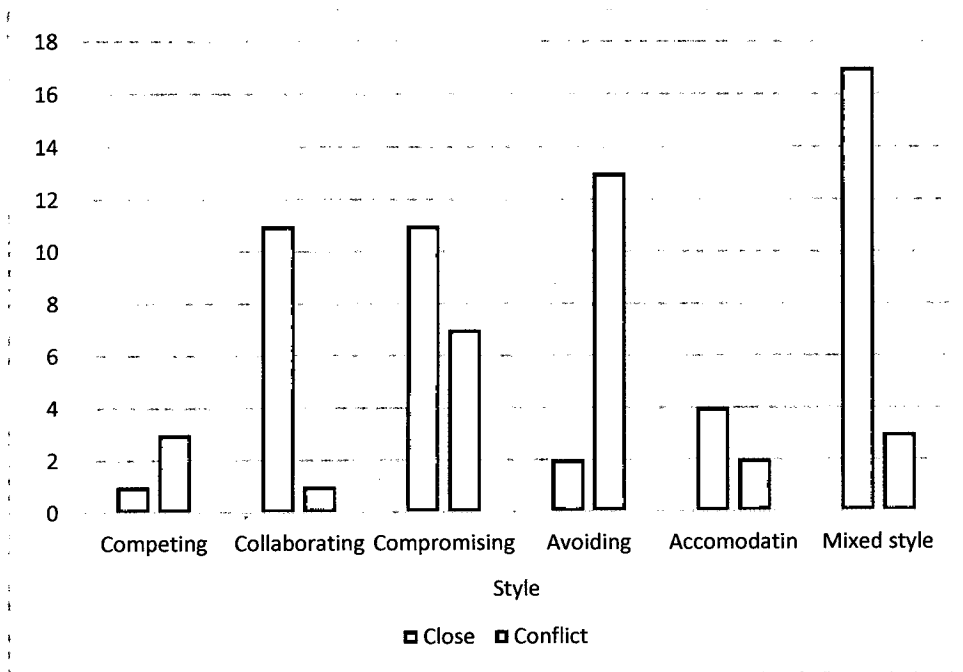


Figure 4. 2  
*A Clustered Bar Chart Illustrating the Number of Close/ Conflict among Conflict Management Styles.*

**Hypothesis 2: There is a significant difference between the effect of each of the five conflict management styles (Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, and Accommodating) on the teacher-student relationship (conflict/ closeness).**

In order to figure out how each style differently affects the closeness and conflict in the teacher-student relationship, the two variables were cross tabulated. The Chi square test, descriptive statistics, and results are presented in Tables 4.3 and 4.4.

Table 4. 3  
*Results of Chi Square Test and Descriptive Statistics for Conflict Management Style by Quality of Teacher-Student Relationship.*

Conflict Management Style	Quality of Teacher-Student Relationship					
	Close		Conflict		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Competing	1	(1.3%)	3	(4%)	4	(5.3%)
Collaborating	11	(14.7%)	1	(1.3%)	12	(16%)
Compromising	11	(14.7%)	7	(9.7%)	18	(24%)
Avoiding	2	(2.7%)	13	(17.3%)	15	(20%)
Accommodating	4	(5.3%)	2	(2.7%)	6	(8%)
Mixed style	17	(22.7%)	3	(4%)	20	(26.7%)

Note.  $\chi^2 = 0.00^*$ , df = 5. \*p < .05

Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages of total

In the Test of Association of conflict management style and teacher-student relationship (Chi square), it is important to check the p-value. As depicted in Table 4.3, the p-value is less than .05 ( $p < .05$ ), which means that a statistically significant difference in the teacher-student relationship exists among the five preferred conflict management styles of

teachers. It is clear through Table 4.3 that teachers who have collaborating and compromising styles as their dominant style are more likely to establish a close relationship with their students (14.7% for closeness out of 16% for collaborating and 14.7% also out of 24% for compromising). In addition, those who have the avoiding style as the most practiced style in conflict situations are more likely involved in conflictual relationships with their students (17.3% out of a total of 20%).

Finally, out of 26.7% of those having a mixed style, 22.7% are in positive relationships with students. In addition, the descriptive statistics in Table 4.4 show that, among participants who have a collaborating style, 91.7% are building close relations with students. Among those who practice an accommodating style, 66.7% are establishing a close relationship, and among those who have a compromising style 61.1% are found in positive relations. Therefore, the higher percentage in the collaborating style reflects the efficacy of this style on maintaining a close teacher-student relationship. In parallel, 86.7% of people who adopt the avoiding style are proved to be in conflictual relationships, and 75% of people who choose the competing conflict mode are also in struggling situations with their students. On the other hand, 85% of teachers who adopt a mixed style are found to be close to their students.

Table 4. 4

*Results of Descriptive Statistics for Conflict Management Style by Quality of Teacher-Student Relationship.*

Conflict Management Style	Quality of Teacher-Student Relationship					
	Close		Conflict		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Competing	1	(25%)	3	(75%)	4	(100%)
Collaborating	11	(91.7%)	1	(8.3%)	12	(100%)
Compromising	11	(61.1%)	7	(38.9%)	18	(100%)
Avoiding	2	(13.3%)	13	(86.7%)	15	(100%)
Accommodating	4	(66.7%)	2	(33.3%)	6	(100%)
Mixed style	17	(85%)	3	(15%)	20	(100%)

Note.  $\chi^2 = 0.00^*$ ,  $df = 5$ .  $*p < .05$

Numbers in parentheses indicate row percentages within the style

**Hypothesis 3: Teachers' conflict management style and demographic factors (age, years of experience, level of education) are significantly related to the quality of teacher-student relationship.**

The relationship between conflict management style, demographic factors, and the quality of teacher-student relationship was tested using one way ANOVA test. Style, age, and years of experience are found related to the closeness and conflict levels. Results demonstrate that p-value for style ( $p = .02$ ), and p-value for age ( $p = .037$ ) and that for years of experience ( $p = .011$ ) are all significantly related to the quality of the teacher-student relationship since they are less than the significant level ( $p = .05$ ); except the level of education which is found not significant with a higher p-value ( $p = .45$ ).

In an attempt to analyze each of these demographic factors in relation to the quality of teacher- student relationship, the Bar Chart (See Figure 4.3) shows the influence of teachers' age on closeness and conflict; one can easily notice that younger teachers are spread equally between conflict and closeness whereas all of the teachers older than 31 have higher count of closeness than conflict. We can conclude, then, that the older the teachers are, the closer the relationship with students is.

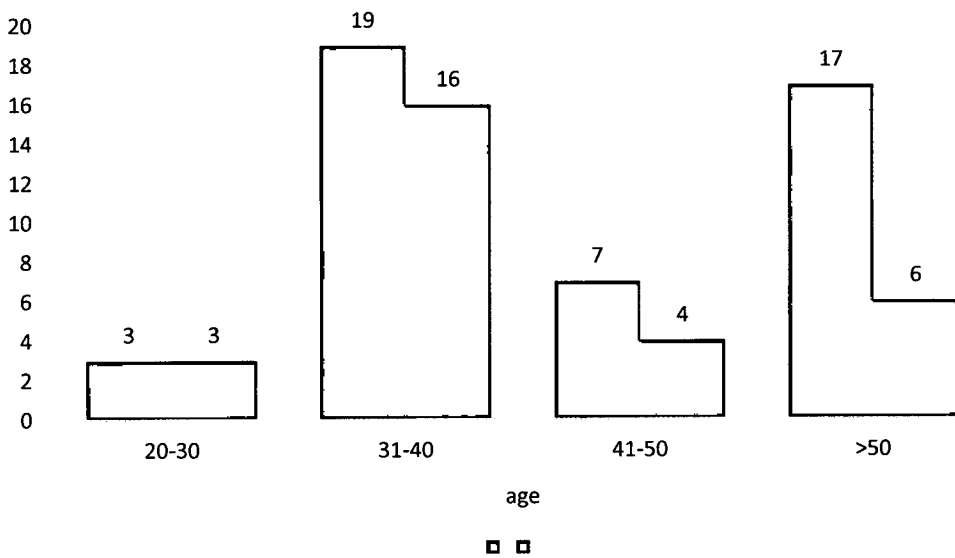


Figure 4. 3  
*Clustered Bar Chart of Age Distribution among Close/Conflict*

Moreover, Table 4.5 presents descriptive statistics on the effects of years of experience on the quality of teacher- student relationship. It was found that 85.7% of teachers having between 31 and 40 years of experience are establishing close relationships with students and surprisingly, 51.3% of teachers having between 11 and 20 years of experience were depicted as having conflicts.

Table 4. 5

*Descriptive Statistics for Years of Experience by Quality of Teacher-Student Relationship.*

<i>Years of experience</i>	Quality of Teacher-Student Relationship					
	Close		Conflict		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<10 years	6	(66.7%)	3	(33.3%)	9	(100%)
11-20 years	19	(48.7%)	20	(51.3%)	39	(100%)
21-30 years	4	(57.1%)	3	(42.9%)	7	(100%)
31-40 years	12	(85.7%)	2	(14.3%)	14	(100%)
>40	5	(83.3%)	1	(16.7%)	6	(100%)
Total	46	(61.3%)	29	(38.7%)	75	(100%)

Numbers in parentheses indicate percentages within range years of experience

Table 4.6 shows that the percentages of closeness among the different levels of education range from 56.4% to 70%, and those of conflict among all levels range from 30% to 43.6%. Based on these findings, we can conclude that the degree that the teachers hold does not have any influence on their connectedness with students.

Table 4.6

*Descriptive Statistics of Level of Education (% within level) by Quality of Teacher-Student Relationship*

Level of Education	Quality of Teacher-Student Relationship					
	Close		Conflict		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<BA	22	(56.4%)	17	(43.6%)	39	(100%)
BA	14	(70%)	6	(30%)	20	(100%)
>BA	10	(62.5%)	6	(37.5%)	16	(100%)
Total	46	(61.3%)	29	(38.7%)	75	(100%)

Numbers in parentheses indicate row percentages within level of education

#### 4.4 Student Gender and Grade Level

Important and interesting findings of this study consider students' gender and grade levels as other factors related to the quality of teacher-student relationship, although these factors were not included in my hypotheses. However, these results may be useful and relevant for more advanced research in the future. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to note them in this chapter.

Each teacher was supposed to randomly select five students in order to self-assess his/her relationship with each of them. The total number of the selected students was 375, 61.3% (n= 230) were perceived in close relationships, while 38.7% (n= 145) were perceived in conflict with their teachers. More specifically, Table 4.7 shows that teachers tend to establish a positive relationship with 66.6% (n= 30) of grade 1 students, 69.2% (n=45) with grade 2 students, 69.5% (n=80) with grade 3 students, and 50% (n= 75) with grade 4 students. In parallel, teachers' ratings show also that they perceive themselves in conflict with

33.3% (n=15) of grade 1 students, 30.7% (n=20) of grade 2 students, 30.4% (n=35) of grade 3 students, and 50% (n=75) of grade 4 students. The overall results, presented in Table 4.8, suggest that among grade levels, students of grade 4 are perceived as having the highest level of conflict (51.7%) (n= 75) of all students who are in conflict and students of grade 1 as the lowest level (10.34%) (n=15).

Table 4. 7

*Results of Descriptive Statistics for Students' Grade Level (within level) by Quality of Teacher-Student Relationship.*

Grade	Quality of Teacher-Student Relationship					
	Close		Conflict		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	30	(66.6%)	15	(33.3%)	45	(100%)
2	45	(69.2%)	20	(30.7%)	65	(100%)
3	80	(69.5%)	35	(30.4%)	115	(100%)
4	75	(50%)	75	(50%)	150	(100%)
Total	230	(61.3%)	145	(38.7%)	375	(100%)

*Note.* Numbers in parentheses indicate row percentages within grade level



Table 4. 8

*Results of Descriptive Statistics for Students' Grade Level (within close/ conflict) by Quality of Teacher-Student Relationship.*

Grade Level	Quality of Teacher-Student Relationship					
	Close		Conflict		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	30	(13.04%)	15	(10.34%)	45	(12%)
2	45	(19.5%)	20	(13.79%)	65	(17.3%)
3	80	(34.78%)	35	(24.13%)	115	(30%)
4	75	(32.6%)	75	(51.72%)	150	(40%)
Total	230	(100%)	145	(100%)	375	(100%)

*Note.* Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages within close/ conflict

In addition, among all students (n=375), 65.06% (n=244) were males and 34.9% (n=131) were females. Statistics from our survey also proved that among all the male population (n=244), 55.32% (n=135) were in conflict while, among the female population (n= 131), only 7.6% (n= 10) were in conflict (See Table 4.9). Teachers, therefore, reported having conflicts with a higher percentage of boys than girls.

Table 4.9

*Results of Descriptive Statistics for Students' Gender (within close/ conflict) by Quality of Teacher-Student Relationship.*

Gender	Quality of Teacher-Student Relationship					
	Close		Conflict		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	109	(44.67%)	135	(55.32%)	244	(100%)
Female	121	(92.3%)	10	(7.6%)	131	(100%)
Total	230	(61.3%)	145	(38.6%)	375	(100%)

*Note.* Numbers in parentheses indicate row percentages within close/ conflict

In summary, the results of this study suggest that the accommodating and the avoiding styles are most frequently adopted by elementary teachers in the four studied schools, while the competing style is the least practised. The first hypothesis shows that the choice of mode for handling conflict in schools influences the quality of teacher-student relationship, while the second hypothesis proved how each conflict style may affect either positively or negatively this relationship. For example, the collaborating style was depicted as the highest in closeness, whereas the avoiding style as the highest in conflict. Finally, the teachers' conflict management styles, their age, and their years of experience were all related to the quality of teacher-student relationship, while the level of education was not. Our findings also depict higher levels of conflict in grade 4 than those in grade 1 and higher percentage of conflict among boys than among girls.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion and Limitations

This chapter presents and discusses the findings and implications drawn from the data analysis in relation to the existing literature on conflict management and teacher-student relationship. It will also reveal the limitations of the present study.

#### 5.1 Discussion

The findings are presented and discussed as follows:

- 1- Conflict, conflict management, and conflict management style
- 2- Demographic factors
- 3- Teachers' perception of conflict
- 4- Teachers' perception of their relationships with students
- 5- Student gender and grade level

This study explored the dominant conflict management style of teachers in four public schools in North Lebanon. The research attempted to investigate how teachers' conflict management style affects the quality of teacher-student relationship in terms of closeness and conflict and to what extent demographic variables (age, years of experience, and level of education of teachers) predict closeness or conflict in the teacher-student relationship. The Thomas-Kilmann Instrument TKI and the short form version of the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS- SF) were administered to 81 teachers from grade 1 to grade 4 in four public schools in koura area. Only 75 teachers returned the questionnaires. A semi structured interview was conducted later to get more profound information and to give better interpretation of the collected data. The teachers who took part in the study were all females.

The research questions addressed in this analysis were as follows:

- 1- What is the dominant conflict management style of teachers of the four public schools in North Lebanon?

- 2- To what extent does each of the five conflict management styles predict close or conflict teacher-student relationships?
- 3- How do teachers of public schools perceive conflict?
- 4- How do teachers of public schools perceive their relationships with their students (conflict, closeness)?
- 5- What is the influence of teachers' demographic variables (age, years of experience, level of education) on their relationship with students?

### **5.1.1 Conflict, Conflict Management, Conflict Management Styles**

As stated before, the big challenge for schools and for the wider community is to prevent conflicts and misunderstanding from becoming destructive disputes. The use of appropriate conflict handling mode relies first on self- knowledge of these styles, and second on the ability of the responsible for managing a conflict situation to understand the circumstances of conflict, the source of conflict and the human psychology (Rahim, 2002; Zia & Syed, 2013). This is what some researchers called the contingency perspective, the best style needed for a contingent situation (Thomas, 1992).

Results of this study showed that the adoption of each of the five conflict management styles has an influence on teacher-student relationship from two dimensions: closeness and conflict. Specifically, as we predicted, the use of compromising, collaborating, and accommodating styles contributes to a close teacher-student relationship, while the adoption of avoiding and competing results in a conflictual relationship.

In this section, we identified the dominant conflict management style of teachers in four of the elementary public schools in North Lebanon, as well as the effect of each style on the quality of teacher-student relationship.

Results showed that 73% of the respondents have only one conflict management style, while the rest have a mixed style. Some researchers have argued that for resolving conflict

effectively, the use of one specific style could be more suitable than the other depending on the circumstances and conditions of the situation (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979; Thomas, 1992). Our findings indicated that teachers tend to choose a preferred conflict style “the accommodating style”, which is the opposite of the competing style recognized as a self-sacrifice mode (Thomas, 1976). The accommodating style (Mean= 7.58) was found to be the most frequent style; it is unassertive and cooperative. The avoiding style (Mean= 7.04) was the second most frequent style, the third one was the compromising style (Mean= 6.87), the fourth was the collaborating style (Mean= 5.47), and finally the least one was the competing style (Mean= 3.04).

In parallel, our study revealed a high percentage of teachers who adopt a mixed style (27%). Studies by Ragin (2002) viewed that the combination of the different approaches may be appropriate for different types of conflicts, while the continuous use of only one preferred style over other styles may reflect people’s rigidity. This explains why some teachers don’t stick to one style but tend to rely on more than one in one situation. It is, therefore, possible to shift from one style to another in one occasion or create a hybrid of two strategies to reduce negative consequences and to preserve relationships (Zia & Zyed, 2013). Based on the results of our statistics; hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested and verified.

**Hypothesis 1: The conflict management style of teachers is significantly related to the quality of teacher-student relationship (close or conflictual relationship).**

Results from our survey support our first hypothesis. The Chi square test revealed an association between conflict management style and teacher-student relationship ( $p = .00$ ). These findings are similar to those of Lee (2009) who considered that effective leaders are those who get to know how to apply good management strategies, strengthen relationships with their subordinates and reduce conflicts in their organizations. Although some schools have their own regulations and policies on how to resolve conflicts (Kiuri, 2009), prior

research suggested that relationships and educational outcomes are highly depending on the means used by teachers to resolve problems (Pinchevsky & Bogler, 2014). Therefore, the secret is to become aware of how to cope positively with conflict in order to benefit from it and to maintain cohesion among parties (Kiuri, 2009) and to turn it into an opportunity for growth in relationships (Lee, 2009). A major obstacle that stands in the way of teachers in addressing conflicts is the lack of support from the school management (Makibi, 2010). For example, instructors at one of the four public schools reject the latest policy that forbids the punishment and expulsion of students as reactions to their misbehaviors; they feel frustrated because they cannot always implement the competing or the avoiding style while managing the conflict. However, the educators who believe that expelling students for their misconduct in the class is the right solution fail to realize that these young people remain in our society and grow unable to learn how to cope with conflict in a productive way (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Hence, besides self-awareness of the five conflict management styles, school culture, beliefs, norms and policies also determine the management tactics that should be implemented (Volkman & Bergmann, 1995).

**Hypothesis 2: There is a significant difference between the effect of each of the five conflict management styles (competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating) on the teacher-student relationship (conflict/ closeness).**

Our first hypothesis has been supported by the findings of this survey and those of other studies; however, fewer studies have looked at the direct relationship between conflict management style of teachers, and the various outcomes on the quality of teacher-student relationship. Our findings would provide the literature with new insights on how teacher-student relationship varies in accordance with each of the five conflict management styles that teachers use in a conflict situation.

***Competing:***

Findings from our survey showed that people adopting the competing style encounter conflicts in their relationship; only 25% of them perceive themselves in close relations compared to 75% in conflict. This style is identified as assertive and uncooperative and viewed as aggressive, autocratic, confrontational, and intimidating; most of the time, it is perceived as ineffective and inappropriate (Gross & Guerrero, 2000). It is an attempt to win one's position at any cost, by ignoring the needs of the other involved person (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979). Although this mode can be appropriate and best implemented when the decision is vital in a crisis (Thomas, 1974), it presents a lot of weaknesses such as spoiling relationships and pushing others to reach their needs using covert methods (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991). Therefore, in a class where power is often enforced, an unsafe environment is fostered, low levels of satisfaction and negative emotions are enhanced. The use of coercive power was proved to be negatively related to student satisfaction and learning (Jamieson & Thomas, 1974). During our interview, it was clear that teachers who use a competitive style always impose sanctions for students' misbehaviors such as punishments and reprimands in front of the class ignoring their feelings. This is consistent with what Hashash (2013) noticed during her observations in public schools. Teachers' hostile behaviors manifested by reprimanding students in public and using coercive approaches, which sometimes include physical punishments, are common among Lebanese public schools. All these patterns reflect ignorance for others' feelings, leading to conflicts in class. Sava (2002) associated all these practices to teachers' misbehaviors, called also "hostile behaviors" that have often negative effects on the educational, psychological, and somatic outcomes. Pupils feel demotivated and indifferent toward the course material, and may develop emotional disorders such as anxiety, shyness, withdrawal, and even musculoskeletal complaints due to stress. The inability to undergo changes in the conditions which they feel unbearable makes undergraduate and high

school students also experience frustration that intensifies challenges and leads to conflict escalation (Jamieson, Thomas, 1974). The dominating style may be merely reasonable when teachers need to take quick decisions, and subordinates lack expertise to make technical decisions (Rahim, 2002).

### *Collaborating:*

The results of our survey showed that teachers using the collaborating style were found to have 91.7% in a close relationship compared to 8.3 % in conflict in their self-reports. The high percentage proves that the collaborating mode is the most appropriate mode because it keeps sociability among parties. These results are consistent with some earlier findings who considered collaboration as “a desirable state of affairs” (Thomas, 1992). Gross and Guerrero (2000) found that the collaborating style (often called win-win problem solving) is generally perceived as the most effective style, and Rahim (2002) asserts that it is the best mode that enhances organizational learning. In addition, since 1964, Blake and Mouton, perceived this style as highly competent because each disputant works on discovering, analysing, and solving the problem. This mode as reflected in the literature is a true means to creating a win-win solution because it involves confronting, digging into the issues and trying to find a creative solution to any interpersonal problem (Thomas, 1974). This style requires assertive communication and cooperation between the concerned individuals to work together on finding innovative and creative ideas to resolve disputes meaningfully. In other words, members in a struggling situation are supposed to be collectively engaged in the process of diagnosis and intervention; it is highly recommended in situations where high quality decisions and high acceptance are required (Rahim, 2002). This strategy is marked by civilized and polite behaviors of all involved people who work toward a common goal. Teachers adopting this style demonstrate not only a high concern for their students, but also the willingness to support, motivate and create a student-centered



educational environment (Pinchevsky & Bogler, 2014). Through this approach, relations are sustained and strengthened. In our interview, most of the teachers adopting this style expressed their care and affection towards all their students. This type of teachers is characterized by a high level of concern for one's own as well as for students' needs (Rahim & Bonoma, 1976). Hence, it is not surprising that teachers adopting the collaboration mode for handling interpersonal conflicts tend to report high levels of closeness. However, this approach requires, most importantly, enough time for the synthesis of ideas, for creative solutions and commitment from the other party for a successful implementation (Rahim, 2002). Unfortunately, it may not be applicable on all occasions in the class because of time constraints. According to Crawford and Bodine (1996),

effective implementation of this style requires an understanding of four essential principles: separate people from the problem (attacking the problem not each other), focus on interests, not positions (defining the problem based on interests not positions), invent options for mutual gain (finding creative options that reconcile both sides), use objective criteria (select a fair solution based on fair standard) (p. 10-11).

Tjosvold (2007) also argued that cooperative conflict management requires intellectual, emotional, and relational capabilities, such as sharing ideas openly and discussing differences constructively, to develop quality relationships. Thomas (1992) underlined the fact that a problem solving approach is the 'one-best-way perspective' towards managing any conflict situation since it encourages collaboration, creativity and most importantly a feeling of tolerance among members. Thomas, further, reported that both "the contingency perspective" and the "one-best-way perspective" are to be implemented in two time horizons. The former is suitable for solving short term conflict situations since it offers direct and effective solutions when unexpected conflicts arise. Conversely, the latter, is a long term solution that persists for a longer period of time (Thomas, 1992).

***Compromising:***

In this approach, 61.1% of compromising teachers are perceived as close to their students compared to 38.9% who are perceived in conflict. This strategy is intermediate in assertiveness and cooperativeness and is viewed as a relatively neutral (Gross & Guerrero, 2000). This approach focuses on reaching a middle ground that partially satisfies both parties. It involves give and take between the disputing parties who abandon some of their needs to reach a mutually acceptable solution. It was described in the Mouton-Blake Managerial Grid as being a win and a lose agreement that can be effective when both parties have equal positions, choose to cooperate, and want to keep positive relations for the future, but this is not our case since teachers and students are not equal, and more significantly, teachers should not offer sacrifices. If teachers who adopt this style give up important standards or principles just to please students and to uphold connectedness with them, then negative outcomes will result. This justifies the high level of conflict, as revealed in this study, probably resulting from the improper use of this style. Compromising may become inappropriate when one party is more powerful than the other (Rahim, 2002), when involved people put aside too much of their needs and end up unsatisfied, and when other conflict styles may be more appropriate (Thomas, 1974). Sometimes, unfortunately, the compromising style often fails to recognize the real reason behind the problem; conflicts are settled only in the short-term period but remain unresolved on the long term (Kiuri, 2009). On the contrary, effectively using the compromising style maintains relationships and takes less time than collaboration (Rahim, 2002). According to Pinchevsky and Bogler (2014), teachers who have high levels of self-efficacy, and are able to properly implement this style, give the right to their students to share in the decision making process to reach an adequate solution. They show them high concern and make them feel satisfied at school; a fact that creates a positive and healthy learning

environment. Being skilled in applying this approach controls and prevents behavioral problems in the class (Pinchevsky & Bogler, 2014).

*Avoiding:*

Unfortunately, the avoiding style, as our survey reveals, is the second mode adopted by elementary teachers; it is mostly associated with conflict in Lebanese public schools since 86.7% of people adopting this style perceived themselves in conflict. Although avoiding could be the best solution for minor issues, or for taking enough time to think about how to respond during confrontation (Thomas, 1974), it can be destructive when people withdraw from a serious conflict rather than face it. During our interview with teachers, we noted that some of the respondents who had an avoiding style believe that the problem can be resolved without their involvement because they don't want to be engaged or because they expect others to take the responsibility. This is consistent with Hashash's (2012) conclusion that a state of indifference and nonchalance toward students exists in our public schools. Moreover, according to this category of teachers, sending troublemakers to the principal, the one they consider as responsible for managing conflict, is one of the best ways to reduce disputes in the class. However, they fail to realize that by ignoring conflicts, crisis will escalate and hostile challenges will be added. By merely engaging in avoidance approaches, educators risk the breaking of the already fragile relationships (Kiuri, 2009). This high level of conflict in public schools matches with the findings of Hashash through her observations in five Lebanese public schools. Therefore, the avoiding style was generally perceived as both ineffective and inappropriate (Gross & Guerrero, 2000). Nevertheless, our survey suggested that 13.3% of teachers following this mode had positive relations. The findings of Pinchevsky & Bogler (2014) indicated that teachers who have high self-efficacy levels know when and how to apply this strategy. They are competent at selecting which situations require "buying time" to understand the conflict and to think about reactions that will likely be most effective

before the problem becomes more complex. In other words, competent teachers postpone dealing with minor forms of students' misbehavior until a more appropriate time. Some respondents, in our interview, consider that some of the everyday students' misbehaviors such as talking out of turn, gossiping, teasing, and property issues are normal at certain age and must be neglected to some extent in order to reduce wasting time on management issues and to increase the instructional time.

*Accommodating:*

Accommodating was depicted as the most common strategy used among all the teachers. Results of this study indicated that 66.7% of teachers following the accommodating style constitute the percentage of those who are engaged in close relationships with their students as perceived by teachers. Basically, this style, also named the obliging style, involves putting aside some of personal needs to please others with the objective of keeping the peace (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979). It is the opposite of competing (Thomas, 1974). It might take the form of self-sacrifice. The emphasis is on saving positive relations although smoothing can lead to false solutions that may produce various feelings ranging from anger to pleasure (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991). This contradicts with Hashash's findings (2012) that Lebanese public school teachers show little concern for their students. Thus, like compromising, accommodating was conceived by Gross and Guerrero, (2000) as neutral. Accommodating teachers are more likely engaged in developing a student-centered environment since they care a lot for their students' concerns (Pinchevsky & Bogler, 2014). However, people who consistently use solely the accommodating strategy to resolve problems risk creating power imbalance between parties (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991), and therefore, engage in conflictual relations (33.3%) in our study. When the issue involved in a conflict is important, when one believes that he or she is right or when the other party is

wrong or unethical, accommodating becomes inadequate and a source of continuous confrontation among people (Rahim, 2002).

To sum up, the collaborating, accommodating and compromising styles are all perceived by elementary teachers as related to close teacher-student relationships, whereas the competing and avoiding styles are perceived as related to negative relations. Through this survey, our predictions were supported. To explain why positive relationships are established only with the collaborating, accommodating and compromising styles, we have to look first at a common denominator. They are all characterized as having a high or intermediate concern for others and high levels of cooperativeness. These styles result in more concern for students' needs and in creating a student-centered approach, and on creating a healthy environment that is conducive to learning (Pinchevsky & Bogler, 2014). Lee (2009) pointed to the high correlation between these three styles and satisfaction; more specifically, the author concluded that collaboration ranks the highest style among others as associated to subordinates' satisfaction with their superior.

### **5.1.2 Demographic Factors**

Seventy five of the teachers who returned the questionnaire were all females. The majority 46.7% were between 31 and 40, while 30.6 % were above 51, 14.7% were between 41 and 50 and only 8% were between 20 and 30. Almost half of the respondents, 52%, didn't hold a university degree, one fourth, 26.7%, had a bachelor's degree in various majors, and only 21.3% had post-graduate degrees. Meanwhile, the majority 52% of the respondents in this study had between 11 and 20 years of experience while 18.7 % had between 31 and 40 years of experience, 12% had less than 10 years of experience, 9.3% had between 21 and 30 years of experience, and only 8% had more than 41 years of experience.

In this section, one broad question was addressed: What is the influence of teachers' demographic variables (age, years of experience, level of education) on their relationship with students?

**Hypothesis 3: The conflict management style, teachers' demographic factors (age, years of experience and the level of education) are all significantly related to the quality of the teacher-student relationship.**

First of all, the one way ANOVA test revealed that conflict management style ( $p=0.02\%$ ), age ( $p=0.037\%$ ), and years of experience ( $p=0.011\%$ ) are all significantly related to the quality of the teacher-student relationship except the level of education which was found not significantly related with a p-value of  $0.45\%$ . This is consistent with what Akinubi et al. (2012) found in their study; personal characteristics, gender, qualification and teaching experience of principals have a direct effect on how conflict is managed in the school system. Furthermore, within the extant literature, several factors related to teachers' characteristics were explored and contributed to understanding the teacher-student relationship. Teachers' attitudes, such as authoritarian attitudes (Pianta et al., 2005), teachers' interpersonal behaviors (Baker, 1999), gender, experiences, levels, (Ipek, & Terzi, 2010), and personal characteristics (Akinubi et al., 2012), were all found closely interrelated with either conflict or closeness in the teacher-student interaction. The results in this study also suggest that all the teachers older than 31 years have higher count of closeness than that of conflict. Surprisingly, younger teachers, aged between 20 and 30 years, have identical count of closeness and conflict. This means that half of those teachers are maintaining amicable relationships with students whereas the other half of teachers is engaged in negative relationships.

In addition, it can be inferred from table 4.5 that teachers having 31 to 40 years of experience manifest a high level of closeness (85.7%) and those having between 11 and 20

years of experience manifest relatively a high level of conflict (51.3%). Evidence from our study proved that years of experience practiced in the educational sector have, to a certain degree, an influence on the quality of teacher- student relationship. Previous researchers believe that teachers' experience and education as in little relation to the qualities of their relationships with their students (Hamre & Pianta, 2006). In contrast, Baker (2006) linked teachers' competency to establish positive interactions with students to their personalities, types, and experiences. Moreover, in an attempt to describe the results of conflicts in the operation of the school unit, Iordanides & Mitsara (2014) found that old teachers and those having many years of service considered conflict as having positive effects on the overall operation of the school, and they focus on "the improvement of interpersonal relationships" of those involved in a conflict. Hence, older and more experienced teachers appreciate interpersonal relationships and look forward to maintaining harmony among all stakeholders. Previous results argued that the teacher- student relationship modifies along the time; although the dominant behavior is significant in the first decade of the teacher's career, a movement towards the ideal teacher-student relationship is manifested later (Brekelmans, Wubbels, & Brok, 2002). In addition, in the same study, more experienced teachers were perceived as more effective than less experienced teachers in classroom communication. The quality of communication between the superior and his subordinates can enhance satisfaction in the organization (Lee, 2009).

Basically, young teachers are supposed to establish warmer and closer relationships than older teachers with children. This fact can be probably traced back to the attachment-relationship theory at an early age (Scarlett, Ponte, & Singh, 2009). Pianta (2001) considered that the relationship between children and teachers resembles that between children and parents and may change in nature and quality in the same way. Children need to feel secure and attached to their teachers as they are attached to their parents. However, the study

showed that this is not the case in our public schools, since teachers with few years of experience showed almost the same level of closeness to their students as those whose years of experience range between 21 and 30. This can be probably due to the fact that almost all of them haven't got any training in conflict management. From our survey, only 17.3% (n= 13) attended seminars pertaining to dealing with students with learning difficulties whereas 82.7% (n= 62) were never trained in conflict management.

### **5.1.3 Teachers' Perception of Conflicts**

According to the review of what was recorded in the face-to-face interviews, the participants in the study reflected on how they perceive conflict in school; several aspects of conflict emerge from their school life experience. Not all of them comprehend conflict as a needed element for school progress. Almost most of the respondents consider that conflict is natural, unavoidable, and normal; however, when exceeded and mishandled, it becomes an obstacle that hinders productivity. Today, in any organization, conflict within certain limits has become necessary for productivity, particularly when constructive methods are being enforced (Kirui, 2009). We cannot judge a conflict as "good or bad" unless we evaluate the process, the results and the measures being used (Iordanides & Mitsara, 2012). The negative effects of conflict for them were spending extravagantly a lot of their energy and time for tackling conflict issues and experiencing a feeling of stress and anxiety day after day. Few of the interviewees expressed how much they feel exhausted and disappointed when dealing with "students of today" and related conflicts in school with the dysfunction of the organization and the overload of work. Surprisingly, we noticed that these "exhausted" instructors were young (between 20-30 years old) and had only few years of service in the current school. A young teacher confessed that because of facing continuous problems with her students, she hates her job and intensely regrets being a teacher. For some people, conflict is a heavy load that elicits unbearable emotional stress in their job, whereas for others, it



could be a stimulating factor (Kirui, 2009). In parallel, some others stated that conflict should not be tolerable since it reduces satisfaction in the work, lowers productivity and, when badly managed, increases the occurrence of new and more severe conflicts. For them, a healthy school environment should be totally free of conflicts and pupils are supposed to comply with schools' rules and with teachers' instruction. On the other hand, only 3 teachers, among 75, contended that conflicts can be beneficially resolved and lead to productive outcomes. They further, argued that it is the teachers' role, as the leader of the class, to be able to minimize confrontation through effective classroom management practices, such as effective communication, anger management, active listening and the use of problem solving tactics. It was interesting to hear from them that teachers should act as a role model, to train their students on how to negotiate and mediate their classmates' conflicts. For them, an effective leader is not only skilled at extinguishing conflicts, but also is able to engage in proactive reaction to prevent problems earlier. These comments largely replicate those of Yuan & Che (2012) who believe that children tend to imitate the behavior around them based on the social learning theory which considers that learning occurs in social context, purely through observation. Therefore, their role is to be a real "teacher leader" (Msila, 2012) who can effectively manage rather than eradicate conflict (Boucher, 2013), get to know how to adjust students' misbehaviors and build a positive teacher-student relationship that reduces the frequency of happening of more serious anti-social behaviours (Yuan & Che, 2012). Austin and Harkins (2008) further stressed on the importance of practising constructive ways to resolve conflicts in the class in order to teach students how to model the same behavior themselves. They also emphasized the need for a holistic preparation for teachers in conflict management strategies and leadership practices.

Furthermore, while asking teachers whether they encounter conflicts in their classes or not, only few of them (36 %) claimed that they don't come upon conflicts because they

perceive themselves as controlling the class effectively and capable of resolving conflicts positively in their professional life, while most of them (64%) reported having continuous conflicts. When looking into the type of conflict teachers have to deal with most of the time, we found out that, according to them, it is almost acting as mediators who manage student-student struggles, such as name calling, fighting, and property issues. These are the most common forms of conflicts that take place in schools, in addition to the lack of conflict and anger management skills (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Teacher-student conflicts such as students' obstinacy, unwillingness to comply with the rules of the class, and disruptive behaviors were also continuously faced in the classroom. It was also noticed that children having low levels of basic academic skills and those coming from families belonging to a low social class were perceived by some educators as another source for disruptive behaviors that usually take place in the class. Previous studies have widely explored the influence of the family and society (Pianta, 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Yan & Che, 2012), and students' achievement levels on their behaviors in educational institutions (Baker, 1999). Although many students coming from poor communities show interest and high concern for education, teachers concluded that, in the last few years, the students' and parents' carelessness for education has increased and results in a negative teacher-student relationship. It is impossible to separate out students' problem behaviors in the class from the social factors where they were raised (Yuan & Che, 2012). The family's environment and parents' attitudes and their low level of education highly influence students' attitude in the school (Yuan & Che, 2012). The most critical factor that contributes to shape a child's personality is his relationship with his parents. Teachers reported that some of their students have violent parents, or live with a single parent because of either divorce or death, which may increase students' bad behavior and result in uninterrupted confrontation with the school. For example, when children are

found disruptive, usually the school contacts their parents who unfortunately show lack of concern and induce deeper troubles in the educational settings.

Children with learning disabilities were described by elementary teachers as another source of conflict in the class since they require individualized, specific, intensive, and directed instruction which is time and effort consuming. The poor concentration and attention, and the inability to progress lead these children to become more antisocial as they grow older (Yuan & Che, 2012). Educators consider that those children disrupt their colleagues and should not be merged in the general educational classroom because they have low levels of learning progress. For example, a 13 year-old-female student was enrolled in grade 3, and was a real source of stress for teachers and disruption for the whole class.

The high level of aggressiveness and violence in schools and society has become another serious problem in the last few decades (Johnson & Johnson, 1996), which raises conflicts in the school to a higher degree. This involves physical attacks among students in the playground and sometimes carrying knives in their bags. In one of the schools that were subject of this study, teachers reported a lot of violent behaviours such as punching and kicking among children during recess time and even playing the role of a terrorist who kills people. They also detected a knife within a grade 4 student's stuff without any serious intervention from the school principal. The role of communities at large, including educational settings, and the parents' involvement in specific, is vital to restrain and prevent violence (Ragin, 2000).

While asking the teachers about the various approaches implemented in their classes in times of conflict, most of them argued that they discuss issues with students through open communication, and work on finding creative solutions. However, when the first strategy doesn't work, some of them refer to coercive approaches, or to power intervention, while others send out students to the principal or involve parents. Statistics from our survey

indicated that 77.3% (n=58) are satisfied with their style because of the productive outcome revealed in their classes. In contrast, 22.7% (n= 17) are not satisfied since conflicts are not adequately settled; disputes tend to become bitter and out of control, and negative and unpleasant outcomes surface.

#### **5.1.4 Teachers' Perception of Their relationship With Students:**

During the interview, we inquired about the teachers' perception of their relationship with their students in general; the majority 93.3% (n=70) perceive themselves as in close and warm relation, while the minority 6.7% (n=5) see themselves fraught with conflict. Findings from teachers' self-rating reports show that 61.3% are in close relationship whereas 38.7% are in conflict. This means that 32% of teachers who claimed that they are concerned about students' academic and social lives in the school were mistaken and they are unaware of their negative interactions with students and they need to reconsider their approach. While a number of educators expressed mostly their positive feelings towards high achievers and girls, some others conveyed a feeling of affection for low achievers and children coming from poor families. In parallel, few of them communicated their low connectedness towards low achievers and boys, and this was apparently manifested in a negative teacher-student interaction. This is in line with previous research which pointed out to the low emotional support that some teachers tend to have towards low achievers in their classes, which has negative effects on their social and cognitive development (Baker, 1999; Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

In response to how they conceive the consequences of a negative relationship with their students, some teachers claimed that apparently students are unaffected by the negative relations they establish with teachers, while others affirmed that negative relationships touch students deeply, demotivate them and negatively influence their academic performance, their school adjustment and their social development. This negative impact of such weak

relationships has been largely addressed in several past studies, whether on the engagement and motivational level (Klem & Connell, 2004; Montalvo et al., 2007) or on the psychosocial and academic achievement (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Pianta, 1999; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Rimm-Kaufman, 2011; Murray & Malmgren, 2005; Hallinan, 2008).

### 5.1.5 Students Gender and Grade Level

The total number of the selected students was 375, 61.3% (n= 230) were perceived in close relationships while 38.7% (n= 145) were perceived in conflict with their teachers. More specifically, results presented in Table 4.8, suggest that among grade levels, students of grade 4 were perceived as having the highest level of conflict (51.7%) (n= 75) of all students who are in conflict and students of grade 1 as the lowest level (10.34%) (n=15).

The literature indicated that one of the most important factors in students' social and academic life is the relationship that they encounter with the adults, specifically at an early school age (Pianta, 1999). Negative behavioral interactions with teachers that are not properly addressed at an early age, progress and aggravate as children grow older and become more serious and difficult to manage. We can, therefore, understand why students of grade 4 had the most frequent occurrence of conflict, probably because disagreements with teachers that were not adequately settled had escalated over years. According to Buyse et al., (2009), teacher-student relationship matters up until third grade; when school trajectories are generally well established, teachers may direct and provide guidance to students' development. Hence, we get the impression that a great number of students hadn't got enough guidance and hadn't established positive relationships with their teachers in grade 3, so conflicts accumulated and emerged in grade 4. In contrast, Berry & O'Connor (2010) considered the outcomes of a high teacher-child quality are trivial in the early years but increase as the children grow older. These findings contradict with those of Jerome, Hamre, and Pianta (2009) who concluded that students who form high-quality teacher-child

relationships demonstrated greater social skills from kindergarten through sixth grade than those who do not. Baker (1999) further suggested a supportive relationship with elementary school students, who basically spend a long time with one teacher every day, as an early intervention for students at risk of poor school outcomes.

To add, among all the male population (n=244), 55.32% (n=135) were in conflict while, among the female population (n= 131), only 7.6% (n= 10) were in conflict (see Table 4.9). Teachers, therefore, reported having conflict with a higher percentage of boys than girls. This is congruent with what Pianta concluded from his study in 1999 that young girls are closer and more dependent on their teachers than young boys, and they remain closer across levels (Hamre & Pianta, 2006). Birch and Ladd (1997) also reported in their study teachers having significantly more closeness in their relationships with girls and significantly more conflictual relationships with boys. Students' gender and behaviours were proved to have a great impact on teacher-student relationship quality in different ways (Runions, 2014). By comparing children who have emotional problems in prekindergarten, boys were found to engender higher levels of conflict than girls because they show unwillingness to participate in class activities (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Gender and students' socio-economic status (SES) levels also affect academic and psycho-social adjustment in schools; for example, girls and students from families of high SES adjust better to school academically as well as psychosocially than boys and students from low SES (Baker, 1999).

## **5.2 Limitations**

While conducting this study, we confronted the following challenges which limited the findings of this survey:

1. First, the respondents were all females, so it was not possible to determine whether the differences in the teachers' preferred style or the differences in the quality of teacher-student relationship are influenced by gender. In future research, a wider study that

includes male and female teachers in schools can be carried out to better explore the effect of teachers' gender on the quality of teacher-student relationship.

2. Second, the two questionnaires used in this study were self-reported; teachers were supposed to assess their relationships with students from their own perception. This could have led to bias in the responses. For example, a teacher who perceives herself in a high conflict with a student may be measuring her relationship with one who has internalizing or externalizing problem behaviors, or a student with learning difficulties. Teachers in our public schools don't provide these struggling students with special intervention practices to become more engaged in the learning process; as a result, conflicts emerge and escalate. Classroom observations would more probably ensure that these types of students are not included in the study. Adding students' perception of their relationship with teachers would contribute to better understanding of the mutual relationship. Yet, this was out of question because of students' immaturity in primary classes. In addition, the instrument used to measure teachers' conflict management style preference, (TKI), is a self-reporting instrument, and the results may be subject to reporter bias too. For future studies, it would be worthwhile to include more extensive observations through the school year that allow for more significant data on teacher-child relationship quality and teachers' conflict management style.
3. Third, the TKI and the STRS-SF and the interview questions were translated into Arabic to ensure a wide comprehension of the instruments. The usage of any tool in countries with different cultures, traditions and beliefs makes the task more difficult (Iarossi, 2006). A well-translated questionnaire and interview can always engender a variety of responses across culture.

4. Fourth, four public schools are not representative of all public schools in the North; therefore, our findings may not be generalized to all public schools in the area. Future studies would be valuable when they cover a broader geographical region in Lebanon.
5. Fifth, a normative sample of five students in each class cannot be representative of the whole class. It was impossible for the teachers to fill the STRS-SF questionnaire for all the students in the class because of time constraint. We faced a lot of teachers' complaints about completing these questionnaires and rating their relationship with each student because they were time consuming. Respondents who teach grade 2 and 3, for example, were supposed to complete 10 papers.



## Chapter 6

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter includes conclusions from the findings and recommendations and implications for improving the quality of teacher-student relationship in the future.

#### 6.1 Conclusion

The study was based on the two self-report questionnaires, Thomas Kilmann Mode Instrument TKI and the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale STRS-SF, and the face-to-face interview I conducted with the teachers. Elementary teachers in four public schools in the North of Lebanon were asked to rate their preferred style when resolving conflict in the school setting and to assess their perception of their relationship with particular students in the class. The study showed that teachers most frequently adopt the accommodating style, followed by the avoiding style, the compromising style, the collaborating style, and the least often, the competing style. The study also revealed that the conflict management style of teachers and the quality of teacher-student relationship were significantly related; the first hypothesis was therefore confirmed. This means that the dominant conflict management style chosen by educators in conflict situations has a direct effect on the relationship they build with students. For example, it can be deduced that teachers with collaborating style are engaged in positive relations with students to a high degree, while those with avoiding styles are engaged in more negative relationships. Our results imply that a statistically significant difference in the teacher-student relationship exists among the five preferred conflict management styles of teachers and the second hypothesis was also supported. Therefore, we conclude that the use of the compromising, collaborating and the accommodating styles are highly recommended to enhance the quality of teacher-student relationship in primary schools since these three strategies range from high to intermediate in the cooperativeness dimension (Thomas, 1976). In the qualitative research, most interviewees 94.7% (n= 71)

agreed with the research findings that the conflict management style may affect their relationship with students, whereas, only 5.3% n=4 disagreed.

In addition, teachers' conflict management style, age, and years of experience were found related to the quality of teacher-student relationship, except the level of education which was of a minor influence.

To sum up, the complexity of the interpersonal relationship between educators and children matches with that of the classroom social systems (Hamre & Pianta, 2006). This complexity is an important factor that needs to be studied profoundly, especially with the increasing levels of conflicts in contemporary schools, since it contributes to the learning process of students (Pianta, 1999). It is well known that conflict is a ubiquitous phenomenon that exists almost everywhere in our society, and it is also almost impossible to admit that we can find an organization that is free of conflict. All what we need today is conflict management and not conflict resolution. According to Rahim (2002), conflict management doesn't mean totally eradicating conflicts like conflict resolution; instead it involves planning for the use of effective approaches that limit the dysfunctions of the conflict and increase its constructive functions with the objective of promoting learning and success in organizations. Conflict management is known as a set of skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, and conflict communication skills (The Foundation Coalition, 2003). The effectiveness of any leader relies on his/her ability to manage conflict promptly and adequately, and to select the most suitable mode in a conflict situation (Rahim, 2002). Researchers argued that positive conflicts that take place between teachers and students are essential to engender dialogue and to instruct students on how to constructively settle their problems (Davies & Leoni, 2007), specifically at an early age (Pianta et al, 1995). While interviewing elementary teachers, few of them contended that conflict may lead to quality product and become beneficial for students' growth. For this reason, before teaching students

how to use conflicts as opportunities for growth in their lives, educators ought to be able to effectively manage the myriad of tasks and situations that occur in the classroom each day. This requires teachers' understanding and practicing of social skills such as communication skills, anger management and self-control, cooperation, and empathy to ensure a classroom conducive for learning. The application of the various approaches and strategies of conflict management is also very essential for teachers for a better classroom management (Abdul Basit et al, 2010). The role of instructors is not just telling students to stop fighting or to criticize them for their bad behaviour or reprimand them angrily since these strategies are not long-term solutions to conflict. Today, teachers are supposed to undertake new means and new behaviors that teach students to model the behavior that they hope to encourage rather than enforce the correct behavior (Davies & Leoni, 2007). The therapeutic programs involve introducing a verbal strategy that communicates with the child in a very meaningful way as a starting point. This requires the intervention of a skilled and understanding adult (D'Oosterlinck, & Broekaert, 2003). In addition, it is acknowledged that during the middle school, in particular in the third and fourth grades, children develop their cognitive and social skills, and they are impressed by their teachers' behaviors and attitudes. Once teachers enhance the classroom social climate through the strong rapport they establish with them, students' satisfaction with school increases and their performance increases too, including at-risk students (Baker, 1999).

Our findings assert that most teachers 82.7% (n=62) were never prepared to properly handle conflict in heated situations with students and little has been done to equip them with conflict resolution skills. Only 17.3% (n=13) had attended seminars that tackle the issue of dealing with difficult students and those having learning disabilities. A common consensus among all the teachers is that conflict management programs could be a useful tool for

addressing conflict school wide since it might be the only mean that alleviates the ongoing pressure of students' misbehaviors and preserves positive relationships.

## **6.2 Recommendations and Implications for Improvement**

Schools are not places where students learn only academic skills but also can be an environment that teaches them how to treat one another, how to approach conflict positively, and how to keep positive and healthy relationships with others. Based on the literature and on the current study, I came up with several recommendations to improve the quality of teacher-student relationship.

1. A number of interventions could be designed to strengthen the bonds between teachers and students in the school settings. For example, extracurricular activities that make teachers and students participate together such as having lunch together, celebrating holidays, and going on trips, play a vital role in building positive relations, and preventing conflict. Involving parents as well, in these collaborative activities, could be of great significance too. Teachers may also work on creating relational themes to be communicated to students throughout the school day for the purpose of building bridges with them. For example, the use of messages such as "I am interested in you", "I will be here", "adults can be helpers"... may motivate even the most difficult students to ameliorate their conduct in the school since teachers' support and care give them a feeling of protection and comfort (Hamre & Pianta, 2006). Acknowledging and reinforcing positive behaviors, rather than criticizing and correcting misbehaviors in public, could be another way to ameliorate the quality of teacher-student relationship. Finally, regular teacher-parent meetings are recommended to make parents become more involved in their children's development.

2. School leaders must prioritize embedding conflict management in the school culture to support organizational learning. Although civic education is incorporated into the Lebanese curriculum, the need for learning foundational skills in conflict resolution still emerges. For example, effective dialogue, active listening, respect for diversity, negotiation and mediation procedures can be taught through theater, as alternatives to rote learning in civic education, and they become more relevant and meaningful.
3. Schools need to integrate conflict management programs in their systems. Implementing such programs school wide demonstrated improved academic and social outcomes for all students including students with behavioural and emotional needs. This involves creating a positive school atmosphere and training teachers and children on conflict resolution skills (D'Oosterlinck & Broekaert, 2003). First, to create a positive school atmosphere, all the staff in the school including administrators, principals, and librarians should learn and apply conflict resolution skills so that a peaceable milieu is nurtured. Conflict resolution education should be also incorporated in the school curriculum, in every subject matter and into the classroom management strategies. This can be accomplished by spending enough time to teach students the problem solving process by including its principles in every lesson, discussion, and activity they engage in and by modelling a positive behavior in class (Crawford & Bodine, 1996). Second, schools are encouraged to carry out continuous teachers' development and trainings in conflict resolution skills to help them become more creative in defining the problem and making decision. Third, it is of great importance to adopt programs that educate students to resolve conflicts constructively and to develop positive social skills. For example, "Teaching Students to be Peacemakers" is a program that has been introduced in schools by Johnson and Johnson since 1960, which focuses on conflict resolution and peer mediation trainings

for students. Its implementation in several schools throughout North America, Central and South America, Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa, from kindergarten through grade nine classes, demonstrated its effectiveness in teaching students problem solving procedures inside and outside the school context (Johnson & Johnson, 2002).

4. An important facet in elaborating a school based conflict management model includes proactive reactions and early interventions to the most difficult situations in a professional manner before conflict escalates (Barmo, 2013). Engaging males in class activities should become a high concern for teachers; planning lessons that include team work and competitive games may reduce students' misbehaviors.
5. Trainings in conflict management are highly recommended for elementary teachers. It is acknowledged that the way people react to conflict greatly affects organizational outcomes (Boucher, 2013; Rahim, 2001; Thomas, 1976, 1992). Unfortunately, nowadays, special emphasis in our schools is directed toward students' performance, and little attention is given to trainings in conflict management. My findings suggest that 82.7 % of elementary teachers hadn't attended seminars pertaining to conflicts in schools. Hence, teachers must be prepared for handling crisis, and schools should implement therapeutic policies (D'Oosterlinck & Broekaert, 2003). Through workshops and trainings, teachers will get to know the various strategies, understand the usefulness of each one and select the most suitable one in a given situation. Based on his broad research in organizational behavior, Rahim (2002) recommended three criteria for effective conflict management. First, good conflict management strategies intend to enhance creative and innovative ways of thinking, to teach people how to identify the roots of the problem and to intervene adequately in a conflict. Second, conflict management approaches should be implemented in a way that satisfies the

needs of all stakeholders. Third, and most importantly, the leader responsible for handling conflicts should communicate and act ethically. Eventually, conflict resolution practices may reduce individuals' stress and worries and increase their awareness (Nan, 2011). Therefore, our public schools are urged to extend teachers' knowledge and skills in conflict management and to enhance teachers' development in several social domains so that a well-managed conflict school becomes a catalyst for change.

Finally, effective implementation of conflict resolution programs requires developing a set of social skills, attitudes, and behaviors including anger management skills, and communication skills (Crawford & Bodine, 1996). They need to be practiced early in preschool and middle schools in order to affect children's social development and to promote peace-making behaviors among the young generations. In addition, they contribute to changing the school into a positive conflict organization and create a safe environment that reflects trust, fairness, empathy, caring, and acceptance of others (D'Oosterlinck, & Broekaert, 2003; Crawford Bodine, 1996). Accordingly, it's recommended that all pre-service teachers take at least one course pertaining to conflict resolution before practicing their careers.

6. In addition, we advocate the application of collaborating mode in handling conflicts. The collaboration style or the problem-solving style is conceived as the most efficient approach since it may involve a long-term solution. In addition, it helps in resolving issues on the micro and macro levels and undergoes a positive shift in the organization (Rahim, 2002). Studies also showed that individuals who master the use of this style increase their self-esteem and their self-confidence (Kiuri, 2009).

To conclude, the results of this study underscore the importance of analyzing conflicts in different situations, and recognizing the suitable conflict management style in order to retain a high teacher-student quality which in turn promotes students' success in educational settings.



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**Appendix A**

## Letter to Elementary Teachers

Dear Teacher,

The aim of this research is to determine the influence of conflict management style of teachers on the quality of teacher-student relationship in several schools in the North of Lebanon.

You are kindly invited to participate in this study. You are asked to complete two questionnaires, which should take around 30-40 minutes. You may take them home and return them back in few days.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Make sure that all of the responses in the survey will be recorded anonymously.

The success of this study depends on your participation and cooperation.

Thank you in advance.

## Appendix B

## THOMAS-KILMANN CONFLICT MODE QUESTIONNAIRE

Consider situations in which you find your wishes differing from those of another person. How do you usually respond to such situations?

On the following pages are several pairs of statements describing possible behavioural responses.

For each pair, please circle the "A" or "B" statement which is most characteristic of your own behaviour. In many cases, neither the "A" nor the "B" statement may be very typical of your behaviour, but please select the response which you would be more likely to use.

When done answering, transfer your answers to the scoring sheet on the last page, and sum each of the columns.

كيف تتعاطى مع الآخرين في المواقف التي تختلف فيها رغباتك عن رغباتهم؟  
فيما يلي، عبارات تصف ردود فعل مسلكية ممكنة.  
اختر العبارة التي تعكس أداءك الشخصي في هكذا وضع.  
في حال لم تعبر أي من العبارتين عن أدائك، الرجاء اختيار الجواب الأقرب إليك.

1. A. There are times when I let others take responsibility for solving the problem.  
في أحيان عديدة أترك المسؤولية للآخرين لحل المشاكل.
- B. Rather than negotiate the things on which we disagree, I try to stress those things upon which we both agree.  
عوضاً عن مناقشة الأمور التي لا نتوافق عليها أشدد على الأمور الأخرى التي نتوافق عليها معاً.
2. A. I try to find a compromise solution.  
أحاول أن أجد تسوية.
- B. I attempt to deal with all of another's and my concerns.  
أحاول التعامل مع ما يهمني وبهم الآخرين.
3. A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.  
أنا عادةً حازم في العمل على تحقيق أهدافي.
- B. I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationship.  
قد أحاول مراعاة مشاعر الآخر والمحافظة على علاقتنا.
4. A. I try to find a compromise solution.  
4-أحاول أن أجد تسوية.
- B. I sometimes sacrifice my own wishes for the wishes of the other person.  
أحياناً أضحي برغباتي من أجل رغبات الآخرين.
5. A. I consistently seek the other's help in working out a solution.  
دائماً أسعى إلى التعاون مع الآخر للوصول إلى حل.
- B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.

أحاول القيام بما هو ضروري لتجنب تشنجات غير مجدية.

6. A. I try to avoid creating unpleasantness for myself.  
أحاول أن أتفادى إزعاج نفسي.  
B. I try to win my position.  
أحاول إثبات موقعي.
7. A. I try to postpone the issue until I have had some time to think about it.  
أحاول تأجيل النقاش في الموضوع حتى يتاح لي الوقت للتفكير في المعطيات.  
B. I give up some points in exchange for others.  
أتخلى عن بعض الأفكار مقابل أفكار الآخرين.
8. A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.  
أنا عادةً حازم في العمل على تحقيق أهدافي.  
B. I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.  
أحاول مناقشة كل الأمور مباشرةً.
9. A. I feel that differences are not always worrying about.  
أشعر أن الاختلاف ليس سبباً للقلق.  
B. I make some effort to get my way.  
أضع بعض المجهود لتحقيق غايتي.
10. A. I am firm in pursuing my goals.  
أنا عادةً حازم في العمل على تحقيق أهدافي.  
B. I try to find a compromise solution.  
أحاول أن أجد تسوية.
11. A. I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.  
أحاول مناقشة كل الأمور مباشرةً.  
B. I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationship.  
قد أحاول مراعاة مشاعر الآخر والمحافظة على علاقتنا.
12. A. I sometimes avoid taking positions which would create controversy.  
أحياناً أتفادى اتخاذ المواقف التي قد تؤدي إلى خلق نزاع.  
B. I will let another have some of their positions if they let me have some of mine.  
أسمح للآخرين بالمحافظة على بعض مواقفهم إذا سمحوا لي بالمحافظة على بعض مواقفي.
13. A. I propose middle ground.  
أقترح حلاً وسطياً.  
B. I press to get my points made.  
أضغط على الآخرين لتحقيق أهدافي.
14. A. I tell another my ideas and ask them for theirs.  
أطلع الآخرين على أفكاري وأسألهم عن أفكارهم.  
B. I try to show him the logic and benefits of my position.  
أحاول أن أظهر المنطق والحسنات المتأتية عن موقعي.

15. A. I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationship.  
أحاول مراعاة مشاعر الآخر والمحافظة على علاقتنا.  
B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid tension.  
أحاول القيام بما هو ضروري لتجنب تشنجات غير مجدية.
16. A. I try not to hurt the other's feelings.  
أحاول عدم جرح مشاعر الآخرين.  
B. I try to convince the other person of the merits of my position.  
أحاول إقناع الآخر بمنافع (حسنات) موقفي.
17. A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.  
أنا عادةً حازم في العمل على تحقيق أهدافي.  
B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.  
أحاول القيام بما هو ضروري لتجنب تشنجات غير مجدية.
18. A. If it makes the other person happy, I might let them maintain their views.  
أسمح للآخرين بالإبقاء على وجهة نظرهم إذا كان ذلك يسعدهم.  
B. I will let the other person have some of their positions if they let me have some of mine.  
أسمح للآخرين بالمحافظة على بعض مواقفهم إذا سمحوا لي بالمحافظة على بعض مواقفي.
19. A. I try to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.  
أحاول مناقشة كل الأمور مباشرةً.  
B. I try to postpone the issue until I have had some time to think it over.  
أحاول تأجيل النقاش في الموضوع حتى يتاح لي الوقت للتفكير في المعطيات.
20. A. I attempt to immediately work through our differences.  
أحاول أن أجد حلاً سريعاً لخلافاتنا.  
B. I try to find a fair combination of gains and losses for both of us.  
أحاول أن أجد حلاً منصفاً لكليتنا.
21. A. In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person's feelings.  
عند التفاوض، أحاول أخذ مشاعر الآخر بعين الاعتبار.  
B. I always lean toward a direct discussion of the problem.  
دائماً أحبذ مناقشة مباشرة للمشكلة.
22. A. I try to find a position that is intermediate between mine and another person's.  
أحاول أن أجد حلاً وسطياً بيني وبين الآخر.  
B. I assert my wishes.  
أشدد على رغباتي.
23. A. I am often concerned with satisfying all my wishes.  
غالباً ما أسعى لتحقيق كل رغباتي.  
B. There are times when I let others take responsibility for solving problems.  
في أحيان عديدة أترك المسؤولية للآخرين لحل المشاكل.
24. A. If the other's position seems important to them, I would try to meet their wishes.  
إذا كانت مواقف الآخرين مهمة لهم، قد أحاول التجاوب مع رغباتهم.  
B. I try to get the other person to settle for a compromise.



أحاول إقناع الآخر بقبول التسوية.

25. A. I try to show the other person the logic and benefits of my position.  
أحاول أن أظهر المنطق والحسنات المتأتية عن موقعي.  
B. In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person's wishes.  
عند التفاوض، أحاول أخذ مشاعر الآخر بعين الاعتبار.
26. A. I propose a middle ground.  
أقترح حلاً وسطياً.  
B. I am nearly always concerned with satisfying all my wishes.  
غالباً ما أسعى إلى تحقيق كل رغباتي.
27. A. I sometimes avoid taking positions that would create controversy.  
أحياناً أتفادى اتخاذ المواقف التي قد تؤدي إلى خلق نزاع.  
B. If it makes the other person happy, I might let them maintain their views.  
أسمح للآخرين بالإبقاء على وجهة نظرهم إذا كان ذلك يسعدهم.
28. A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.  
أنا عادةً حازم في العمل على تحقيق أهدافي.  
B. I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.  
أشعر أن الاختلاف ليس سبباً للقلق.
29. A. I propose middle ground.  
أقترح حلاً وسطياً.  
B. I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.  
أشعر أن الاختلاف ليس سبباً للقلق.
30. A. I try not to hurt the other person's feelings.  
أحاول عدم جرح مشاعر الآخرين.  
B. I always share the problem with the other person so that we can work it out.  
دائماً أشاطر الرأي مع الآخر للوصول إلى حل المشكلة.

**Scoring TKI**  
**SCORING INTERPERSONAL STYLES OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**

Circle the letters below which you circled on each item of the questionnaire.

	Competing (forcing)	Collaborating (problem solving)	Compromising (sharing)	Avoiding (withdrawal)	Accommodating (smoothing)
1.				A	B
2.		B	A		
3.	A				B
4.			A		B
5.		A		B	
6.	B			A	
7.			B	A	
8.	A	B			
9.	B			A	
10.	A		B		
11.		A			B
12.			B	A	
13.	B		A		
14.	B	A			
15.				B	A
16.	B				A
17.	A			B	
18.			B		A
19.		A		B	
20.		A	B		
21.		B			A
22.	B		A		
23.		A		B	
24.			B		A
25.	A				B
26.		B	A		
27.				A	B
28.	A	B			
29.			A	B	
30.		B			A
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>TOTAL:</b>

The largest number is your most probable reaction to conflict situations.

## Appendix C

## STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP SCALE – SHORT FORM

Robert C. Pianta

Teacher's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Please reflect on the degree to which each of the following statements currently applies to your relationship with a particular child in your class. Using the scale below, circle the appropriate number for each item.

Definitely does not apply 1	Not really 2	Neutral, not sure 3	Applies somewhat 4	Definitely applies 5
-----------------------------------	--------------------	---------------------------	--------------------------	----------------------------

اسم المدرس: \_\_\_\_\_

اسم الولد: \_\_\_\_\_ الجنس: \_\_\_\_\_ الصف: \_\_\_\_\_

إلى أي درجة تتطبق كل من العبارات التالية مع ولد معين في صفك:

اختر الإجابة بحسب المعيار المدرج أدناه:

1- لا ينطبق إطلاقاً.	2- ليس فعلاً.	3- محايد، ليس متأكد.	4- ينطبق إلى حد ما.	5- بالتأكيد ينطبق.
----------------------	---------------	----------------------	---------------------	--------------------

1.	I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child. أبادل هذا الولد علاقة ملوفا والدفء.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	This child and I always seem to be struggling with each other. نبدو أنا وهذا الولد في حالة صراع مستمر.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	If upset, this child will seek comfort from me. عندما يشعر هذا الولد بالإنزعاج، يسعى إليّ لمواساته.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	This child is uncomfortable with physical affection or touch from me. لا يشعر هذا الولد بالارتياح إذا أظهرت له عاطفة حسية أو لامسته.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	This child values his/her relationship with me. هذا الولد يقدر علاقتنا.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	When I praise this child, he/she beams with pride. عندما أمدح هذا الولد يشعر بالفخر.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	This child spontaneously shares information about himself/herself. هذا الولد يطلعني على أموره الخاصة بشكل عفوي.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	This child easily becomes angry with me. هذا الولد يغضب مني بسرعة.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	It is easy to be in tune with what this child is feeling. يسهل عليّ أن أفهم مشاعر هذا الولد.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	This child remains angry or is resistant after being disciplined. يبقى هذا الولد بحالة غضب ورفض بعد تأنيبه.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Dealing with this child drains my energy. التعامل مع هذا الولد يستنفذ قواي.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	When this child is in a bad mood, I know we're in for a long and difficult day. عندما يكون مزاج هذا الولد سيئاً أعلم أننا سنقضي يوماً طويلاً وشاقاً.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	This child's feelings toward me can be unpredictable or can change suddenly. إن أحاسيس هذا الولد تجاهي لا يمكن توقعها أو قد تتغير بسرعة.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	This child is sneaky or manipulative with me. هذا الولد يتعامل معي بوجهين ويحاول المناورة.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	This child openly shares his/her feelings and experiences with me. هذا الولد يشاطرنني أحاسيسه وتجاربه في العلن.	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring Guide for STRS-SF

**SECTION A. Teacher/Care Provider Relationship With the Child**

Below is a series of statements about your relationship with this child. For each statement, please circle the number of the category that most applies to your relationship with him/her.

	Definitely Does Not Apply	Not Really	Neutral, Not Sure	Applies Sometimes	Definitely Applies
1. I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child .....	CL 1	2	3	4	5
2. This child and I always seem to be struggling with each other.....	CO 1	2	3	4	5
3. If upset, this child will seek comfort from me.....	CL 1	2	3	4	5
4. This child is uncomfortable with physical affection or touch from me.....	CO 1	2	3	4	5
5. This child values his/her relationship with me .....	CL 1	2	3	4	5
6. When I praise this child, he/she beams with pride .....	CL 1	2	3	4	5
7. This child spontaneously shares information about himself/herself .....	CL 1	2	3	4	5
8. This child easily becomes angry at me.....	CO 1	2	3	4	5
9. It is easy to be in tune with what this child is feeling .....	CL 1	2	3	4	5
10. This child remains angry or is resistant after being disciplined .....	CO 1	2	3	4	5
11. Dealing with this child drains my energy.....	CO 1	2	3	4	5
12. When this child is in a bad mood, I know we're in for a long and difficult day .....	CO 1	2	3	4	5
13. This child's feelings toward me can be unpredictable or can change suddenly.....	CO 1	2	3	4	5
14. This child is sneaky or manipulative with me .....	CO 1	2	3	4	5
15. This child openly shares his/her feelings and experiences with me.....	CL 1	2	3	4	5

CL = CLOSENESS  
 CO = CONFLICT

**Appendix D****Conflict Management Style and Teacher-Student Relationship Interview****I- Section A : Demographic Information:**

- 1- Indicate your gender: Male /Female
- 2- Indicate your age:
  - a- 20-30
  - b- 31-40
  - c- 41-50
  - d- >50
- 3- How many years of experience you have?
  - a- <10
  - b- 11-20
  - c- 21-30
  - d- 31-40
  - e- >40
- 4- What is your highest academic degree?
  - a- < BA ( Bac II or equivalent)
  - b- BA or BS
  - c- > BA or BS (Master or other)

**II- Section B : About Conflit :**

- 5- Have you ever had conflict in your class? Yes/ No
- 6- How do you perceive conflict in school in general?

-----  
-----

- 7- What kind of conflicts have you experienced in your class?

-----  
-----

8- Who usually causes conflicts in the class?

-----

9- What are the various approaches adopted in your class to resolve conflicts?  
What are the outcomes?

-----  
-----  
-----  
-----

10- Are you satisfied with your conflict management style?

Yes, why? .....

No, why? .....

11- Have you ever attended a seminar or a conference or a course on Conflict Management Resolution? If the answer is "yes", please specify.

Yes -----

No -----

**III- Section C: About relationship with students:**

12- How do you perceive your relationship with your students in general?

Close/ conflict

13- How do you perceive you relationship with particular students?

a- Low achievers / High achievers -----

b- Boys/ Girls -----

c- Low SES / High SES -----

14- How do you think your relationship with children affect their life?

-----

15- Do you think your conflict management style has an impact on your relationship with students?

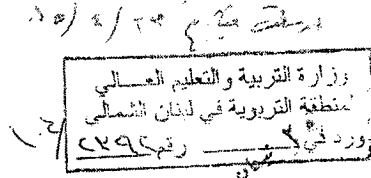
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## Appendix E

## Consent of the Ministry of Education



طرابلس، 17 نيسان، 2015



السيدة نهلا حاماتي نعمة، رئيس المنطقة التربوية في الشمال  
 المنطقة التربوية في الشمال  
 طرابلس- لبنان الشمالي  
 هاتف: 06626501

حضرة السيدة نهلا حاماتي،

تقوم السيدة ميرنا الكسي غندور، طالبة دراسات عليا في الإدارة التربوية في جامعة السيدة اللوزة، بتنفيذ بحث ميداني باشرافي يتناول البيئة المدرسية في عينة من مدارس القطاع الرسمي ودور الإصلاح التربوي في هدف تطويرها. تستند عملية جمع البيانات الى منهجية دراسة حالة تقوم على اجراء المقابلات مع عينة من المدرسين ومدراء المدارس. وتشمل عملية جمع المعلومات والبيانات المتعلقة بالدراسة المدارس التالية:

مدرسة بطرام- خليل سالم الرسمية، مدرسة نده الرسمية المختلطة، مدرسة كفر حزير الرسمية المختلطة ومدرسة ضهر العين الرسمية المختلطة.

هدف هذه الدراسة تبيان اسلوب الاساتذة في حل المشاكل وتأثيرها على العلاقة بين التلميذ والاساتذ.

التمس من مساعدتكم اعطاء الطالبة ميرنا الكسي غندور اذنا يخولها زيارة المدارس التي تشملها العينة واجراء بحثها الميداني فيها. وأتعهد بالتزام الطالبة ميرنا الكسي غندور ببروتوكول وأخلاقيات البحث الميداني لجهة السرية مع استعادتها لوضع نتائج بحثها بتصرف الوزارة.

مع فائق التقدير والاحترام

١٠٤/٢٠١٥

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