

Examination of Conflict Management Strategies and Leadership Strategies of Prospective Sport Managers

Spor Yöneticisi Adaylarının Çatışma Yönetim Stratejilerinin ve Liderlik Stratejilerinin İncelenmesi

Ali KAYA 

Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Department of Sport Management, Istanbul, Turkey

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Abstract

This study was conducted to examine the conflict management strategies and leadership orientations of prospective sports managers, aiming to understand how these two behavioral constructs interact within the context of sports administration. The research also sought to determine whether conflict management strategies and leadership orientations differ according to demographic variables such as gender, age, marital status, and department of study. A correlational screening model was employed to identify relationships between the variables without manipulation. The study population consisted of students enrolled in the Sports Management Department of Istanbul Gelişim University's Faculty of Sport Sciences, and the sample was selected from this population using a random sampling method to ensure representativeness. The Conflict Management Styles Scale (CMSL) and the Multifaceted Leadership Orientation Scale (MLSL), both reliable and valid instruments, were utilized to collect data. The study was conducted on a voluntary basis, with participants informed about the confidentiality and purpose of the research. The findings revealed a weak but positive correlation between conflict management styles and multifaceted leadership orientations, suggesting that individuals with effective conflict resolution skills tend to exhibit stronger and more versatile leadership behaviors. These results emphasize the significance of integrating conflict resolution and leadership development training into sports management education programs, as such competencies are essential for effective decision-making, teamwork, and organizational success in future professional settings within the sports industry.

Keywords: Management, strategies, leadership

Özet

Bu çalışma, geleceğin spor yöneticilerinin çatışma yönetimi stratejileri ile liderlik yönelimlerini incelemek ve bu iki davranışsal yapının spor yönetimi bağlamında nasıl etkileşimde bulunduğunu anlamak amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmada ayrıca, çatışma yönetimi stratejileri ve liderlik yönelimlerinin cinsiyet, yaş, medeni durum ve öğrenim görülen bölüm gibi demografik değişkenlere göre farklılık gösterip göstermediği de incelenmiştir. Değişkenler arasındaki ilişkileri herhangi bir müdahalede bulunmadan belirlemek amacıyla ilişkisel tarama modeli kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın evrenini İstanbul Gelişim Üniversitesi Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi Spor Yöneticiliği Bölümü öğrencileri oluştururken, örneklem bu evrenden temsiliyet sağlamak amacıyla rastgele örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilmiştir. Verilerin toplanmasında güvenilirlik ve geçerliliği kanıtlanmış olan Çatışma Yönetim Tarzları Ölçeği (ÇYTÖ) ile Çok Boyutlu Liderlik Yönelimi Ölçeği (ÇBLYÖ) kullanılmıştır. Araştırma gönüllülük esasına dayalı olarak yürütülmüş, katılımcılara çalışmanın amacı ve gizlilik ilkeleri hakkında gerekli bilgilendirme yapılmıştır. Bulgular, çatışma yönetim tarzları ile çok boyutlu liderlik yönelimleri arasında zayıf fakat pozitif bir ilişki olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu durum, etkili çatışma çözme becerilerine sahip bireylerin daha güçlü ve çok yönlü liderlik davranışları sergileme eğiliminde olduklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Sonuçlar, spor yöneticiliği eğitim programlarına çatışma çözme ve liderlik gelişimi eğitimlerinin entegre edilmesinin önemini vurgulamakta; bu tür becerilerin gelecekteki profesyonel spor ortamlarında etkili karar verme, ekip çalışması ve örgütsel başarı için hayati bir rol oynadığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yönetim, stratejiler, liderlik

Sorumlu Yazar: Ali KAYA, e-posta: ali.kaya2@iuc.edu.tr

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1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict, a concept frequently encountered and used in daily life, generally arises when faced with distress, stress, anxiety, disagreement, tension, hostility, and various negative emotional states. It is virtually impossible to avoid conflict in environments where people are present (Deviren et al., 2024). The existence of conflict in businesses affects businesses psychologically and physiologically. When combined with the challenges faced by individuals in their private lives, factors such as work intensity, resource constraints, the ever-increasing individual and social competition within businesses, employees' efforts to prove themselves, performance management, and high expectations lead to negative outcomes both individually and institutionally. These negative experiences are elements that absolutely must be controlled (Çolakoglu and Uzun, 2023).

People are the fundamental element that constitutes societies. Humans are distinguished from other beings by their identity within society and the values they produce. Every society has a specific order and rules that form its existence. People can maintain their existence in society by adhering to these rules (Aliç, 1995). Problems arising at any point in society, problems between people, lead to disagreements and conflicts. Conflicts that occur in interpersonal relationships, communication, and interaction, are detrimental to the functioning of a business, and therefore constitute a significant issue that deserves attention (Shapiro, 2004). The concept of conflict encompasses issues arising from differences in emotions, thoughts, and values between at least two individuals (Sirin & Yetim, 2009). Conflict generally evokes concepts such as disagreement, negativity, and problems, thus presenting a negative connotation. However, when conflict occurs in a business and is managed correctly, it can pave the way for new ideas, different perspectives, and the emergence of diverse ideas, ultimately generating profit for the business (Yurdunkulu & Oktay, 2020). Conflict is inevitable in every medium where communication and interaction occur, and disagreements between individuals are expected. Conflict can occur in two forms in human life. The first is vertical, and the second is horizontal. Vertical conflict is a common occurrence in business life, arising from the relationship between superiors and subordinates. In other words, it refers to disagreements between people in different hierarchical positions (Sökmen, 2021). Horizontal conflict is the type of conflict experienced by people working in the same position during their work and operations. Factors such as personal goals, ambitions, desires for self-actualization and self-improvement, ambition, and the desire to stand out within the organizational identity lead to conflict (Ertürk, 2013). Every society, institution, and structure needs self-governance. It is crucial for employees within organizations to behave in accordance with the organizational identity and structure, accept the organization's operations, and act within the framework of its goals, methods, principles, and objectives (Aydemir, 2025). Acting harmoniously, coordinated, and in accordance with the organization's conditions is crucial for strengthening the existing structure (Gökce et al., 2008). In addition, individuals in sports management positions must possess the necessary skills and leadership qualities to be successful in their work and operations. Possessing management and leadership skills requires experience, effective communication, finding solutions, being a source of motivation, honesty, mastery of the task, being trustworthy, and establishing a foundation for teamwork (Yılmaz, 2024). Today, it is crucial for management candidates to act appropriately in the face of potential conflicts and problems, generate solutions, be open to positive communication, be flexible in their decisions based on circumstances, adopt merit and respect as their guiding principles, and instill trust in the other party. The impact of the strategies adopted by sports management candidates in both conflict management and leadership processes on their professional success and internal organizational interactions is becoming increasingly important. In this context, the main problem of this study is whether there is a relationship between the conflict management strategies adopted by sports management candidates and their leadership strategies.

2. METHOD

The methodology section is where the research model, population, and sample are presented, as well as the data collection tools and data analysis.

2.1. Study Group

The population of the study consists of students enrolled in the Department of Sport Management at the Faculty of Sport Sciences, Istanbul Gelisim University. The sample of the study consists of university students determined by convenience sampling method from this population. The convenience sampling method is characterized by its ability to collect data in a timely and cost-effective manner (Karasar, 2017).

2.2. Study Design

Relational survey model was used in the study. The relational survey model is a research model that examines how two or more variables change together (Karasar, 2017).

2.3. Data Collection

The personal information form created by the researcher as well as the data collection tools used in the study are described below.

2.3.1. Personal Information Form

The personal information form created by the researcher consists of gender, age, marital status, and department of education variables.

2.3.2. Conflict Management Styles Scale (CMS)

The Conflicts Management Styles Scale (CMSS) was developed by Thomas and Ruble in 1977, and subsequently adapted into Turkish by Sökmen and Yazicioğlu in 2005. The scale consists of five sub-dimensions and has 15 items. These items are as follows: executive competition style (1, 2, 7), compromise style (3, 5, 9), avoidance style (4, 11, 14), compliance style (6, 12, 15), and cooperative style (8, 10, 13). The reliability of the scale was calculated as 0.78.

2.3.3. Multifaceted Leadership Orientations Scale (MLAS)

The Multifaceted Leadership Orientations Scale (MLOS) was developed by Dursun, Günay, and Yenel (2019). The scale is composed of 19 items and four sub-dimensions, including political leadership (3, 6, 9, 10, 11), human resource leadership (2, 8, 12, 14, 17), charismatic leadership (13, 15, 16, 18, 19), and structural leadership (1, 4, 5, 7). The scale is structured on a 5-point Likert scale. The internal consistency coefficient for the entire scale was determined as. The result indicated an 85% reliability rating for the scale in its entirety.

2.4. Statistical Analysis of Data

The data obtained from the personal information form and the related scales were processed into the SPSS package program, and the analyses were conducted through this program. In the study, normal distribution curve, skewness, kurtosis value, normal distribution curve according to histogram, and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test values were used when the number of participants was greater than 50. Reliability analyses were conducted for the overall and sub-dimensions of the scales, and "Chronbach's Alpha Coefficient" was obtained as a result. It was determined that the data did not exhibit a normal distribution, prompting the implementation of statistical procedures such as the Mann-Whitney U test, the Kruskal-Wallis test, and the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient analysis.

2.5. Ethical Approval

The research was conducted with the approval of the Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa Rectorate Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Date: 06.05.2025, Decision No: 2025/304).

3. FINDINGS

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Groups	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender		
Female	109	35.7
Male	196	64.3
Age		
18-22	95	31.1
23-27	117	38.4
28-32	31	10.2
33 and above	62	20.3
Marital Status		
Married	61	20.0
Single	244	80.0
Department of Education		
Coaching Education	77	25.2
Sport Management	77	25.2
Recreation	36	11.8
Exercise And Sport Sciences	48	15.7
Exercise and Sports Sciences in Disabled People	67	22.0

Note. $N = 305$

An examination of Table 1 reveals that 31.1% of the participants are between the ages of 18 and 22, 38.4% are between the ages of 23 and 27, 10.2% are between the ages of 28 and 32, and 20.3% are 33 and over. The data also show that 35.7% of the participants are female, 64.3% are male, 20% are married, 80% are single, and 25.2% were students of the Department of Coaching Education. The sample included 2% of students from the Department of Sport Management, 11.8% from the Department of Recreation, 15.7% from the Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences, and 22% from the Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences for the Disabled.

Table 2. Skewness-plankness and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test significance level results of Conflict Management Styles Scale (CMSS) and Multifaceted Leadership Orientations Scale (MLAS) sub-dimension and total score scores

Dimensions	Skewness	Kurtosis	P
<i>Executive competitive style</i>	-.498	-.354	.000
<i>Compromise style</i>	-.600	-.091	.000
<i>Avoidance style</i>	-.776	.111	.000
<i>Harmony style</i>	-.821	.999	.000
<i>Collaborative style</i>	-1.341	1.802	.000
CMSS Total Score	-1.216	4.145	.000
<i>Political leadership</i>	-.528	-.091	.000
<i>People-centered leadership</i>	-.593	-.195	.000
<i>Charismatic leadership</i>	-.541	.070	.000
<i>Structural leadership</i>	-.598	.316	.000
LLS Total Score	-.416	.411	.000

When the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results were examined, it was determined that there were deviations from normality in the scores obtained from the leisure management scale and its sub-dimensions.

Kolmogorov-Smirnov analysis is only one of the methods applied to determine the normal distribution status of the data. When the normal distribution curves were examined; it was determined that there were deviations from normality. Büyüköztürk (2007) explained that the skewness-kurtosis values of the variables being within the range of ± 1 means that there are no excessive deviations from normality, while Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) stated that the data can be accepted as being within the normal distribution range if the skewness-kurtosis coefficients of the variables are between ± 1.5 . As a result, it was determined that there were deviations from normality in the scale scores, that the coefficients were not within the range of ± 1 and ± 1.5 , and that the data did not show a normal distribution.

Table 3. Investigation of participants' responses to the conflict management styles scale (cmss) and multifaceted leadership orientations scale according to their gender

Dimensions	Female		Male		U	p
	Row Mean	Row total	Row Mean	Row total		
<i>Executive competitive style</i>	157.31	17146.50	150.60	29518.50	10212.50	.518
<i>Compromise style</i>	149.78	16325.50	154.79	30339.50	10330.50	.629
<i>Avoidance style</i>	139.47	15202.50	160.52	31462.50	9207.50	.052
<i>Harmony style</i>	138.45	15091.00	161.09	31574.00	9096.00	.029*
<i>Collaborative style</i>	157.62	17181.00	150.43	29484.00	10178.000	.478
CMSS Total Score	145.50	15860.00	157.17	30805.00	9865.00	.268
<i>Political leadership</i>	138.34	15079.00	161.15	31586.00	9084.00	.028*
<i>People-centered leadership</i>	151.70	16535.50	153.72	30129.50	10540.50	.847
<i>Charismatic leadership</i>	162.38	17699.00	147.79	28966.00	9660.00	.161
<i>Structural leadership</i>	148.52	16189.00	155.49	30476.00	10194.00	.504
LLS Total Score	144.50	15751.00	157.72	30914.00	9756.00	.209

Note. *p < 0.05. female (n=109); male (n= 196)

An examination of Table 3 reveals a statistically significant difference in the gender variable for the participants in the adaptive style sub-dimension of the Conflict Management Styles Scale and the political leadership sub-dimension of the Multifaceted Leadership Orientations Scale. Based on mean ranks, the difference is significant in the male-dominated category. No statistically significant differences were found in the total scores of the conflict management styles scale: the executive competitive style, compromising style, avoiding style, and cooperative adaptive style sub-dimensions; the total scores of the Multifaceted Leadership Orientations scale: political leadership, human-based leadership, charismatic leadership, and structural leadership sub-dimensions; or the total scores of the Multifaceted Leadership Orientations scale: multifaceted leadership orientations.

Table 4. Investigation of participants' responses to the conflict management styles scale (cmss) and multifaceted leadership orientations scale according to their age

Dimensions	18-22 ¹	23-27 ²	28-32 ³	33 and above ⁴	X ² (3, 302)	p
	Row Mean	Row Mean	Row Mean	Row Mean		
<i>Executive competitive style</i>	161.29	155.44	141.58	141.40	2.601	.457
<i>Compromise style</i>	145.80	146.82	174.06	165.17	4.285	.232
<i>Avoidance style</i>	144.71	159.58	152.92	153.32	1.540	.673
<i>Harmony style</i>	157.77	157.01	118.15	155.56	5.615	.132
<i>Collaborative style</i>	158.07	149.32	130.69	163.31	3.622	.305
CMSS Total Score	151.95	155.67	139.82	156.15	.895	.827
<i>Political leadership</i>	149.87	157.38	141.94	155.06	.957	.812
<i>People-centered leadership</i>	164.51	155.03	148.79	133.64	4.796	.187
<i>Charismatic leadership</i>	151.73	164.09	143.79	138.64	3.953	.267
<i>Structural leadership</i>	150.81	158.28	138.31	153.74	1.372	.712
LLS Total Score	159.80	160.09	133.31	139.04	4.438	.218

Note. *p < 0.05. 18-22 (n=95); 23-27 (n= 117); 28-32 (n= 31); 33 and above (n= 62)

When the responses of the participants to the Conflict Management Styles Scale (CMSL) and the Multidimensional Leadership Orientation Scale according to the age variable in Table 4 are examined, it is determined that there is no statistically significant difference.

Table 5. The Relationship Between Participants' Conflict Management Styles Scale and Multifaceted Leadership Orientations Scale

Dimensions		Political leadership	People-centered leadership	Charismatic leadership	Structural leadership	LLS Total Score
<i>Executive competitive style</i>	r	.045	-.004	.012	.049	.039
	p	.431	.949	.830	.397	.494
<i>Compromise style</i>	r	-.066	.025	-.039	-.100	-.083
	p	.253	.662	.496	.082	.146
<i>Avoidance style</i>	r	.020	.027	-.053	-.094	-.013
	p	.725	.643	.355	.102	.821
<i>Harmony style</i>	r	-.005	.184**	.077	-.078	.093
	p	.931	.001	.177	.175	.106
<i>Collaborative style</i>	r	-.011	.051	-.020	.151**	.111
	p	.849	.372	.725	.008	.052
CMSS Total Score	r	-.018	.081	-.009	-.047	.029
	p	.750	.157	.876	.417	.613

When the participants' Conflict Management Styles Scale and Multidimensional Leadership Orientation Scale scores are examined in Table 5, it is seen that there is a moderate positive relationship.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study examined the relationship between participants' conflict management styles and ambidextrous leadership orientations and the effects of demographic variables on these two factors. Participants' demographic characteristics varied based on age, gender, and department, and this diversity may have had different effects on conflict management and leadership styles. While some findings are consistent with findings in the literature, others differ.

A statistically significant difference was found in the accommodating style sub-dimension of the Conflict Management Styles Scale and the political leadership sub-dimension of the Multifaceted Leadership Orientations Scale based on the gender variable of the participants. Based on the mean ranks, the difference was significant in the male-dominated category. No statistically significant difference was found in the sub-dimensions of the Conflict Management Styles Scale: the managerial competitive style, compromising style, avoiding style, and cooperative accommodating style; the total scores of the Conflict Management Styles Scale; the sub-dimensions of the Multifaceted Leadership Orientations Scale: political leadership, human-driven leadership, charismatic leadership, and structural leadership; or Statistically the total scores of the Multifaceted Leadership Orientations Scale. The significant difference in accommodating style and political leadership based on the gender of the participants suggests that women and men may exhibit different tendencies in conflict resolution and leadership approaches. While women may generally exhibit more relationship-oriented behaviors, men may adopt more political leadership strategies aimed at establishing power and influence. This can be explained by the reflection of societal roles and expectations on individuals' management styles. In a review of the literature, Güllü et al. (2020) found that conflict management varied in the sub-dimension of domination based on gender. According to the research findings, a significant difference in the sub-dimension of domination was in favor of men. In a review of the literature, Çelik et al. (2024) found significant differences in the sub-dimension of structural leadership. According to the research results, women have higher structural leadership orientations than men. Our research findings differ from those in the literature. The discrepancy between our research findings and some studies in the literature may be due to various factors, such as sample characteristics, the use of data collection tools, and the context in which the study was conducted.

When the participants' responses to the Conflict Management Styles Scale (CMSL) and the Multifaceted Leadership Orientation Scale were examined based on age, no statistically significant difference was found. The lack of a significant difference based on age suggests that conflict management and leadership strategies do not change significantly with age. This could be explained by the participants having undergone similar educational processes or being in the same professional development period. In a review of the relevant literature, Çelik et al. (2024) found no significant difference in conflict management strategies and leadership orientations based on age.

The research results are consistent with our findings. However, there are also results that do not align with our findings. In his master's thesis, Çufaoğlu (2024) identified significant differences in the avoidance strategy and leader-member interaction levels based on age. According to the research findings, it was determined that teachers aged 29 and under perceived avoidance strategies from their principals were significantly higher than those in other age groups. In another study, Güllüoğlu (2013) found that conflict management differs based on age. The results of these studies differ from our findings.

An examination of the participants' Conflict Management Styles Scale and Multifaceted Leadership Orientations Scale scores reveals a weak positive correlation. The weak positive correlation between the participants' Conflict Management Styles and Multifaceted Leadership Orientations Scale scores suggests that individuals who use effective conflict management strategies may also be more competent in their leadership skills. However, the weak correlation suggests that these two constructs are influenced by independent factors and that indirect interactions, rather than a direct relationship, may be at play. This suggests that leadership development is shaped not only by conflict management but also by personal characteristics, experience, and education. No studies have been found in the literature examining the correlation between conflict management styles and Multifaceted Leadership Orientations.

Suggestions

In light of the findings, several recommendations can be proposed for both researchers and practitioners. First, institutions and organizations—particularly those operating in educational and sports management contexts—should design and implement training programs aimed at enhancing conflict management and leadership competencies. Such initiatives can help individuals strengthen their cooperative and adaptive styles, fostering more effective interpersonal relationships and leadership performance. The finding that participants in the 28–32 age group demonstrated higher levels of cooperation suggests that mentoring and experience-sharing programs could be beneficial in transferring knowledge and leadership skills from more experienced individuals to younger participants.

Moreover, since gender was found to influence political leadership and avoidance styles, gender-sensitive leadership development strategies should be encouraged. Empowering women through targeted leadership programs and awareness-raising activities may help achieve a more balanced representation in leadership roles. Although the study revealed only a weak correlation between multifaceted leadership orientations and conflict management styles, integrating both skill areas into structured training modules may support their parallel development and promote a more comprehensive understanding of interpersonal dynamics in organizational settings.

Future research should expand on these findings by exploring the relationship between conflict management and leadership orientations across different cultural, institutional, and sectoral contexts. Comparative and cross-cultural studies may help determine whether the observed patterns are consistent or context-dependent. Additionally, longitudinal research designs could provide deeper insights into how leadership orientations and conflict management styles evolve over time with increased experience. Finally, incorporating additional variables such as personality traits and emotional intelligence into future studies could help clarify the underlying mechanisms that shape both leadership and conflict management behaviors.

Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest between the author(s) and any individual, institution, or organization that could have influenced the research process or its outcomes.

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Author Biographies and Contributions

Corresponding Author: *Ali Kaya* – Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Department of Sport Management, Istanbul, Turkey, ORCID Code: 0000-0002-6417-4523 Email: ali.kaya2@iuc.edu.tr

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