



Conflict Management Strategies Among Nurses in Hospitals: A Systematic Literature Review

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Article Info

Article history:

Received: July 10, 2026

Revised: July 27, 2026

Accepted: August 14, 2026

Keywords:

Conflict Management;
Hospitals;
Nurses;
Strategy;
Systematic Literature Review.

Abstract

Background: Conflict is an inevitable phenomenon in hospital settings due to the complexity of healthcare services, high workloads, and interprofessional interactions. Effective conflict management strategies are essential to maintain a positive work environment, improve nursing performance, and ensure quality patient care.

Aims: This study aimed to identify and analyze conflict management strategies used by nurses in hospital settings based on current scientific evidence.

Methods: A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was conducted following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. Literature was searched through Dimensions AI, PubMed, and Google Scholar for articles published between 2020 and 2026. After the screening and eligibility process, 19 original research articles were included and analyzed using descriptive synthesis.

Result: The review found that collaborating was the most frequently applied conflict management strategy, followed by compromising, accommodating, avoiding, and competing. Strategy selection was influenced by emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, communication skills, moral competence, work experience, and organizational culture. Collaborative strategies were consistently associated with improved teamwork, conflict resolution, and nursing performance.

Conclusion: Collaborative conflict management is the predominant strategy used by nurses in hospitals. Strengthening communication, leadership, and interpersonal competencies can enhance nurses' ability to manage workplace conflicts effectively and improve the quality of nursing care.

To cite this article: Renata, D., Takwim, A., Nurbaya, B. S., Wulandari, A. E., Angraeni, F. D., Pambudi, F. D. B., Putri, E. (2026). Conflict Management Strategies Among Nurses in Hospitals: A Systematic Literature Review. *Journal of Nursing Management Innovations*, 2(2), 50–67. <https://doi.org/10.58723/jnmi.v2i2.144>

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INTRODUCTION

Conflict management refers to the process of recognizing, addressing, and resolving workplace conflicts through appropriate strategies to achieve constructive outcomes. It is recognized as one of the essential leadership competencies in nursing because it directly influences teamwork effectiveness, communication quality, staff retention, organizational commitment, and patient safety. Nurse managers are therefore expected to possess adequate conflict resolution competencies to create a positive work environment and improve healthcare outcomes (González-García et al., 2025). As healthcare systems become increasingly complex, hospitals are also challenged by workforce shortages, heavy workloads, and growing nurse turnover, all of which intensify workplace conflict and threaten the continuity and quality of nursing care (Van Kraaij et al., 2025; Resubun et al., 2025).

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Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping how workplace conflicts are managed within hospital settings. Evidence suggests that ineffective leadership, particularly toxic leadership, encourages confrontational and less collaborative conflict management styles. Such leadership behaviors may reduce nurses' organizational commitment, weaken interpersonal relationships, and contribute to an unhealthy work environment. Conversely, supportive and ethical leadership promotes open communication, collaboration, and constructive conflict resolution, ultimately enhancing nursing performance and organizational effectiveness ([Tsapnidou et al., 2025](#)). Contemporary nursing management further emphasizes the importance of shared governance and relational leadership in managing workplace conflict. Shared governance encourages nurses to actively participate in organizational decision-making, whereas relational leadership fosters mutual trust, respect, and effective communication among healthcare professionals ([Inácio et al., 2025](#)). Rather than viewing conflict solely as a disruptive event, these leadership approaches enable healthcare organizations to transform disagreements into opportunities for strengthening teamwork, enhancing organizational performance, and promoting innovation. Constructive conflict resolution also contributes to the establishment of a Healthy Work Environment (HWE), which supports psychological safety, professional collaboration, staff well-being, and improved quality of patient care ([Inácio et al., 2025](#)). Furthermore, supportive work environments strengthen teamwork, improve patient-centered care, reduce patient safety incidents, and contribute to nurse retention ([Kim & Ko, 2025](#); [Cho & Steege, 2025](#); [Trisnadewi & Rosa, 2026](#)).

The Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) and Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) are the most commonly used frameworks for identifying conflict management strategies. These frameworks describe five major strategies: collaborating, compromising, accommodating, avoiding, and competing. Previous studies have shown that collaborative and compromising strategies are generally associated with improved teamwork, communication, leadership effectiveness, and nursing performance, whereas avoiding and competing strategies tend to be applied in specific situations depending on organizational and interpersonal contexts. Recent evidence further suggests that effective conflict management among nurses requires not only the appropriate selection of conflict resolution strategies but also strong leadership, communication skills, and emotional intelligence. A recent systematic review emphasized that collaborative conflict management contributes to better teamwork, improved patient safety, and stronger organizational commitment, whereas ineffective conflict management is associated with burnout, workplace stress, and reduced quality of care ([Nikitara et al., 2024](#)).

At the global level, the World Health Organization ([World Health Organization, 2020](#)) and the International Council of Nurse ([International Council of Nurses, 2021](#)) emphasize that strengthening the nursing workforce requires supportive leadership, healthy work environments, effective communication, and active nurse involvement in organizational decision-making. These strategies are essential for improving teamwork, patient safety, and workforce retention while ensuring sustainable, high-quality healthcare delivery. The ICN further highlights the importance of fostering mutual respect, interdisciplinary collaboration, and nurse participation in leadership and policy development to create supportive work environments and resilient healthcare systems. These global recommendations reinforce the need to strengthen nurses' conflict management competencies as a key strategy for improving organizational effectiveness and healthcare quality.

Although numerous studies have investigated conflict management among nurses, most have focused on specific determinants such as emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, communication skills, moral competence, or organizational culture. Existing evidence is dispersed across different healthcare settings and countries, making it difficult to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the conflict management strategies most commonly used by nurses. Furthermore, an updated synthesis of original research published during 2020–2026 remains limited.

A comprehensive synthesis of recent evidence is needed to identify the predominant conflict management strategies used by nurses and the factors influencing their implementation. The findings of this review are expected to provide evidence-based recommendations for nurse managers, hospital administrators, educators, and policymakers to strengthen nurses' competencies in conflict management and improve the quality of nursing services.

This systematic literature review aimed to identify and analyze conflict management strategies used by nurses in hospital settings and to summarize the factors influencing the implementation of these strategies based on original research published between 2020 and 2026.

METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines ([Page et al., 2021](#)). A systematic literature review was considered appropriate because it enables the identification, evaluation, and synthesis of existing evidence regarding conflict management strategies among nurses in hospital settings ([Aromateris & Mun, 2021](#)).

The studies included in this review were original research articles investigating conflict management strategies among nurses working in hospital settings. A total of 19 original research articles published between 2020 and 2026 met the inclusion criteria and were included in the final analysis.

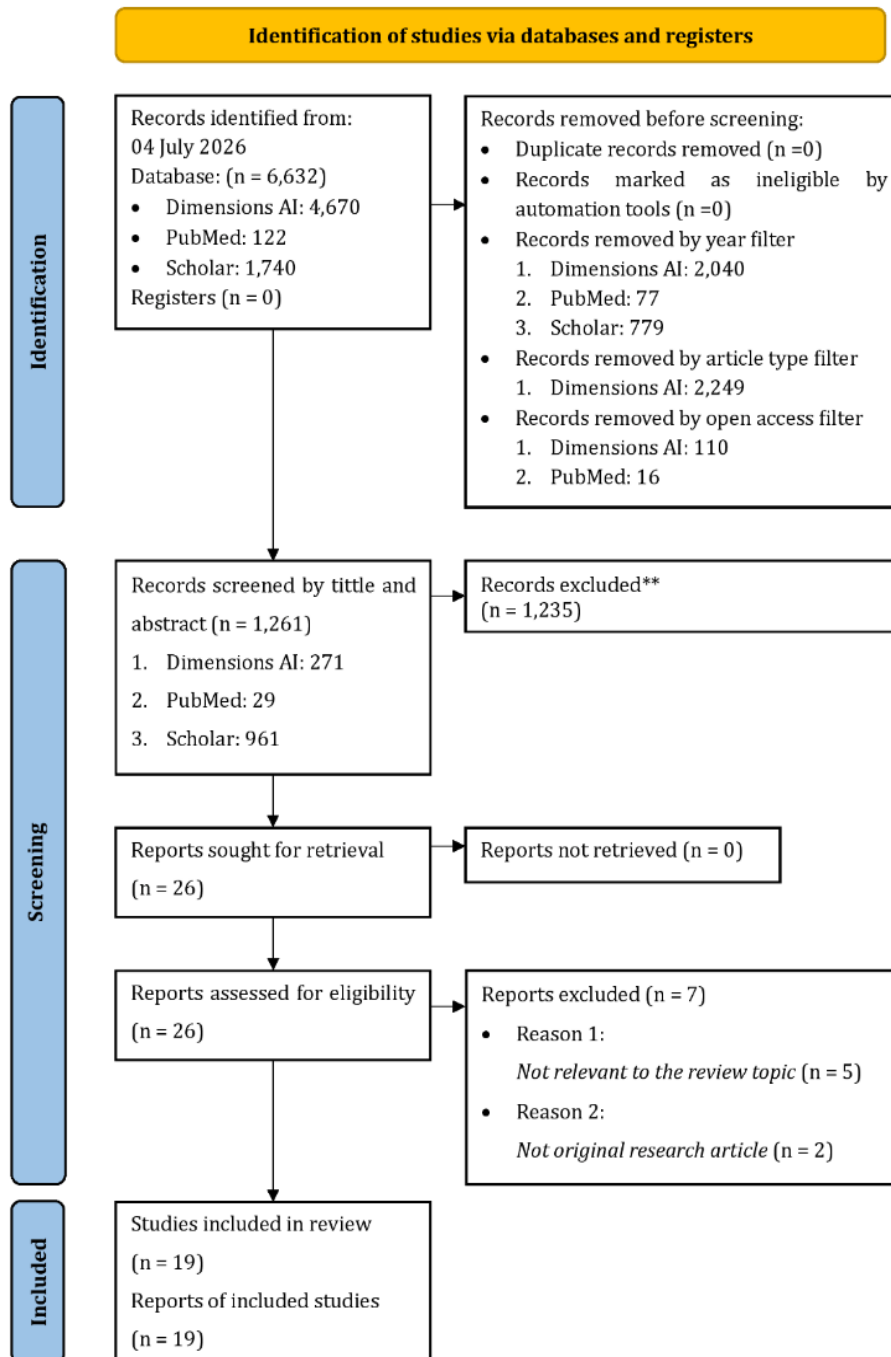
The literature search was conducted using three electronic databases: Dimensions AI, PubMed, and Google Scholar. Studies were selected through the PRISMA 2020 process based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria comprised original research articles published in English between 2020 and 2026, involving nurses in hospital settings, and focusing on conflict management strategies or conflict resolution styles. Review articles, editorials, conference abstracts, duplicate publications, and studies not directly related to the research topic were excluded.

A standardized data extraction form was used to collect information from the included studies, including the author, publication year, country, study design, sample characteristics, research instruments, and the main findings related to conflict management strategies.

The literature search was conducted on July 4, 2026. Records identified from the databases were screened by title, abstract, and full text according to the eligibility criteria. Duplicate articles were removed, and the remaining studies were selected using the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram ([Page et al., 2021](#)). Eligible studies were then extracted and synthesized.

The included studies were analyzed using a descriptive narrative synthesis approach. Data were organized according to conflict management strategies, influencing factors, and study outcomes to facilitate comparison across studies ([Xiao & Watson, 2019](#)). Similarities and differences among the findings were subsequently identified to generate common themes and provide a comprehensive synthesis of the evidence.

This review included only original research articles published in English between 2020 and 2026 from three electronic databases. Therefore, relevant studies published outside the selected databases, languages, or publication period may not have been included.



Gambar 1. Diagram Alir PRISMA dalam Pemilihan Studi

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

A total of 6,632 records were identified through searches of Dimensions AI, PubMed, and Google Scholar. After duplicate removal, title and abstract screening, and full-text eligibility assessment based on the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, 19 original research articles published between 2020 and 2026 were included in this review. The characteristics of the included studies are presented in Table 1. Characteristics of the Included Studies

Table 1. Characteristics of the Included Studies

No	Author	Title	Year	Main Findings
1.	Shereen Abd El-Moneam Ahmed & Samia Gaballah	Conflict and communication gap among the critical care nurses during care of patients with COVID-19 (Abd El-Moneam Ahmed & Gaballah, 2023)	2023	Research Method Descriptive exploratory, quantitative; Nursing Conflict Scale (NCS) + ROCI-II Form C; data May–July 2020 Research Population Staff nurses in COVID-19 isolation ICU in Ismailia City, Egypt Research Sample 80 nurses; purposive sampling Main Findings 42.5% moderate conflict; dominant type: intergroup conflict; primary triggers: repeated COVID-19 exposure (100%) and powerlessness (97.5%); dominant strategy: collaborating, followed by accommodating
2.	Nourah Alsadaan & Mohammed Alqahtani	Toxic Leadership in Emergency Nurses: Assessing Abusive Supervision and Its Team-Level Impacts on Conflict Management and Organizational Commitment (Alsadaan & Alqahtani, 2024)	2024	Research Method Cross-sectional, quantitative; Toxic Leadership Scale + ROCI-II + Meyer & Allen Organizational Commitment Scale Research Population ±580 emergency department nurses in 5 large public hospitals in the northern province of Saudi Arabia Research Sample 387 nurses; purposive multistage sampling (response rate 67%) Main Findings High toxic leadership: authoritarian (77%) and narcissism (75%) dominant; positively correlated with passive/aggressive conflict and reduced affective commitment; conflict management style mediated 29% of the toxic leadership–organizational commitment relationship
3.	Mohammad Dar Assi, MSN; Nidal F. Eshah, RN, CNS, PhD; Ahmad Rayan, RN, CNS, PhD	The Relationship Between Mindfulness and Conflict Resolution Styles Among Nurse Managers: A Cross-Sectional Study	2022	Research Method Descriptive correlational cross-sectional; Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) + ROCI-II Research Population Nurse managers in 5 public hospitals and

- (Assi et al., 2022)
- 2 university hospitals in Jordan
Research Sample
 197 nurse managers; convenience sampling
Main Findings
 Average mindfulness level: moderate; dominant conflict style: integrating (42.1%); mindfulness positively correlated and significantly predicted it (OR=1.03)
4. Hanan A. Alkorashy PhD, MSN, BScN; Ashwaq A. Alosaimi MSN, BScN; Nawal F. Alruwaili MSN, BScN; Shuruq N. Alshahrani MSN, BScN
 Conflict occurrence and preferred management styles among ICU nurses during the first wave of COVID-19 pandemic: A cross-sectional study in Saudi Arabia (Alkorashy et al., 2023)
 2023
Research Method
 Cross-sectional descriptive correlational; NCS + ROCI-II Form C; cross-cultural adaptation
Research Population
 121 staff nurses in ICU at 3 government hospitals in Saudi Arabia
Research Sample
 95 nurses; convenience sampling (response rate 78.5%)
Main Findings
 64.2% moderate conflict, 34.79% high intensity; dominant type: competitive & intragroup; dominant style: collaborating (21.85); age, experience, and education significantly correlated with conflict style
5. Abolfazl Dehbanizadeh; Mohammadsaeed Mirzaee; Narges Roustaei
 Assessment of the relationship between ethical reasoning and conflict management style among nurses (Dehbanizadeh et al., 2024)
 2024
Research Method
 Descriptive-correlational; Nursing Dilemma Test (DNT) + ROCI-II; systematic random sampling; SPSS v26
Research Population
 203 clinical nurses at a hospital in Yasuj City, Iran
Research Sample
 196 nurses; systematic random sampling (response rate 96.55%)
Main Findings
 Dominant style: collaborative; ethical reasoning very strongly and positively correlated with conflict management, explaining 41% of variance; demographic characteristics had no significant effect
6. Zeinab Amirkhanlou, MSc; Ravanbakhsh Esmaeili, PhD; Amir Emami Zeydi, PhD; Mohammad Khademlu, PhD; Pooyan Ghorbani Vajargah, PhD; Samad Karkhah,
 Moral competence and conflict management styles in emergency nurses: a cross-sectional study (Amirkhanlou et al., 2025)
 2025
Research Method
 Cross-sectional; Zafarnia Moral Competence Questionnaire + ROCI-II; convenience sampling
Research Population
 Emergency department nurses (minimum 1 year experience, bachelor's degree)
Research Sample
 190 nurses; convenience sampling

MSc; Hedayat Jafari,
PhD

Main Findings

Moral competence at desirable level; dominant style: participation-based (85.7%); significant correlation between moral competence and all conflict styles; age and job type were significant predictors

7. Barbara Delak & Klemen Širok
Physician–nurse conflict 2022 resolution styles in primary health care (Delak & Širok, 2022)

Research Method

Descriptive cross-sectional correlational; Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument (TKI) Slovenian version; chi-squared analysis

Research Population

476 nurses and 374 physicians at Community Health Centre Ljubljana, Slovenia

Research Sample

298 respondents (173 nurses, 125 physicians); convenience sampling

Main Findings

Dominant styles: compromising (44.3%) and avoiding (42.3%); males preferred compromising, females preferred avoiding ($p < .05$); tenure >10 years tended toward avoiding; no significant difference by professional role

8. Eduarda de Carlo Sbordoni; Paola Nabeshima Madaloni
Strategies used by nurses 2020 for conflict mediation (Sbordoni et al., 2020)

Research Method

Descriptive qualitative using oral history guided by COREQ (Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research); data collection via semi-structured interviews.

Research Population

Nurses working in the organ transplant unit of a university hospital in São Paulo, SP, Brazil, with at least one year of experience in that unit.

Research Sample

7 professionals (4 female, 3 male): 2 morning shifts, 1 afternoon shift, 4 night shifts. Exclusion criteria: resident nurses and those absent during data collection.

Main Findings

Three main categories identified: (1) Sources of conflict triggers; (2) Conflict mediation strategies; (3) Consequences of conflict. Effective mediation strategies: team collaboration, dialogue (allowing time to calm down), protocol standardization, expressive actions (fairness & active listening), and timely intervention. Positive consequences: opportunities for improvement; negative: damage to collegiality. Recommendation:

- invest in communication and interpersonal relationship training for nurses.
9. Hannah Ruth Barker; Peter Griffiths; Chiara Dall'Ora; Gisele Silva de Oliveria; Rosana Rodrigues Figueira Fogliano; Vanessa Ribeiro Neves; Alexandre Pazetto Balsanelli "I don't think there's necessarily a one size fits all" negotiating competing priorities in nurse shift scheduling: a qualitative study (Barker et al., 2025) 2025
- Research Method**
Interpretive qualitative with framework analysis; theoretical framework: Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) (5 approaches: collaborating, compromising, accommodating, avoiding, competing); subtle realist ontological position; data collection via individual and group interviews through Microsoft Teams.
- Research Population**
Nursing staff (registered nurses, nursing associates, healthcare support workers) working shifts in NHS inpatient settings (UK), ward managers, and NHS hospital directors in HR/Finance.
- Research Sample**
Total 28 participants: (a) 22 nursing staff & managers (20 female, 2 male; settings: 10 Community & Mental Health, 10 General Hospital, 2 Paediatrics; 14 UK-trained); (b) 6 NHS directors (settings: 2 Community & Mental Health, 2 General Hospital, 2 Paediatrics).
- Main Findings**
Three main themes: (1) Balancing preferences with consistency, predictability, and flexibility; (2) Adequate rest and recovery between shifts; (3) Enjoyment and engagement at work. Collaborative and compromising approaches most effective in preventing conflict. Flexible scheduling improved wellbeing & nurse retention; rigid policies increased turnover and lowered morale. External constraints (caregiving responsibilities) must be considered.
10. Ardia Putra; Hajjul Kamil; Yuswardi Yuswardi; Mayanti Mahdarsari; Aina Fitri; Andara Maurissa Conflict Management Strategies among Nurses: A Survey Study at a General Hospital (Putra et al., 2026) 2026
- Research Method**
Descriptive survey, quantitative; 5-point Likert scale questionnaire (Marquis & Huston framework); SPSS v27 analysis
- Research Population**
428 registered nurses at Meuraxa General Hospital
- Research Sample**
266 nurses; purposive sampling
- Main Findings**
Dominant strategy: collaboration (61.28%), followed by compromise, avoidance, accommodation, smoothing,

and competition. Nurses preferred constructive strategies reflecting Indonesia's collectivist cultural values.

11. Amira Abu Elkhayer Mohammed; Amal Roshdi Ahmed; Taghreed Hussien Alboelola; Abdulhamid Gharib Alrwil; Laila Assri Alhazm; Lamiaa Abd El Hakeem Ali Ahmed; Sayeda Mohamed Ahmed Soliman; Samia Khalf Mohamed Soliman; Soheir Mohammed Ahmed Ali

The Role of Emotional Intelligence Program in Effective Nurses' Management, Stress, and Conflict Resolution (Abu et al., 2025)

2025

Research Method
Quasi-experimental pre-post design; TEIQue, PSS-10, ROCI-II, PME Scale instruments

Research Population
Staff nurses at Sohag University Hospitals, Egypt

Research Sample
300 nurses; convenient sampling

Main Findings
After EI training: high stress dropped from 55% → 8%; collaborating style increased significantly ($p < 0.001$); strong positive correlation between EI and leadership effectiveness

12. Listiyawati Ratna Ningrum; Fitri Alfionita; Ida Herwati; Jennyla Puspitaning Ayu

The Relationship Between Conflict Management and Nurse Performance in a Secondary-Level Hospital: A Cross-Sectional Study (Ningrum et al., 2026)

2026

Research Method
Observational cross-sectional; adapted Thomas-Kilmann questionnaire + performance appraisal; Spearman correlation + logistic regression

Research Population
±120 clinical nurses at Lavalette Hospital, Malang, East Java

Research Sample
70 nurses; simple random sampling (Slovin formula)

Main Findings
Strong positive correlation between conflict management and performance ($r = 0.738$, $p = 0.001$); collaborating ($aOR = 2.43$) and compromising ($aOR = 2.03$) as independent predictors; 54% of performance variance explained by conflict management

13. Aigul S. Abdyzhalieva; Victor E. Savin; Tologon Ch. Chubakov; Kaliman T. Mamatova; Raikhan S. Rozyeva

Conflict resolution style in professional activities of nurses (Abdyzhalieva et al., 2025)

2025

Research Method
Descriptive survey, quantitative; ROCI 34-item 5-point Likert scale

Research Population
Nursing personnel (deputy nursing managers, head nurses, senior nurses, nurses) in public, private, and family medicine centers in the Kyrgyz Republic

Research Sample
392 nursing personnel (98.7% female)

Main Findings
Largest conflict cause: unfair salary (31.1%) and non-compliance with ethics (26.5%). Dominant strategy: cooperation (4.16); least used strategy: competition

(2.86)

- | | | | |
|--|--|------|---|
| 14. Handan Alan PhD, RN; Duygu Gül PhD candidate; Ülkü Baykal MD, Professor | The relationship between the conflict management strategies and ethical leadership behaviours of nurse managers perceived by nurses
(Alan et al., 2022) | 2022 | <p>Research Method
Descriptive, correlational, cross-sectional; Ethical Leadership Scale (ELS) + ROCI-II; correlation and regression analysis</p> <p>Research Population
Nurses in public and private hospitals in Istanbul, Turkey (N=675)</p> <p>Research Sample
285 nurses; convenience sampling</p> <p>Main Findings
Ethical leadership strongly and positively correlated with collaborating ($r=.744$), accommodating ($r=.747$), compromising ($r=.706$). Communicative ethics explained 58% of variance in collaborating style</p> |
| 15. Mohammad Dar Assi; Nidal F. Eshah | Emotional intelligence and conflict resolution styles among nurse managers: a cross-sectional study
(Dar Assi & Eshah, 2023a) | 2023 | <p>Research Method
Cross-sectional; Genos EI Inventory (31 items) + ROCI-II; logistic regression, SPSS v25</p> <p>Research Population
Nurse managers in the 5 largest public hospitals and 2 university hospitals in central and northern Jordan</p> <p>Research Sample
197 nurse managers; convenience sampling (response rate 94%)</p> <p>Main Findings
40.1% of nurse managers had low EI; dominant conflict resolution style: integrating (42.1%); EI positively correlated with integrating ($r=0.51$) and compromising ($r=0.27$)</p> |
| 16. Alireza Heidari; Sakine Beygom Kazemi; Mohammad Javad Kabir; Zahra Khatirnamani; Mansoureh Lotfi; Narges Rafiei; Mahla Tajari; Sakineh Jafar; Farah Zanganeh | The relationship of communication skills with leadership style and conflict management strategies of head nurses: A cross-sectional study in Northern Iran
(Heidari et al., 2024) | 2024 | <p>Research Method
Cross-sectional descriptive-analytical; Robbins' Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (conflict resolution), Queendom's Interpersonal Communication Skills Test (interpersonal communication), and Bass & Avolio's Leadership Style Questionnaire (leadership style); Spearman correlation, Mann-Whitney U, and Kruskal-Wallis tests.</p> <p>Research Population
178 head nurses in 16 hospitals affiliated with Golestan University of Medical Sciences, Iran</p> <p>Research Sample
166 head nurses; census method</p> |

			(response rate 93%) Main Findings Dominant leadership style: charismatic; dominant conflict strategy: non-confrontation; communication (especially emotional control & listening) significantly and positively correlated with conflict management
17. Charalampos Platis; Thomas Christonasis; Pantelis Stergiannis; George Intas; Petros Kostagiolas	Investigating the Main Causes of Conflicts and the Management Strategies That Are Used by Healthcare Professionals: The Case of General Hospital of Arta (Platis et al., 2021)	2021	Research Method Cross-sectional; 5-part structured questionnaire (multiple choice + 5-point Likert) Research Population Physicians and nurses at the General Hospital of Arta, Greece Research Sample 120 participants (25 physicians, 95 nurses); convenience sampling Main Findings Most common strategy: avoiding (47.5%). Main conflict causes: excessive workload (83.4%), orders from multiple supervisors (72.3%), inadequate salary (65.8%)
18. Roohollah Farhadloo; Mohammad Reza Azadeh; Mahsa Haji Mohammad Hoseini; Fatemeh Sharififard; Mohammad Parvaresh-Masoud	Prevalence of Workplace Conflicts and the Used Coping Strategies Among Nurses in Teaching Hospitals in Qom City, Iran: A Cross-sectional Study (Farhadloo et al., 2024)	2024	Research Method Descriptive-analytical cross-sectional; DuBrin WCQ + OCCI (Putnam & Wilson); multivariate regression analysis Research Population All nurses in 4 teaching hospitals affiliated with Qom University of Medical Sciences, Iran Research Sample 373 nurses; simple random sampling Main Findings Conflict level: moderate (mean WCQ=10.04); most used strategy: solution-oriented; strongest conflict predictors: control strategy ($\beta=0.43$), work experience ($\beta=-0.32$), and age
19. Sanaa Abdelazeem Ibrahim; Hind Abdullah Mohamed; Heba Emad EL-Gazar	Conflict Management Strategies Utilized by Nurse Managers and its Relationship to Vertical Dyad Linkage with Nurses (Abdelazeem Ibrahim et al., 2020)	2020	Research Method Descriptive correlational with quantitative approach using Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) – 30 forced-choice statement pairs measuring 5 conflict styles (avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising, collaborating) and LMX-Multidimensional Scale (Liden & Maslyn, 1998; Alshamasi, 2012 adaptation) – 12 items, 4 dimensions (affect, loyalty, contribution, professional respect); 5-

point Likert scale

Research Population

All head nurses and staff nurses working at Port Said General Hospital and Port Said Health Insurance Hospital, Egypt

Research Sample

31 head nurses + 203 staff nurses

Main Findings

Dominant conflict strategy of head nurses: accommodation (67.7%), followed by compromise (51.6%); competing was least used. 64% of staff had neutral relationships; only 29.1% had high-quality relationships. Negative inter-strategy correlations: avoiding-competing ($p=0.001$); accommodating-competing ($p=0.01$); accommodating-collaborating ($p=0.023$). Conflict management effectiveness depends more on situational alignment of strategy than on preference for a particular style.

The included studies were conducted in various countries and predominantly employed cross-sectional research designs, while a few used qualitative and quasi-experimental approaches. Most studies investigated conflict management strategies among nurses in hospital settings using validated instruments, such as the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) and the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI).

Table 2. Summary of Conflict Management Strategies Identified in the Included Studies

Conflict Management Strategy	Summary
Collaborating	The most frequently applied strategy. Nurses work together to find mutually beneficial solutions through open communication and teamwork.
Compromising	Frequently used to reach mutually acceptable agreements by allowing each party to make concessions.
Accommodating	Applied to maintain harmonious relationships by prioritizing the interests of others.
Avoiding	Used in certain situations to prevent conflict escalation or when the issue is considered less urgent.
Competing	Applied less frequently and generally used in urgent situations requiring quick decision-making.

Table 3. Factors Influencing Conflict Management Strategies

Factors	Summary
Emotional intelligence	Influences nurses in selecting constructive conflict management strategies.
Leadership	Effective leadership encourages collaboration and conflict resolution.
Communication skills	Good communication facilitates effective conflict management.
Moral competence	Supports appropriate decision-making in conflict situations.
Work experience	Experienced nurses tend to manage conflicts more effectively.
Educational level	Higher education is associated with better conflict management

	abilities.
Organizational culture	A supportive work environment promotes collaborative conflict management.

Discussion

The present findings indicate that collaboration is the preferred conflict management strategy among nurses because it promotes open communication, mutual respect, and shared decision-making. This strategy enables nurses to resolve workplace conflicts while maintaining positive interpersonal relationships and supporting patient safety. Compromising was identified as another commonly used strategy, particularly when rapid decisions were required and both parties were willing to reach mutually acceptable solutions ([Adriana Amal et al., 2022](#)). One possible explanation for the predominance of collaborative strategies is that they encourage nurses to openly express different perspectives, negotiate mutually acceptable solutions, and maintain professional relationships without compromising patient care. In multidisciplinary healthcare settings, this approach is particularly valuable because effective communication and teamwork are essential for ensuring continuity and quality of care.

This pattern is also supported by ([Dar Assi & Eshah, 2023](#)) who reported that integrating (collaborating) was the most frequently used conflict resolution style among nurse managers, whereas avoiding was the least preferred. Their study further demonstrated that nurse managers with higher emotional intelligence were more likely to adopt integrating and compromising strategies, highlighting the importance of emotional competence in promoting constructive conflict resolution. These findings are further reinforced by ([Nurbaeti et al., 2022](#)) who highlighted that collaborative conflict management allows for open problem discussion, integrative solutions, and improved job satisfaction, particularly in high-mobility environments such as emergency departments. Consistent with these findings, ([Alzahrani et al., 2022](#)) revealed a significant positive correlation between transformational and transactional leadership styles and cooperative conflict strategies such as integrating and compromising. These findings are consistent with those of ([O'Donovan et al., 2021](#)), who reported that effective leader behaviours, particularly those promoting communication, collaboration, and shared decision-making, significantly enhance healthcare team performance. Such leadership behaviours foster positive work environments where conflicts can be managed constructively, thereby strengthening teamwork and improving patient care outcomes.

In contrast, the selection of conflict management strategies may vary depending on organizational characteristics, demographic factors, and workplace culture. For instance, ([Rosita Candra Dewi et al., 2022](#)) observed that executive nurses perceived their head nurses to most frequently utilize a compromising strategy (87.30%), followed closely by collaboration (85.75%), whereas avoidance was perceived as the least frequently used strategy (44.00%). Likewise, ([Bashir, Bashir, et al., 2022](#)) reported that demographic characteristics, including age and years of experience, influenced nurses' preferred conflict management strategies. Younger nurses (21–35 years) and those with less than one year of experience predominantly adopted compromising strategies, whereas avoiding became more common among older nurses and those with longer tenure. In another study, ([Bashir, Shahzadi, et al., 2022](#)) found that avoiding was the predominant strategy in a tertiary care hospital, reflecting an unassertive approach to preventing direct confrontation. Collectively, these findings suggest that conflict management strategies are context-dependent rather than universally applicable. Differences in organizational culture, clinical demands, leadership style, and workforce characteristics may influence nurses' preferences for selecting particular conflict management approaches.

The review also demonstrated that nurses with higher emotional intelligence, effective communication skills, ethical leadership, and greater professional experience were more likely to adopt collaborative conflict management strategies. These findings suggest that interpersonal competencies and leadership capability play an important role in determining how nurses respond to workplace conflict. In addition to these individual competencies, practical conflict management skills are equally important in clinical settings. ([Adriana Amal et al., 2022](#)) emphasized that conflict mitigation in hospital wards fundamentally relies on two key domains: attitude strategies (such as ethics, mutual respect, emotional control, and discipline) and skill strategies, particularly effective

therapeutic communication. However, contrasting evidence was reported by (Aseery et al., 2023) who found no statistically significant relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management strategies among nurse managers. This discrepancy may be explained by differences in organizational context, leadership responsibilities, participant characteristics, or cultural settings, suggesting that factors beyond emotional intelligence may also influence the selection of conflict management strategies. Furthermore, effective communication between nurse managers and nursing staff plays a crucial role in successful conflict management. (Fowler et al., 2021) highlighted that clear communication, constructive feedback, and supportive leadership strengthen teamwork, improve staff engagement, and facilitate collaborative problem-solving, all of which are essential for managing workplace conflict effectively. Similarly, (Niinihuhta & Häggman-Laitila, 2022) reported that supportive nursing leadership is associated with improved nurses' work-related well-being, healthier work environments, and greater collaboration in addressing workplace challenges. These conditions encourage constructive conflict management and reduce the negative impact of interpersonal conflict within healthcare organizations.

Overall, the present review demonstrates that effective conflict management among nurses is influenced not only by the selection of appropriate conflict resolution strategies but also by leadership quality, communication competence, emotional intelligence, and organizational support. These findings are further supported by (Kızılkaya, 2024) who demonstrated that effective conflict management reduces work stress and job burnout while improving collaboration among healthcare professionals. Well-managed conflict also contributes to better communication, stronger teamwork, and improved patient care. Similarly, (Labrague, 2021) emphasized that positive nursing leadership is associated with higher quality of care and fewer adverse patient events, indicating that supportive leadership is fundamental to creating a work environment where conflicts can be managed constructively and patient safety is maintained. Collectively, the evidence suggests that collaborative conflict management should be regarded as a core competency for nurses and nurse managers. Beyond resolving interpersonal disagreements, effective conflict management promotes psychological safety, strengthens multidisciplinary collaboration, enhances organizational commitment, and supports high-quality patient care. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening nurses' conflict management competencies through continuous education, supportive leadership, and organizational policies that foster collaborative workplace cultures.

Implications

The findings suggest that hospitals should strengthen conflict management competencies through continuous education, leadership development, communication training, and organizational strategies that promote open communication and collaborative conflict resolution. These recommendations are consistent with previous evidence reported by (Specchia et al., 2021), who demonstrated that supportive leadership styles positively influence nurses' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and collaborative working relationships. Similarly, the reviewed studies indicate that leadership development, Just Culture education, and emotional intelligence enhancement contribute to more effective conflict management, improved communication, and safer healthcare environments (Specchia et al., 2021).

Just Culture training for nurse managers has been shown to improve leadership knowledge, reduce silent behavior, and increase error reporting, while emotional intelligence development enhances the use of constructive conflict management styles. Furthermore, transformational leadership promotes greater nurse engagement and supports collaborative working environments. Therefore, hospitals should prioritize leadership development and continuous conflict management training to strengthen nurses' competencies and enable nurse managers to create supportive work environments where conflicts can be managed constructively, ultimately fostering collaborative communication and improving patient care outcomes (Moustafa et al., 2025; Alanazy & Alzamil, 2026; Alluhaybi et al., 2026).

Research Contribution

This systematic literature review provides a comprehensive synthesis of recent evidence on conflict management strategies among nurses in hospital settings. The findings contribute to nursing management by identifying the most commonly used strategies and the factors influencing

their implementation, which may serve as a reference for nursing practice, education, and future research.

Limitations

This review included only original research articles published in English between 2020 and 2026 and retrieved from three electronic databases. Differences in study design, research instruments, and healthcare settings may have influenced the comparability of findings. Therefore, the results should be interpreted with consideration of these methodological variations.

Suggestions

Future studies should include additional international databases and evaluate the effectiveness of specific conflict management strategies using longitudinal or experimental research designs. Hospitals are also encouraged to implement regular conflict management training programs to improve nurses' competencies and strengthen collaborative workplace relationships.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review identified and analyzed conflict management strategies used by nurses in hospital settings based on 19 original research articles published between 2020 and 2026. The findings indicate that collaborating is the most frequently applied conflict management strategy, followed by compromising, accommodating, avoiding, and competing. The selection of these strategies is influenced by several factors, including emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, communication skills, moral competence, work experience, educational level, and organizational culture. These findings suggest that strengthening nurses' interpersonal and leadership competencies may improve conflict management and support better teamwork and quality of nursing care. Future research is recommended to explore the effectiveness of specific conflict management strategies using longitudinal or experimental study designs and to include broader healthcare settings and international databases.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Faculty of Health Sciences, Bina Sehat PPNI University, for the academic support provided during the completion of this study. The authors also thank all lecturers and individuals who contributed valuable guidance and support throughout the preparation of this systematic literature review.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

DR, AT, BS, AE, FD, EP, FDY, and DRZ: Contributed to the study conceptualization, literature search, article screening, data extraction, data analysis, interpretation of findings, manuscript drafting, and manuscript revision. AT served as the corresponding author and coordinated communication throughout the manuscript preparation and submission process.

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