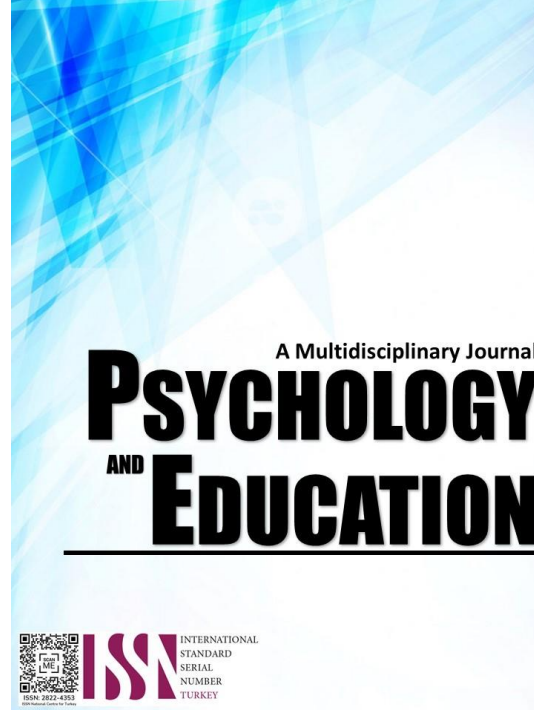


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School Leaders' Conflict Resolution Strategies

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Abstract

Organizational conflicts sometimes referred to as interpersonal conflicts happen everyday because people have different values, personalities, ideas, likes and styles. To organization leaders, resolving varied conflicts is one of their most stressful jobs. Further, this study aimed to determine the school leaders' conflict resolution strategies as correlates of teachers' satisfaction and performance in the District of Rodriguez during the school year 2021-2022 which served as inputs in developing a technologically-mediated learning program. Based on the findings of the study, the conflict resolution strategies such as accommodating, collaborating, competing, compromising, problem solving and mediating have been frequently utilized by the school leaders while avoiding strategy was used in moderation. The school leaders and the teachers have differing views on the use of the school leaders of the conflict resolution strategies except for avoiding strategy which they viewed similarly. The teachers are very much satisfied with their work, personal and professional growth, human relations, and recognitions and awards given by their schools. The teachers and the school leaders have a common observation on the teachers' contentment level on the four aspects of satisfaction. The teachers perform very well the tasks, duties, and responsibilities assigned to them by the school. The school leaders' conflict resolution strategies could influence the teachers' satisfaction performance except in the problem-solving strategy. A learning program could be developed to help school leaders enhance their capability to resolve conflicts within school level.

Keywords: *teachers' performance, conflict resolution strategies, teachers' satisfaction*

Introduction

Organizational conflicts sometimes referred to as interpersonal conflicts happen everyday because people have different values, personalities, ideas, likes and styles. To organization leaders, resolving varied conflicts is one of their most stressful jobs.

As remarked by Yoon (2017), interpersonal conflicts in the school setting could occur among teachers, employers, employees, students, parents, and even with the external stakeholders. Relative to this, Llopis (2020) commented that the workplace can become a toxic environment if the leaders allow conflict to aggravate rather than solve it immediately. He also said that conflict management can be a "tricky" thing if the leader is not familiar with the organization which the conflict operates. More so, Llopis contends that the leaders of the work place have so many tasks to do that they may not even know which one should be resolved first.

Meanwhile, schools have managers tasked with the responsibility of maintaining stability in order to achieve organizational goals. They are the school leaders who are responsible with the overall management of the school. Nevertheless, conflicts in the country's public secondary schools are on the rise in the recent years. This is mainly due to unresolved conflicts between the students, teachers, and the school

administrators. As experienced by this researcher, most school leaders avoid tension in the work place in order to have a harmonious working relationship. But doing this, as pointed out by Llopis could create problems in the organization. On the other hand, Bennies, as cited by Griffin et al. (2019) remarked that leaders do not avoid or deny conflict, but rather see it as opportunity. Bennies pointed out that conflict could lead to better decisions, better relationship, and other positive outcomes. However, most employees dislike conflict. They want to have less stressful and risky environment. These contrasting opinions have motivated this researcher to find out the stand of good leaders in organizations. The questions: "Do the school leaders regard conflicts as positive or detrimental to the organization? If they believe that conflicts should be resolved rather than to be avoided, what strategies should be done to mitigate the consequences?" These queries also triggered the mind of this researcher to conduct this study.

Research Questions

This study aimed to determine the school leaders' conflict resolution strategies as correlates of teachers' satisfaction and performance in the District of Rodriguez during the school year 2021-2022 which served as inputs in developing a technologically-mediated learning program. More specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the extent of use of the following school leaders' conflict resolution strategies as perceived by the teachers and the school leader respondents?

- 1.1. Accommodating
- 1.2. Avoiding
- 1.3. Collaborating
- 1.4. Competing
- 1.5. Compromising
- 1.6. Problem-Solving
- 1.7. Mediating

Literature Review

One of the reviewed literatures was the concept of conflict by Saylor (2020). He said that conflict occurs when people misunderstand or disagree with each other when working together which could emanate from actual opposition of needs, interests, and values. Saylor cited that in an organization, conflicts can be influenced by different factors such as lack of clarity in the responsibilities assigned to organization members, their interpersonal relationship, and the lack of needed funds. Another view of conflict was posited by Channing (2019) who said that conflicts occur when contradiction exists between departments or units in the workplace caused by unclear goals, roles, schedules, uncomfortable working environment, bullying among members, closed communication among others. In addition to those mentioned by Saylor (2020) and Channing (2019), Giovanni (2018) also identified some causes of conflicts in the work place. These are: disrespect, exclusion, sabotage, ignoring, authority issues, lack of cooperation, low performance, misunderstanding, personality clashes, competition for resources, value or goal differences, favoritism, mobbing, unfair treatment, unclear job roles, unpredictable policies, lack of equal opportunity, poor communication, bullying and harassment, personal problems and differences of methods and styles.

Griffin et al. (2019) also shared their own concept of conflict as disagreement that occurs when two or more persons or groups perceive something as a threat to their needs, interests, or concerns. They also claim that conflict can be constructive as well as destructive. According to them, the positivity or negativity of a conflict is determined by the two parties' response to the conflict rather than by the conflict itself. Griffin et al. also mentioned the common conflicts in organizations, namely: a) differing task goals which means disagreements over what is to be accomplished; b) differing process goals which refer to differences on how to accomplish the tasks or goals; c) interpersonal

differences in persons' motivation, aspirations, or personality; d) resource constraints which occur when there exist a competition over perceived resources constraints; e) exchange which evolves when changes affect the relative importance of different organizational groups; f) differing values which occur when persons have different views on what is good or bad and what is right or wrong, or fair or unfair; g) poor communication which occurs when people do not have the appropriate information, have different interpretation of the information; h) task independence which prevails when a person or unit is dependent on others for resources or information thereby increasing the potential for conflict; and i) organizational structure whether vertical or horizontal.

Sources of conflict have also been identified by Hynes (2015). These are lines of authority in an organization, distribution of limited resources, and diverse goals. Hynes remarked that lines of authority in an organization could lead to conflict, for instance, when two departments have common goals within the organization, their interdependence can lead to conflict over their respective authority. Hynes further explained that when interdependence of the two departments becomes a big issue, conflict will eventually arise over whose authority takes responsibility for the achievement of the goal. On the other hand, Hynes contends that the distribution of limited resources in the organization can create conflict. Different departments, for example, crying for budget allocations can become a major source of conflict. The third source of conflict has been explained by Hynes that the varying goals of different managers in the organization can cause conflict among the employees of the different departments. Relative to these sources of conflicts, Griffin et al. (2019) maintains that when managers already know these, they need to determine the best strategy for addressing it. Thus, they suggested five conflict management strategies which differ in their concern for others and concern for one's own interests. These are collaborating, compromising, competing, accommodating, and avoiding.

Methodology

This study used the descriptive-correlational type of research. Descriptive research, according to Mc Neil (2018), seeks to describe the characteristics or behavior of individuals in an organization. She said that the aim of descriptive research design is to describe, explain, or validate the hypotheses of the study. In this study, the descriptive research was used

to describe, explain, and analyze the data elicited from the respondents through the use of the survey questionnaire. Similarly, Mc Combes (2019) described descriptive research as an activity describing a population situation or phenomenon in an accurate and systematic way. Questions answering what, where, when, and how are its concern. It could be quantitative or qualitative method to investigate one or more variables. The descriptive research is the most appropriate method for this study since it aimed to identify the school leaders' conflict resolution strategies and their correlation to teachers' satisfaction and their work performance. The primary sources of data were collected from the school leaders consisting of head teachers, master teachers, and school principals and teachers of the national public high schools in the Division of Rizal during the school year 2021-2022.

Instruments of the Study

The data gathering instrument used by the researcher was the survey questionnaire. There were two sets of questionnaires, one for each group of the respondents. The first set was for the school leaders. It consisted of conflict resolution strategies as regards the seven conflict resolution strategies, namely: accommodating, avoiding, compromising, collaborating, competing, problem-solving and mediating. The survey questionnaire has the following parts: Part I determined the extent of school leaders' conflict resolution strategies used. It has seven aspects with five indicators for each. Part II elicited the teachers and school leader respondents' perception on the teachers' job satisfaction level in terms of work itself, personal and professional growth, human relations, and recognition and awards with five indicators each. The questionnaire was validated by seven educational leader-experts who were not part of the group of respondents.

Procedures

The researcher secured permission from the Public Schools District Supervisors of Rodriguez relative to the study and to assist her in identifying her respondents. The researcher went through proper channels. After identifying all the respondents, the survey questionnaires were administered to the respondents using Google Forms. Due to the pandemic, the researcher also asked the help of school heads to share the survey questionnaire in their group chats together with the approved letter of request from the Rodriguez, Suboffice to identify the number of respondents per school. Afterwards, the data were

tallied, statistically treated, analyzed, and interpreted.

Results

This section presents the findings according to the study's research questions. To compare the mean and find out the significance between variables, linear regression was computed using the weighted means of the School Leaders and the Teachers respondents in terms of Accommodating, Collaborating, Avoiding, Competing, Compromising, Problem-Solving and Mediating. As shown in the table, the extent of use of the conflict resolution strategies by the school leaders as perceived by the school leaders and the teacher respondents was Very High as indicated by the grand weighted means of 3.56 and 3.42, respectively. It is very evident, however, that the school leaders and the teacher respondents perceived avoiding as Moderate Extent only as indicated by their respective weighted means of 2.91 and 2.97. The teachers, too, perceived collaborating as Moderately used only as shown by the weighted mean of 3.20. These findings imply that majority of the conflict resolution strategies are used by the school leaders which further mean that they are knowledgeable of the advantages of the various strategies in resolving the conflicts in their own schools. However, those which have been rated with the lowest weighted means at a moderate extent such as avoiding, collaborating, and mediating should be addressed by holding seminars relative to the weak areas. The findings on avoiding strategy which has the lowest weighted means as perceived by the two groups of respondents could have an implication that the school leaders do not use this frequently in resolving the conflicts that occur in their schools. By using the appropriate conflict resolution strategies, the principals could develop a comfortable school climate thereby creating a better place to live in.

Table 1. Summary of the Extent of Use of the Conflict Resolution Strategies by the School Leaders as Perceived by the School Leaders and the Teacher Respondents

Categories	School Leaders		Teachers		Composite W Means	
	WM	VI	WM	VI	CWM	VI
1. Accommodating	3.80	VHE	3.61	VHE	3.71	VHE
2. Avoiding	2.91	ME	2.97	ME	2.94	ME
3. Collaborating	3.71	VHE	3.20	ME	3.46	VHE
4. Competing	3.79	VHE	3.66	VHE	3.73	VHE
5. Compromising	3.53	VHE	3.26	VHE	3.40	VHE
6. Problem-Solving	3.79	VHE	3.62	VHE	3.71	VHE
7. Mediating	3.40	VHE	3.47	VHE	3.44	VHE
Grand Weighted Means	3.56	VHE	3.40	VHE	3.48	VHE

Discussion

The school leaders and the teachers are encouraged to use the developed technologically-mediated enhancement learning packages to familiarize themselves with the conflict resolution strategies which need to be strengthened. A district wide webinar may be conducted by the DepEd legal officials to discuss the various appropriate strategies which should be used by school leaders in resolving conflicts in the school level. Other schools may conduct a parallel study to identify the appropriate strategies in resolving conflicts between teachers and their peers. Future researchers may replicate this study but in a different locale and level of respondents on their wider perimeter.

Conclusion

The conflict resolution strategies such as accommodating, collaborating, competing, compromising, problem solving and mediating have been frequently utilized by the school leaders while avoiding strategy was used in moderation. The school leaders and the teachers have differing views on the use of the school leaders of the conflict resolution strategies except for avoiding strategy which they viewed similarly. The teachers are very much satisfied with their work, personal and professional growth, human relations, and recognitions and awards given by their schools. The teachers and the school leaders have a common observation on the teachers' contentment level on the four aspects of satisfaction. The teachers perform very well the tasks, duties, and responsibilities assigned to them by the school. The school leaders' conflict resolution strategies could influence the teachers' satisfaction performance except in the

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