



The Interplay of Emotional Intelligence on Conflict Management Styles of Public Elementary School Heads in Davao De Oro Division

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.5.0524.1335>

ABSTRACT

The conflict management styles of school heads are believed to have been influenced by their emotional intelligence. Unfortunately, this had never been explored in the local scenario by means academic research. With this, the study determined the extent of emotional intelligence and the conflict management styles of school heads in the public elementary schools in Davao de Oro Division. Also, it investigated the association of the involved variables. With the use of probability sampling, 200 elementary teachers in the public schools were selected as the respondents. Utilizing the descriptive-correlational survey method, the data collated were analyzed through the use of Mean, Product-Moment correlation and Regression Analysis. Results revealed that there was an extensive emotional intelligence and extensive conflict management styles of school heads. Furthermore, there was a significant relationship between the two variables. Based on the findings, it was further suggested that higher officials in the Department of Education may identify means on how to help school heads strengthen their conflict management styles by showcasing and empowering their emotional intelligence.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, conflict management styles, descriptive correlation, Davao De Oro Division, Philippines

Introduction

To avoid confrontations and allow employees to focus on their work, conflict management is crucial in the workplace. Unfortunately, school administrators have had difficulty with employee disputes. Unresolved disputes can result in low morale at work, high absenteeism and turnover, protracted interruptions of operations, and a lack of cohesion among team members (Jantzi & Leithwood, 2016). With this, the head of school must effectively handle conflicts that arise in order for the organization to be able to benefit from them (Kayanda & Tangi, 2022). In order to resolve conflicts and discover solutions in the form of solutions as a form of organizational optimization, it appears that approaches used to manage conflicts in schools are required.

In Tanzania, Kayanda and Tangi (2022) revealed that the high spot that some challenges faced by heads of school in managing conflict are lack of conflict management skills, biasness, scarce financial resources, low awareness on responsibilities to some teachers, lack of evidence, and political interference. Problems of conflicts in public secondary schools in Tanzania have been renowned severally in various districts and schools, whereby in Chato district, conflicts in public secondary schools have alike been renowned. Head of school required to be able to master and condition conflicts that occur in schools that must be managed properly in secondary school. In Nigeria, sources of conflicts are inadequate facilities and funding, conflicts among staff members, personality factors, and role conflicts (Uchendu et al., 2013).

In Puerto Princesa, both school heads and teachers claimed that the variables under personality factors are the major causes conflicts in school. At schools conflicts may be experienced in many issues such as distribution of work among personnel, financial resources, in and out of class teaching activities and practices, rewards, punishment, assessment practices, use of power-authority, being late for class, leave of absences, political views, negative personal attitudes, passing grade levels and scoring system, issues regarding the legislation, student behaviors, dress code, assignments and placements for staff and distribution of resources. Conflicts can take place between administrators-teachers, teachers-teachers, teachers-students or parents-parents or among the students. Calora (2020) also found that the absence of camaraderie and teamwork among teachers was regarded as the most serious problem as regards conflict management.

Cognizant of the prevailing issues and conditions that school managers face, the Division of Davao de Oro also shared the same predicaments. Miscommunication and individual differences were observed as the sources of conflict. They encountered varied conflicts that need to be resolved. In fact, competition is also one of the observed factors leading to conflict. Since conflict is inevitable, the researcher believed that there is a need to undertake research that would serve as a foundation for improvement aimed toward the welfare of school leaders as they carry out their administrative and managerial tasks which included their conflict management styles.

There had been existing studies regarding conflict management styles of school heads. However, this had never been explored and investigated in Davao de Oro considering their emotional intelligence. With this, the researcher explored the emotional intelligence and the conflict management styles of school heads. In this academic endeavor, the researcher also hoped to provide insights to the policy makers in crafting policies, programs, interventions, projects, activities that would be of advantage to school leaders to find means to develop varied means of improving their emotional intelligence and conflict management styles. This study was based on several theories and models that have been associated with emotional intelligence and conflict management styles of school heads. The main theory for this study was the Emotional Intelligence Theory by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and later expanded Mayer and Salovey (1997).

Emotional Intelligence (EI) was initially proposed as an organized theory of emotional abilities by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and later expanded (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The concept was popularized in the general media by Goleman (1995) who developed his own model of emotional capacities (Goleman et al., 2000). These two models of EI will be presented in the context of educational leadership. The first model (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) is the ability-model that considers four major emotion skill sets (perception, facilitation, understanding and managing). The second model (Goleman et al., 2002) organizes EI competencies across two dimensions: capacities (emotion recognition and regulation) and application domains (toward self and others). There is some overlap between these models with regard to emotional perception (recognition) and regulation (managing).

The Mayer's and Salovey's (1997) model is distinct for its abilities to use emotion concepts and the use of emotions to facilitate decision-making and emotional planning. Goleman and colleagues' (2002) model includes organizational and social intelligence as unique features and for this reason is considered a mixed model in contrast to the ability-model (Mayer et al., 2000). As a psychological construct, EI is important and relevant to leadership since emotional factors play a role in personal well-being, interpersonal relationships, motivation, workplace adjustment and learning processes (Brackett et al., 2016; Caru- so & Salovey, 2004; Fischer & Manstead, 2016; Zeidner et al., 2009). EI is highly relevant to educational leadership since the school leader must continually work with individuals and groups (i. e. teachers, students and parents) and make decisions that impact the social functioning of the whole school.

Gray (2009) examined EI abilities in the context of educational leadership noting how school administrators cannot completely remove emotions from decision-making and therefore must be cognizant and intentional with emotions. Using emotions adaptively is critical for effective interpersonal relationships as well as for creating an emotional-toned environment in the school context. A study by Brackett et al. (2011) found that EI skills were associated with better emotional climate in the classroom and improved student conduct which are factors that would be desired goals for educational leaders.

Growing research in this field makes it evident that emotional intelligence may play a vital role in underpinning effective leadership. Higgs and Dulewicz (2016) propose that to build a sustainable, supportive and resilient way of working, there is a need for leaders to lead with emotional intelligence. The emotional task of the leader is a primal and most important act of leadership (Goleman et al., 2013).

More so, this study was also anchored to Conflict Theory by Marx (1994). This theory posited that conflict is a fundamental part of the social order, and that schools are a critical site in the reproduction of social inequality, particularly class conflict and racial stratification. This stated that tensions and conflicts arise when resources, status and power are unevenly distributed between groups in society and that these conflicts become the engine for social change (Crossman, 2018).

Conflict can occur at several levels and various degrees in any organization. First, interpersonal conflicts usually occur due to differing work roles and work load, individual differences on values, goals and needs, and individuals competing for resources, such as, promotions or work assignment (Kipruto & Kipkemboi, 2013). Second, intra-group conflicts may arise due to disagreement or differences among group members or sub-groups regarding the goals, functions or activities of the group. Lastly, there may be inter-group conflicts which tend to develop when there is "against them" mind-set, for example in departments, or levels of decision making. Thus, groups see each other as enemies and tend to become hostile; as a result, positive relationship decreases (Ramani & Zhimin, 2010).

Emotional intelligence provides a new criterion by which we can be judged at work (Goleman, 1998). Opportunities for success in a business setting may be limited by low EI (Goleman, 1995). EI is increasingly the yardstick used by managers to decide who is hired and fired, or who receives promotions. EI is related to all aspects of our work life, from self-motivation (Goleman, 1998) to work-group cohesion in organizational settings (Abraham, 1999), enhancing performance in interviews (Lyons & Schneider, 2005) and in predicting turnover (Day & Carroll, 2004). EI is also related to conflict management in a work setting. Those with higher levels of EI are more adept at managing conflict situations and resolving them successfully (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001; Jones & Bodtker, 2001).

Conflict management is an important function of our work life. In order to be successful at any level in an organization, conflict management skills are necessary (Brewer, Mitchell & Weber, 2002). Using a conflict management technique inappropriately may create a conflict situation that did not previously exist, or exacerbate one that did (Rahim, Buntzman & White, 1999). Emotionally intelligent individuals are more adept at putting difficulties behind them and redirecting their attention to conflict resolution (Abraham, 1999).

Methodology

Research Design

This study was a quantitative research approach utilizing the descriptive correlational approach. Quantitative research is the process of collecting and analyzing numerical data. It can be used to find patterns and averages, make predictions, test causal relationships, and [generalize](#) results to wider populations (Bhandari, 2022). The purpose of quantitative research is to generate knowledge and create understanding about the social world. Quantitative research is used by social scientists, including communication researchers, to observe phenomena or occurrences affecting individuals (Allen, 2017). Moreover, a descriptive correlation study is a study in which the researcher is primarily interested in describing the relationships between variables without attempting to establish a causal relationship (Stangor, 2011).

This study was considered as quantitative since it depended on the numerical data when analyzing and interpreting the data. It was descriptive since its purpose was to determine the extent of emotional intelligence and conflict management styles. In addition, this academic pursuit was correlational since its purpose was to measure the connection between emotional intelligence and conflict management styles of public elementary school heads in Davao de Oro Division.

Research Respondents

This study catered the 200 public secondary teachers in Davao de Oro Division. It was claimed that 200 samples are enough when testing the Pearson Correlation analysis (Memon et al., 2020). Hence, the 200 respondents were enough to address the purpose of this study.

In the inclusion and exclusion criteria, elementary teachers with 3 years teaching experience were chosen in this endeavor since their 3 years stay in the public school would help them to assess the emotional intelligence and conflict managements styles of their school heads. Respondents who felt awkward and uncomfortable in answering the survey questionnaire were free to withdraw from their participation. They were not forced to be part of the study. Their decision to withdraw was respected. Apparently, the respondents' welfare was given utmost importance in the conduct of the study.

Research Instrument

As to the form of gathering data, this study utilized an adapted survey questionnaire. The questionnaire that was employed in this undertaking was divided into two sets. The first set was focusing on the emotional intelligence while the second set was about the conflict management styles of public elementary school heads.

The emotional intelligence questionnaire was adapted from Sterrett (2000). The instrument consists of 20 items. It has the following indicators, namely: self-awareness (1-5); self-management (1-5); social awareness (1-5), and relationship management (1-5). The questionnaire was subjected to a pilot testing having a result of .76 suggesting that the items have relatively *high* internal consistency.

The conflict management styles questionnaire was adapted from Adkins (2006). The tool has a total of 28 items. It had five variables, namely: collaborating (1-7), competing (1-5), avoiding (1-6), accommodating (1-6), and compromising (1-4). The questionnaire was subjected to a pilot testing having a result of .77 suggesting that the items have relatively *high* internal consistency.

The instruments in this study were contextualized to achieve the purpose of this study. The researcher subjected the instrument into validation and integrated all the comments and suggestions of the adviser, panel members and expert validators for the refinement of the tools and to achieve construct validity.

Table

Table 1

Summary on the Extent of Emotional Intelligence of School Heads

No	Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1	Self-Awareness	3.56	Extensive
2	Self-Management	4.17	Extensive
3	Social Awareness	4.28	Very Extensive
4	Relationship Management	4.27	Very Extensive
Overall		4.07	Extensive

Table 1 provides the summary on the extent of emotional intelligence of school heads. It is exhibited that the overall mean of emotional intelligence of school heads is 4.07, which is in an extensive level. This means that emotional intelligence of school heads is oftentimes evident.

Data show that all four (4) indicators reveal a varying result ranging from extensive to very extensive result. As arranged chronologically, social awareness has the highest mean score (4.28). This is followed by relationship management (4.27), self-management (4.17), and self-awareness (3.56).

The data analysis demonstrates a distinct pattern across the four indicators, revealing a spectrum of results spanning from extensive to very extensive. When examined chronologically, it is notable that social awareness garners the highest mean score, closely followed by relationship management, self-management, and self-awareness. This order of scores implies that school heads exhibit a remarkable capacity for grasping and responding to the emotions of others, skillfully managing relationships, and maintaining self-control. However, there seems to be an area for potential growth in terms of enhancing self-awareness. These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of emotional intelligence among school heads and suggest that further emphasis on self-awareness could create a more comprehensive foundation for effective leadership, fostering a holistic and harmonious school environment for all stakeholders involved.

With the extensive status of the emotional intelligence of school heads, this reaffirmed the widely held belief of Serrat (2017) indicating that high emotional intelligence individuals have a deep understanding of their own emotions as well as the emotions of others. They are friendly, strong, and upbeat. People can improve their productivity and success in their careers, as well as the productivity and success of others, by increasing their emotional intelligence. The process and results of developing emotional intelligence also include a number of components that are known to lessen stress for both individuals and organizations through conflict management, relationship building, and continuity, consistency, and peace.

Similarly, Berkovich and Eyal (2015) cited that successful educational leaders have emotional self-awareness and social intelligence. They are able to be more receptive, respond to subordinates' expectations with accuracy, and boost morale and group cohesion—all of which are essential for the achievement of organizational goals. More so, school leaders' emotions have a considerable impact on the emotions and organizational behaviors of their subordinates.

According to Blackmore (2011), school principals who can control their emotions while interacting with the employees can foster a favorable emotional climate in their institutions. School leaders who demonstrate caring through their words and deeds can help foster an environment that values care in their institutions. More so, Finkelhor (2014) stated that many leaders in today's global society rely on their emotional intelligence (EI), which social media is fast reshaping.

Table 2

Summary on the Extent of Conflict Management Styles

No	Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1	Collaborating	3.45	Extensive
2	Competing	4.33	Very Extensive
3	Avoiding	4.31	Very Extensive
4	Accommodating	4.17	Extensive
5	Compromising	4.17	Extensive
Overall		4.09	Extensive

Table 2 provides the summary on the extent of teacher empowerment. It is exhibited that the overall mean of teacher empowerment is 4.09, which is in an extensive level. This means that teacher empowerment is oftentimes evident.

Data show that all five (5) indicators reveal a varying result ranging from extensive to very extensive level. As arranged chronologically, competing has the highest mean score (4.33). This is followed by avoiding (4.31), accommodating, compromising both (4.17), and collaborating (3.45).

The data analysis illustrates a discernible pattern across all five indicators, showcasing a spectrum of results ranging from extensive to very extensive levels. These findings highlight the varying approaches that school heads employ when managing conflicts. The higher scores for competing and avoiding suggest a tendency towards assertiveness and preservation of harmony respectively, whereas the mid-range scores for accommodating and compromising indicate a willingness to find middle ground. The comparatively lower score for collaborating implies an opportunity for enhancing collaborative conflict resolution strategies. The implications of these results underscore the importance of cultivating a balanced repertoire of conflict management styles that can adapt to diverse situations, fostering an environment where conflicts are effectively addressed through a tailored approach, ultimately contributing to a harmonious and productive school atmosphere.

The favorable findings of this study supported the notion of Imperial and Madrigal (2021) mentioning that the ability of school administrators to manage disagreement and find solutions is essential for fostering a tranquil and effective work environment. According to the school administrator must use his unique skills and traits to suggest a fair and practical resolution to the problems. His character traits are crucial to the efficient functioning and management of the institution. In order for school administration to run smoothly and effectively, school managers' ability to manage and resolve conflicts is essential. Conflict management in this context refers to the capacity to identify and address issues at school in a reasonable, equitable, and timely manner.

According to Drigas et al. (2023), only the emotionally intelligent educator is capable of handling these situations with authority, restraint, and tact. Tancinco (2016) argued that one of the most important aspects of addressing the majority of difficulties in today's businesses is conflict management. In the context of educational institutions, there are no exceptions. Saiti (2014) discovered that conflicts in schools are frequent and are typically caused by

both administrative and interpersonal factors. Her research also shows that these arguments are more probable to happen in urban schools. In contrast to principals and students or students and teachers, Mugwe (2016) discovered that principals and teachers encounter conflict in schools the most frequently.

Table 3 Significance of the Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence of School Heads and Conflict Management Styles

Emotional Intelligence of School Heads	Dependent Variable	r-value	p-value	Decision on Ho
Self-Awareness		0.472	0.000	Rejected
Self-Management		0.493	0.000	Rejected
Social Awareness		0.512	0.000	Rejected
Conflict Management Styles				
Relationship Management		0.508	0.000	Rejected
Overall		0.496*	0.000	Rejected

*Significant at 0.05 significance level.

Presented in Table 3 are the data on the significance of the relationship between emotional intelligence of school heads and conflict management styles. Reflected in the hypothesis, the relationship was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The overall r-value of .496 with a p-value of <0.05 signified the rejection of the null hypothesis. It means that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence of school heads and conflict management styles. This shows that emotional intelligence of school heads are correlated with conflict management styles.

Doing a pairwise correlation among the measures of both variables, it can be gleaned that self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management revealed computed r-values of 0.472, 0.493, 0.512, and 0.508 respectively with p-values which are less than 0.05 in the level of significance. This implies that as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management increases, the conflict management styles also increase.

The result is in consonance to the study conducted by Danilov and Mihailova (2020) revealing that emotional intelligence has a special place in schools as educational organizations, as in other organizations. Because school principals, who know themselves well and can direct their emotions, give more positive reactions to the behaviors of teachers and students. They know what they feel and what emotions they experience, and they can direct the emotions and thoughts of school members in this direction in order to create a better school environment.

In a study conducted by Chen et al. (2019), it was revealed that that managers at different levels possess different EI and adopt different conflict management styles when dealing with their subordinates, peers and superiors. Specifically, when subordinates were involved in a conflict, junior managers and female managers were more likely to use the dominating style, while when peers were involved in a conflict, male managers were more likely to use the dominating style. When peers were involved in a conflict, managers working in public sectors were more likely to adopt the integrating, avoiding, obliging and compromising style.

Several other studies contest the notion that leaders with high emotional intelligence are associated with conflict management in organizations. A study conducted by Young (2015) investigated the effect of emotional intelligence on conflict management, organizational commitment, and customer service behaviour in Jordan. The results indicate that all emotional intelligence dimensions of self-management, social awareness positively and significantly affect all employees' work outcomes and conflict management.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were offered:

The extent of emotional intelligence of school heads of the public secondary schools implies that it is oftentimes evident. Specifically, social awareness and relationship management are perceived to be always evident while self-awareness and self-management are oftentimes evident.

Meanwhile, the extent conflict management styles is oftentimes evident. In particular, competing and avoiding are always evident among teachers while collaborating, accommodating, and compromising oftentimes evident.

Based on the findings, emotional intelligence of school heads and conflict management styles are correlated. Also, emotional intelligence of school heads significantly influences conflict management styles. In fact, all domains of emotional intelligence of school heads, namely, self-awareness,

self-management, social awareness, and relationship management significantly influence conflict management styles by registering a p-value of .000 which is less than .05 in the level of significance. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Further, the result indicates that for every unit increase in the four domains of emotional intelligence of school heads, conflict management styles will increase.

Recommendations

The following suggestions were offered based on the conclusions of the study:

The higher officials in the Department of Education may craft effective policies, programs, projects, interventions and activities which empower school heads to have solid foundation of conflict management styles. More so, they may create more initiatives that would further strengthen school heads' emotional intelligence which they may use in handling conflicts.

Meanwhile, school principals may assess the extent of their emotional intelligence. At the same time, they may do self-reflection on their means of handling conflict. In doing so, they may craft personalized ways of strengthening their emotional intelligence and establishing effective conflict management styles based on the circumstances.

More so, teachers may serve as partners of school heads in intensifying their emotional intelligence and conflict management styles. They may provide helpful feedback to their school heads that concerns school heads' conflict management styles.

Lastly, future researchers may explore other relevant information about school heads' emotional intelligence and conflict management styles. They may also consider using other research approaches such as qualitative research and mixed methods further explore the involved variables in this study.

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