CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS AND TEAM BUILDING COMPETENCE OF SCHOOL HEADS: A MODEL EFFECTIVE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted in public elementary schools in Malita District to determine the conflict resolution skills and team-building competence of school heads as a model for effective school management. A descriptive correlational design was employed. Descriptive statistics and correlational analysis were used in the study. The level of conflict management, collaboration, and compromise achieved the highest mean, while accommodation was the lowest. Among the indicators of team building competence of school heads, accountability had the highest mean, while the lowest mean was achieved by interdependence. The result showed that as conflict resolution increases, team building decreases. Based on the study's results, training in fair negotiations and conflict resolution should be provided to school administrators to enhance their ability to resolve disputes effectively. Additionally, the results suggest that school administrators should

recognize its meaning and open themselves up to a contact structure that allows faculty members to participate. Subsequently, school administrators need to integrate conflict resolution skills as a key component in enhancing the school environment.

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is common in all aspects of life (Donovan, 1993) and exists at all levels (Green, 1984; Marion, 1995). Conflict resolution is therefore a crucial challenge for members of all types of higher education institutions at all levels (Brown et al., 2002; Green, 1984; Haas, 1999; Harmon, 2003; Marion, 1995; Pepin, 2005). Conflict resolution in an educational institution was also illustrated in Green's (1984) study, which examined conflict management among managers, teachers, students, and outsiders. In one study, researchers found that school community administrators and faculty agreed that conflict management was the most often identified skill in leadership needed by administrators and faculty members (Cooper & Pagotto, 2003).

In the Davao del Sur division, recent experience of misunderstandings and grudges among teachers and some school leaders has challenged conflict resolution and team-building skills among school leaders. This motivated the researcher to address the need as soon as possible. This study was therefore undertaken.

Objectives of the Study

Generally, the study aimed to assess the relationship between conflict resolution skills and team-building competence among public elementary school heads in the Malita District, to improve school management. Specifically, it addressed the following:

1. Determine the demographic profile of the respondents.
2. Determine the levels of conflict management skills of school heads for effective school management according to the following:
    2.1. competition;
    2.2. collaboration;
    2.3. compromise;
    2.4. avoidance; and
    2.5. accommodation.
3. Determine the levels of team-building competence of school heads for effective school management according to the following:
    3.1. shared goals;
    3.2. interdependence;
    3.3. commitment; and
    3.4. accountability
4. Determine the relationship between conflict resolution skills and team building competence of school heads for effective school management.

Figure 1

Schematic diagram showing the relationship of the dependent and independent variables of the study
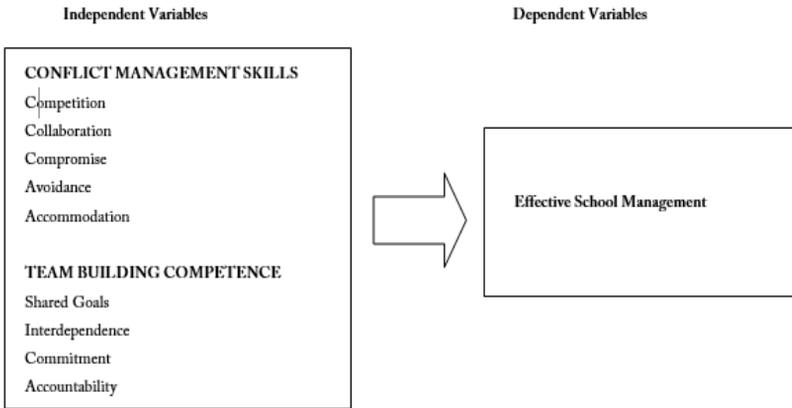
The conceptual framework for the analysis comprised independent and dependent variables relevant to the three research questions. Data collection included personal and work-related demographic information, as well as ROCI-II products for evaluating conflict management. Figure 1 illustrates the independent and dependent variables of the study. The independent variables were the five conflict management types and team building skills. The dependent variable was the effective school management. The study suggested that conflict resolution skills and team-building competence could serve as a paradigm for school administrators.

METHOD

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Malita District, Division of Davao del Sur, specifically in the barangays of Feliz, Kidalapong, Bolila, Sanghay, Talogoy, Bagsak, Lacaron, Pangian, Buhangin, Tubalan, New Argao, Tingolo, Bisang, Jack Harvey, Kibalatong, Tical, Bito, Malaway, Santagose, and Kablulan.

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlation approach to investigate the relationship between conflict resolution skills and team-building competence among school heads in Malita District, Davao del Sur. It was undertaken to describe the characteristics of the variable in a situation.

Respondents and Sampling Procedure

The respondents in the study were selected using a random draw technique. Fifty percent (50%) of the public elementary schools in Malita

North and South Districts were considered. Likewise, 195 teachers were tapped as respondents. Since there were only two (2) district supervisors, both of them were also included in the study.

Research Instrument

A questionnaire was developed and validated through pilot testing. Ten (10) teachers were selected for the pilot testing as suggested by Fraser et al. (2018). The pilot-testing respondents were requested to encircle the numbers of the items they did not understand, and to underline phrases and words that were either unclear or unintelligible. After receiving all the completed pilot research questionnaires, the researcher reviewed the responses for clarity and distribution without running an item analysis. Minor linguistic mistakes were identified, including sentence construction and spelling errors. Such errors were corrected, and the response was returned for another round.

After the pilot test, the questionnaire was submitted to the Thesis Advisory Committee for final checking. The comments and corrections of the Thesis Advisory Committee were considered. The committee found the questionnaire valid and reliable. The questionnaire was divided into parts. The first part consisted of the respondents' profiles. The second part was used to measure the conflict resolution skills and team-building competence of the school managers and school heads. The questions were scaled using the following:

Range	Description	Interpretation
4.5 − 5.0	Very High	The school administrators always manifest these criteria
3.5 − 4.4	High	The school administrators often manifest these criteria
2.5 − 3.4	Moderately High	The school administrators sometimes manifest these criteria
1.5 − 2.4	Low	The school administrators rarely manifest these criteria
1.0 − 1.4	Very Low	The school administrators never manifest these criteria

Data Gathering Procedures

The necessary permissions and clearances from the key offices of the Department of Education (DepEd) were obtained by the researcher. The questionnaire for the school managers and teachers was then administered to their respective schools or during a district meeting. The teachers were gathered at the school manager's office. They were oriented on the study and how to use the research instrument by the researcher. Moreover, for district supervisors, the questionnaire was administered at their offices. The respondents were given

sufficient time to answer and complete the questionnaire. After answering the questionnaires, they were checked and subjected to statistical analysis.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Data were tabulated and analyzed according to the study's objectives using means, percentages, Pearson's correlation coefficient (r), and r values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Respondents

There were 195 surveyed respondents. As indicated in the table, 180 or 92.3% were teachers. The other 5, or 2.56%, were Head Teachers, 5, or 2.56%, were Principals, 3, or 1.54%, were Teachers-in-Charge, and 2, or 1.02%, were Supervisors. All the 195 respondents were on a permanent status. As to years of working, 101 of 195 or 51.79% were in service for 5 to less than 10 years, followed by 10 years or more with 50 respondents or 25.64% then 2 to less than 5 years with 25 respondents or 12.82% then 1 to less than 2 years with 17 respondents at 8.72%. Finally, three respondents had less than one year of working experience.

As to educational attainment, 146 or 74.87% were baccalaureate degree holders, followed by master's graduates with 43 respondents or 22.05%, then by post-graduates with eight respondents or 4.1%, the majority of the respondents were married, comprising 183 or 93.84%, followed by those who were single, with 12 at 6.15%.

As for sex, the majority of respondents were female, comprising 183 or 93.84%, while males accounted for only 12 or 6.15%. Most of the respondents belong to the age bracket 41 – 50 years old, with 82 respondents comprising 42.05%, followed by 31-40 years old or 36.92%, then 51-60 years old at 33 or 16.92%.

Successful teamwork relies on synergy among all team members, creating an environment where they are all willing to contribute and participate to promote and nurture a positive, effective team environment. Team members must be flexible enough to adapt to cooperative working environments where goals are achieved through collaboration and social interdependence rather than individualized, competitive goals (Luca & Tarricone, 2001). Thus, the socio-demographic profile has less to do with the effectiveness of school management.

Conflict Management Skills of School Heads Competition

All in all, the indicator had a grand mean of 2.98, described as Moderately High, which is interpreted as meaning that school administrators sometimes exhibit these criteria. The researcher believed that incentives for good performance should also be added, as school administrators can pose healthy competition. This is an innovative approach, as Green (1984) suggests that

constructive conflict is managed rather than resolved in situations where conflict can be beneficial, such as facilitating innovative changes.

Collaboration

The grand mean was 3.07, described as High. The school administrators often manifested these criteria. Thus, the researcher is anchored on Stanley and Algert (2007), who propose that organizations have an imperative need to provide leaders with training in conflict management to benefit the organization holistically. This would mean that if one were equipped with such skills, it would lead to harmony and peace in the workplace.

Compromise

Managers require practical communication skills to motivate others, as well as to form teams and build relationships. This includes responding to conflicts by implementing conflict-handling behaviors, such as discussing issues privately, maintaining the calmness of all relevant parties, and adopting a flexible or open-minded approach. Rahim (1985) and Rahim and Bonoma (1979) emphasize five management styles, which were later modified into five conflict-handling styles: avoiding, compromising, dominating, integrating, and obliging. Thus, in particular, school heads or managers must manage conflict among peers, subordinates, external constituents, and students.

These interactions create situations that can lead to conflict, thus requiring specific behaviors from leaders. It is indeed essential to understand the importance and meaning of compromise before school administrators in Malita can effectively apply this skill.

Avoidance

Consequently, the school administrators demonstrated the lowest criterion in accepting corrections when confronted, with a mean of 2.3. Everybody commits mistakes. It just depends on the approach of the parties involved on how they correct each other. Unfortunately, many become victims of bullying in the workplace because they do not address the issue clearly to the right person.

Three studies, moreover, specified which particular reactions the employee confronted when faced with a conflict associated with bullying. Their findings linked conflict to being a target of bullying through productive (i.e., problem-solving) and destructive (i.e., yielding, avoiding, or fighting) conflict management styles (Aquino, 2000).

Accommodation

This implied the school manager's personality, wherein he/she could step up or step down from his/her dealings with the various personalities he/she would encounter in the workplace or the school to which he was assigned.

It would necessitate examining his skills in dealing with situations where

accommodation played a significant role in his interactions with peers and subordinates. Regarding this, Marion (1995) discussed the bureaucratic nature of public elementary schools and the need for conflict management that arises from executive leaders' interactions with various groups, including the community, board members, faculty, students, and other stakeholders. These interactions create situations that can lead to conflict, thus requiring specific behaviors from leaders. Similarly, accommodation must become a key factor in the success of the school's workplace. All in all, the grand mean is 2.56, described as Moderately High, which is interpreted as indicating that school administrators sometimes manifest this criterion in managing conflict through accommodation.

Conflict can be categorized as both constructive and destructive. Constructive conflict, otherwise known as constructive controversy, is defined as situations when one person's ideas, information, conclusions, theories, and opinions are incompatible with those of another, and the two seek to reach an agreement (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). If school administrators are given sufficient time to learn more about conflict management, they will logically improve their understanding of its categories.

Levels of Conflict Management Skills of School Heads

These indicators can help in managing conflicts among school heads, as Cherniss and Goleman (2001) suggest. Conflict management emphasizes the importance of listening, empathizing, and negotiating. Add to that Silberman's remark, the ability of managers to manage and resolve conflict is seen to encompass negotiation skills and creativity." Finally, accommodation got the lowest rate at 2.56 described as low interpreted as the school administrators rarely manifest these criteria in trying to satisfy the other's needs, accommodating and giving in to other's wishes, is often going with the other's suggestions, trying to satisfy other's expectations, tends to show favor to one party, experiences struggle between choosing from one party, listens to both parties before deciding, listens to both parties before deciding, tries logically to use conflict management styles in various situations and can accommodate reasonably.

Individuals promote and encourage their fellow team members to achieve, contribute, and learn. Interpersonal Skills include the ability to discuss issues openly with team members, being honest, trustworthy, and supportive, and showing respect and commitment to the team and its individuals. Fostering a caring work environment is crucial, including the ability to work effectively with other team members. Open Communication and positive feedback are essential, as actively listening to the concerns and needs of team members and valuing their contributions helps create an effective work environment (Johnson & Johnson, 1995).

Team Building Competence of School Heads

School administrators need to enhance their participation in activities

that inspire them to work towards common goals, as conflict management is an integral part of creating programs that disseminate ideas and skills for averting, managing, and resolving conflicts amicably (Water, 2000). This cannot be accomplished by one person or based solely on their idea.

Interdependence

The school administrators could share with others the meaning of interdependence, as it reached a mean of 2.62, described as moderately high, interpreted as this criterion is sometimes practiced in the workplace. Thus, it was highly recommended that this area receive attention from school administrators in Malita to contribute more to their school's development.

Commitment

This entails commitment; successful teamwork relies upon synergism existing between all team members, creating an environment where they are all willing to contribute and participate in order to promote and nurture a positive, effective team environment. Team members must be flexible enough to adapt to cooperative working environments where goals are achieved through collaboration and social interdependence rather than individualized, competitive goals (Luca & Tarricone, 2001). Maeroff (1993) provides arguments that team building is an effective method for addressing real problems facing a school, as it requires commitment. Additionally, team building may not be accepted by all members of the school. However, when teachers who are more inclined towards change participate in team building, it often encourages new practices that can permeate the rest of the school. Team spirit, according to Pritchett and Pound (1992), is generated through common goals. Process skills allow teachers to work productively. Teachers begin to realize that they have valuable knowledge to contribute. Networks and partnerships can emerge from team efforts in solving problems. Staff development can become more closely aligned with the needs of students. He warns that team building should be directed towards solving serious problems and not be adopted as another sideshow, as education has had enough of these. Team-building training will influence goals such as communication, trust, and support, which are examples of skills and attitudes.

Accountability

The school administrators acted by the principles of the Civil Service, often achieving a mean score of 3.80, which is described as high. At the same time, they needed the team-building competence to align all activities with the school's value on accountability, with the lowest mean at 2.19, which could be interpreted as indicating that school administrators rarely practice this criterion.

Team building is the process of helping a work group become more effective in accomplishing its task and satisfying the needs of group members

(De Meuse et al., 2009). Moreover, an intervention conducted in a work unit as a response to a condition (or conditions) perceived as needing improvement (Dyer, 1977). This strength of the school administrator can significantly help in accomplishing their task as they follow the school's plans, principles, and activities.

Level of Team Building Competence of School Heads

Special training can also be provided to enhance team building, focusing on three key areas: the quality concept, training in the use of quality tools, and instruction in specialized topics. Quality concept training is based on the theories of experts such as Dr. W. Edwards Deming. Such training can last from eight to twelve hours and is intended to generate enthusiasm for the quality concept. Training for the use of quality tools involves equipping employees with the skills and knowledge necessary to collaborate effectively within their environment. Tools such as Pareto charts, cause-and-effect diagrams, and control charts are demonstrated as methods for problem-solving. The final stage involves training tailored to the specific needs of the organization (Brown & Starkey, 1994).

Correlation between Conflict Resolution Skills and Team Building Competence of School Heads

The correlation coefficient result in this study was $r = -0.125$, which implies a weak, slight negative correlation between conflict resolution and team building. As conflict resolution increases, team building tends to decrease. As teams must also understand the social processes of leading a meeting, generating creativity, self-management, and leadership, as outlined by Sims (1995), the author also emphasizes the need to manage conflict.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Based on the presented, analyzed, and interpreted data, this chapter presents the key findings and recommendations for this study, which assesses the level of conflict resolution skills and team-building competence of school heads in the school management of Malita District, Davao Occidental. The study sought to answer the following problem statement such as: 1) Demographic profile of the respondents; 2) Levels of conflict management skills of school heads according to Competition, Collaboration, Compromise, Avoidance, and Accommodation; 3) Levels of team building competence of school heads as to Shared goals, Interdependence, Commitment, and Accountability; and 4) Correlation between conflict resolution skills and team building competence of school heads. Most of the interviewees were the 180 teachers on permanent status, mainly belonging to service periods of 2-5 years. Moreover, most respondents are college graduates, and the majority are

married, with the majority being between 41 and 50 years old.

Among all the indicators of conflict management, collaboration achieved the highest mean, while Compromise achieved the lowest. Furthermore, among all the indicators of team building competence in school heads, Accountability achieved the highest Mean, while Interdependence achieved the lowest Mean. Notably, there is a weak/slight negative correlation between conflict resolution and team building. As conflict resolution increases, team building tends to decrease.

CONCLUSION

A significant relationship exists between conflict resolution skills and team building competence in effective school management in public elementary schools of Malita District, Davao Occidental.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's results will serve as a reference for school heads and principals, researchers, and other stakeholders in the education sector, particularly in matters related to conflict resolution and team building. Additionally, the study's results would serve these organizations in formulating efficient and effective conflict resolution skills for public school heads, managers, and teachers, ultimately leading to improved school management. Moreover, policymakers can use the study to inform their policies and decisions on how to implement conflict resolution skills and team-building competence in the workplace. The results of the study would increase the level of understanding regarding the handling of subordinates and coworkers in their respective workplaces or institutions. This would also tell what particular attitude or behavior needs to be enhanced and improved. Moreover, students will be informed about the work attitudes of teachers as disclosed through the results of this study, and corrective measures, if necessary, will be applied. Ultimately, this was beneficial for the students, as the lowest rate of compromise was achieved. Therefore, training in negotiations and conflict resolution should be provided to school administrators. As interdependence achieved the lowest mean, the school administrators need to know its meaning and open themselves to a communication structure that allows faculty members to participate. Since there is a weak or slight negative correlation between conflict resolution and team building, school administrators need to incorporate team building as a significant component in improving the school climate. They should then identify areas needing the most improvement and introduce team-building techniques.

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