

## Conflict Management Styles of Secondary School Principals and Its Relationship to Organizational Climate of the Selected Schools in Quezon City

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### Abstract

*This study aimed to determine the relationship between the conflict management styles of secondary school principals of Quezon City and their organizational climate. Two standardized tests were used to conduct the study, the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument and the Organizational Climate Descriptive Questionnaire – Rutgers School (OCDQ-RS). To achieve the aim of the study, thirty one (31) school principals and 1,168 teachers participated in the study.*

*Results show that there is no significant relationship exists between the Conflict Management styles of school principals and the following organizational climate: Supportive Principal Behavior, Directive Principal, Engaged Teacher Behavior, and Intimate Teacher Behavior. However, significant relationship exists between the conflict styles and frustrated teacher behavior. In addition, the prevalent conflict management styles of school principals are Collaborating and Compromising. Collaborating is characterized by being assertive and cooperative whereas compromising is moderate in both areas. (Thomas-Kilmann, 1998) Furthermore, in terms of organizational climate, Supportive Principal Behavior and Engaged Teacher Behavior exist as organizational climate in the schools in Quezon City.*

*It is recommended that the Department of Education may organize a conflict resolution trainings and simulations to all school principals in order to prepare them for conflict management in their respective schools. In order to assess the overall organizational climate of the school, other stakeholders such as the students and administrators may also assess the climate existing in their school.*

**Key words:** organizational climate, conflict management, school principals, Quezon City, Philippines

## **INTRODUCTION**

Every day, people deal with situations differently; but most of the time, people face them depending on what they believe in, their tradition, and the perspective over these situations. Since humans have differences in dealing with situations and how they interact with other people, sometimes, if not all the time, people face conflicts.

Conflicts occur in any situation, anytime, anywhere. It has been a normal situation in a workplace. If one opposes the idea and opinion of another person, there is conflict. If one breaks or did not follow a rule one is under conflict. If one does not like another person's personality, there is conflict. When there are opposing interests between two parties, there is conflict. When a person interferes with matters concerning another person, there is conflict. If somebody reacts to what was just said or what was done, conflict arises. Conflicts are inevitable especially in the academe although it is not necessarily a disadvantage in the workplace because it may redound to the positively to the relationship of the entire organization.

Conflicts are struggles between two parties who have incompatible behavior, choices, and preferences.

As the head of the school, it is the school principal's responsibility to handle conflicts. It is their responsibility to establish a positive environment among the members of the faculty. While they cannot be associated to all troubles that may arise among faculty and administrative employees, how the school principals handle conflict may have an effect in mitigating or complicating clashes among school personnel. The ability to resolve and handle conflicts is an important skill that every school administrators should master. It is for the reason that school heads are the ones who faced and eventually resolves conflicts in the school such as confrontation among teachers, organizational needs, and among others.

Moreover, school principals' way of handling conflicts might affect the performance of the teachers. Some might react positively, but others might take it against the school administrator.

Conflicts may also lead to positive effects. If it is taken constructively, it might result to good working environment and positive rapport between the teachers depending on how the teachers take it. A teacher might work in a positive working environment free of conflicts. Positive outlook at school or in the teachers' work environment is very important. It may help them to be efficient, effective, and productive. In addition, some might see it as an opportunity to work harder. Some might take it as a challenge, a challenge that would push them to become more effective and productive teacher.

On the other hand, conflicts might yield negative effects. If it was not taken constructively, conflict can destroy the relationship between the school principal and teacher; and the teacher to another teacher. It might also result to disorderliness and disorganization of the school.

School principals are committed to improve the school system that includes increase in retention and participation rates, increase in the graduation rates, low drop outs, and in general, make the school a place where students want to be rather than have to be. Moreover, it is the school principal's job to make sure positive working environment is prevalent in the school system where teachers are determined to achieve the vision, mission, and goals of the school and students are highly motivated to study and achieve their objectives.

However, school principals face a lot of challenges—diversity of the school and the community, administration and academic concerns, and lastly dealing with stakeholders such as parents, alumni, and the industry. In addition, there are unmotivated teachers who seem to be reasonably content and are receptive to new ideas and strategies. Teachers who describe the school as work environment in much more negative terms—teachers who are leaving early, teachers skipping meetings, and teachers who are not attending any extra-curricular activities. These are just examples of the many dilemmas that a school principal should address to have a positive school climate.

One of the factors that set the scene for effective leadership in schools is the school climate. Teachers' performances in schools are in part, determined by the climate in which they work. Organizational climate is a general concept that refers to teachers' perception of the

school's work environment; it is affected by the formal organization, informal organization, and politics, all of which, including climate, affect the motivations and behavior of teachers. According to Hoy (1990), the set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another and influences the behavior of its members is the organizational climate of the school. More specifically, climate is a relatively enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by teachers, and influences their behavior, and is based on their collective perception.

This study sought to know the conflict-management styles of school principals of the selected schools in the Division of City Schools-Quezon City. It also sought to know if there is a relationship between the conflict management styles of schools principals and organizational climate.

### **Theoretical Background**

The research is anchored using the conflict management styles of Thomas and Kilmann (1998) and the Organizational climate by Hoy, Tarter, and Kottkamp. (1992)

### **Conflict Management Styles by Thomas & Kilmann (1998)**

No two individuals have exactly the same expectations and desires; according to Thomas and Kilmann (2015), conflict is a natural part of their interactions with others. "Conflict" according to them are those situations where the two parties has incompatible behavior or concerns. In such situations, people can describe an individual's behavior along two dimensions: a) assertiveness is the extent into which one satisfy his or her own concern other than his/her; and b) cooperativeness is satisfying other people's concern other than satisfying one's own concern. (Thomas-Kilmann, 1998)

From the two dimensions elaborated, Thomas and Kilmann (1992) identified five methods of conflict styles are then defined: 1) Competing (assertive and uncooperative); 2) Accommodating (unassertive and cooperative); 3) Avoiding (unassertive and uncooperative); 4) Collaborating (assertive and cooperative); and 5) compromising (moderate on being assertive and cooperative).

### **Organizational Climate by Hoy, Tarter, and Kottkamp (1992)**

Organizational climate refers to the teachers' perception about the work environment of their schools. (Hoy, 1972). This may be affected by relationship of the teachers towards work, colleagues, and their relationship to their principal. In 1991, Hoy, Tarter, and Kottkamp developed the Organizational Climate Descriptive Questionnaire to fit the secondary schools since the original OCDQ was originally designed to use only by elementary schools. In the revised OCDQ-RS all the climate instruments describe the behavior of Principals as they interact with their teachers and the behavior of teachers as they interact with their colleagues.

#### *Principal-Teacher Interactions*

There are two key aspects in determining the organizational climate in terms of Principal- Teacher interactions, supportive and directive principal behavior. Supportive Principal Behavior refers to the efforts of the school principal to motivate the teachers at work by helping and supporting them in the attainment of their tasks and showing concern in both the professional and personal welfare of the teachers. On the other hand, Directive Principal Behavior is characterized by constantly controlling the overall activities of the teachers.

#### *Teachers' Behavior in School*

In terms of teachers' behavior in school, Hoy, Tarter and Kottkamp identified three aspects of organizational climate. Engaged teacher behavior is characterized by high faculty morale, where teachers are proud of what they are accomplishing in school. Frustrated teacher behavior is characterized by having disruptive behavior of colleagues and administration, too many workloads and excessive duties. And lastly, Intimate teacher behavior is reflective of having a strong relationship among faculty members.

### **RESEARCH PROBLEMS**

Three research problems were answered in this study. First, what are the conflict management styles of secondary school principals? Second is the organizational climate of the schools as perceived by the

teachers. And lastly the relationship between the conflict management styles of principals and the organizational climate.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The main purpose of this study is to prove if there is a significant relationship between the conflict management styles of principals and the organizational climate of the schools, descriptive research design is used.

The study used two standardized test to measure the conflict management styles of principals and the assessment of the teachers about the organizational climate of their respective schools. The first instrument is the Conflict management mode instrument created by Thomas-Kilmann (1998) and the organizational climate descriptive questionnaire which was developed and improved by Hoy, Tarter, and Kottkamp (1992).

There are 31 secondary school principals who identified their conflict management styles and there are a total of 1,168 public school teachers who identified the organizational climate existing in their schools.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Conflict Management Styles of Secondary Public School Principals**

There are 31 principal-respondents of the Division of City Schools in Quezon City. The result recognizes that 8 or 25.8% of the respondents' conflict management style is Collaborating. This means that the principals are both assertive and cooperative in dealing with conflicts. Moreover, there are also 8 or 25.8% of the respondents whose style is compromising. This means that 8 principals deal with conflicts to be moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. Same results were recognized when Edward Cox (1994) examined the conflict management styles of the school in South Carolina. According to his study, Principals strongly preferred the Integrating Conflict (Collaborating) management style. The eight principals, when managing conflicts, preferred to deal with the two parties and satisfy their concerns. The findings are similar with that of the study by

Boucher (2013) about the conflict management styles and its relationship to school climate. In her study there is an overwhelming preference among the sample group of principals for the Integrating (collaborating) conflict management styles. She added that there are themes that emerged from the interviews: the importance of listening, the importance of establishing trust, the importance of dealing with conflict quickly and directly, and for principals, the value of developing self-knowledge. The data shows that the majority of the school principals tend to be collaborating or compromising in resolving conflicts in the school.

In addition, five (5) or 16.1% is avoiding that is unassertive and uncooperative; 4 or 12.9 is Accommodating that is unassertive and cooperative; and 1 or 3.2% is competing that is assertive and uncooperative.

Moreover, there are five (5) principals who have two or three conflict management styles as scored in their Conflict Management Mode Instrument questionnaire. There are 2 or 6.5% whose styles are Collaborating and Avoiding; 1 or 3.2% uses Competing and Collaborating; 1 or 3.2% utilizes Compromising and Avoiding; and lastly, 1 or 3.2% has three conflict management styles: Collaborating, Compromising, and Accommodating. This means that not all situations principals use only one conflict mode when facing conflicts in the school. They may use several types of mode depending on the extent and depth of the situation they are facing. Moreover, every person is capable of using all five conflict-handling modes. As discussed by Thomas-Kilmann (2015), a person cannot be characterized by only using one conflict style. Certain people may use some modes better than the others and, therefore, tend to rely on those modes more heavily than others—whether because of temperament or practice.” In the study of Balay (2006) about understanding the conflict management strategies of administrators and teachers, three conflict management strategies (competing, avoiding, and compromising) have been examined in terms of task and school type. Results have indicated that administrators are more likely to use avoiding and compromising strategies than teachers. Moreover, administrators and teachers in the private schools use compromising, avoiding, and competing as conflict styles as compared to their counterparts in the public schools.

### **Descriptive Analysis of the Organizational Climate of Schools**

Descriptive statistics is used to summarize the quantitative data of the existing organizational climate of schools. There are a total of 1,168 public secondary school principals who identified the existing organizational climate in Quezon City, Philippines.

**Table 1. Organizational Climate: Principal and Teacher Interactions**

<b>Principal and Teacher Interactions</b>	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>
1. Supportive Principal Behavior	2.83	Often Occurs
2. Directive Principal Behavior	2.44	Sometimes Occurs

The table below shows the organizational climate of the 31 participating schools in terms of Principal-Teachers relationship. Supportive Principal behavior got the highest mean of 2.83 or with verbal interpretation of Often Occurs. On the other hand, Directive Principal Behavior has a weighted mean of 2.44 or with verbal interpretation of sometimes occurs. It is evident that from the two climate, supportive principal behavior is the organizational climate exist in terms of principal and teacher relationship. The result clearly recognizes the ability of the school principals in Quezon City to be supportive to their teachers. All of the indicators in the area of supportive behavior falls under Often Occurs. As discussed by Meador (2019), having a supportive principal can make all the difference for a teacher. Teachers want to know that their principal has their best interests in mind. One of the main duties of a principal is to provide ongoing, collaborative teacher support. The relationship between a teacher and a principal has to be built on a foundation of trust. This type of relationship takes a lot of time to build. Principals must slowly cultivate these relationships while taking the time to get to know each teacher's strength and weaknesses. Moreover, all principals should continuously offer their teachers advice, direction, or assistance. This is especially true for beginning teachers, but it is true for teachers throughout all levels of experience. The principal is the instructional leader, and providing advice, direction, or assistance is the primary job of a leader.

According to the article “Primer on Communication Studies”, supportive principal behavior is good at reducing the stress and frustration of the group which helps create a positive climate and can



help increase group members' positive feelings about the task and other group members. With a supportive principal as a model, such behaviors would likely be performed as part of established group norms, which can do much to enhance social cohesion. Supportive principals do not provide unconditionally-positive praise. They also competently provide constructive criticism in order to challenge and enhance group members' contributions. Supportive principal is a leadership style where a manager does not simply delegate tasks and receive results but instead supports an employee until the task's completion.

According to the research of Wachira, Tanui, and Kalai (2016), teacher job satisfaction is influenced by head teacher in directing teachers' through guiding and controlling them on how to carry out school tasks. These tasks need to be set clear with rules, guidelines, timelines, and standards of performance. The expertise needed to achieve goals must come from a broader base of teachers with diverse skills and knowledge; thus, inexperienced individuals need guidance. Directive leadership style requires leader to communicate to subordinates about the responsibilities formally in order to avoid ambiguity. The study concludes that head teachers should utilize directive style to ensure that goals and tasks allocated are realized and meet timelines however, structures should be put in place to enhance teacher autonomy.

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of organizational climate in terms of Teachers' behavior in school. The result of the findings show that the existing organizational climate in terms of the behavior of teachers in school is engaged teacher behavior which has a weighted mean of 2.89 and a verbal interpretation of often occurs. Frustrated teacher behavior has a weighted mean of 2.28 or sometimes occurs and Intimate teacher behavior has a weighted mean of 2.46 or sometimes occurs.

**Table 2. Organizational Climate: Teachers' behavior in school**

<b>Teachers' behavior in school</b>	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>
1. Engaged Teacher Behavior	2.89	Often Occurs
2. Frustrated Teacher Behavior	2.28	Sometimes Occurs
3. Intimate Teacher Behavior	2.46	Sometimes Occurs

The results only mean that when it comes to more complex and crucial responsibilities, students should be guided and monitored by the teachers. Teachers are not only concerned about each other, they are committed to the success of their students. They are friendly with students, trust students, and are optimistic about the ability of students to succeed Hoy (1972). Moreover, the results clearly show that teachers do have concern to the students not just in academics but in other extra-curricular activities as well. The role of the teachers in forming the students is apparent in the result of the study. As College (2018) have discussed, successful teachers are those have the ability to maximize the learning potential of all students in their class. Developing positive relationships between a teacher and student is a fundamental aspect of quality teaching and student learning. Positive teacher-student relationships promote a sense of school belonging and encourage students to participate cooperatively. Students develop confidence to experiment and succeed in an environment where they are restricted by the fear of failure. Teachers are able to assist students with motivation and goal setting, and students can turn to them for advice and guidance.

Hoy (1972) has elaborated this frustrated behavior as teacher behavior that refers to a general pattern of interference from both administration and colleagues that distracts from the basic task of teaching. Routine duties, administrative paperwork, and assigned nonteaching duties are excessive; moreover, teachers irritate, annoy, and interrupt each Teacher such as lack of teaching guides and learning materials, working under deadline pressures, students' lack of interest and poor study habits, having to deal with students' misbehavior or misconduct and financial burden.

Intimate teacher behavior reflects a strong and cohesive network of social relationships among the faculty. Teachers know each other well, are close personal friends, and regularly socialize together (Hoy, 1972). The first two top indicators only show that in terms of teacher to teacher relationship, there is a positive feedback among the teachers in Quezon City. There is a cohesive relationship among them and they socialize regularly to build stronger relationship. According to Meador (2018) in his article "The Importance of Effective Communication between Teachers", effective teacher to teacher communication is vitally essential in the success of

a teacher. Regular collaboration and team planning sessions are extremely valuable. Engaging in these practices has a positive impact on teacher effectiveness. Having peers that one can collaborate with and lean on during tough times is essential.

Collegial relationships between teachers are very important within the school environment. They are essential to ensuring the school operates smoothly and within a positive atmosphere. Positive relationships between teachers benefit both students and teachers within the school. Professional development is reliant on positive relationships between teaching staff, with it being an essential component of effective professional development. (Smith, 2015)

### **Relationship between the Conflict Management Styles of Principals and Organizational Climate**

**Table 3. Principal's Styles of Interacting with Teachers**

Variable Tested	Computed Chi-Square	P-Value	Decision	Remarks
1. Conflict Management Styles and Supportive Principal Behavior	16.222	0.880	Accept Ho	Not Significant
2. Conflict Management Styles and Directive Principal Behavior	12.763	0.690	Accept Ho	Not Significant

The table above shows the significant relationship between the conflict management styles of school principals and the organizational climate in terms of Principal's Styles of Interacting with Teachers. It is presented that there is no significant relationship between the conflict management style of principals and Supportive Principal Behavior and Directive Principal Behavior.

#### *Conflict Management Styles and Supportive Principal Behavior*

The computed chi-square is 16.222 and the p-value is 0.880. Since the computed p-value is greater than the 0.05 assumed level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, there is no significant relationship between the conflict management styles of school principals and organizational climate in terms of supportive principal behavior. The result of the study is in consonance with the result of the study of Phyu and Vinitwatanakhun (2018). The result of

their study shows that most teachers perceived their principals' leadership behavior as supportive as high. Hence principals' leadership behaviors were surveyed as supportive. Principals-teachers and teachers-teachers relationships could be interpreted as open and teachers perceived their school climates as open climates. There is no difference between school climates perceived by teachers.

According to Schilling (1988) supportive behavior by the principal appears to result in more open teacher behaviors. An increase in the openness of principal behavior would seem to suggest a lower teacher disengagement rate. The findings also imply that the more supportive the principal is, the lower the teachers' disengagement will be. If a principal is restrictive in his or her behavior, there seems to be some evidence to indicate that the teachers will show increased disengagement.

*Conflict Management Styles and Directive Principal Behavior*

The computed chi-square is 12.763 and the p-value is 0.690. Since the computed p-value is greater than the 0.05 assumed level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between the conflict management styles of school principals and organizational climate in terms of directive principal behavior. This claim is also supported by Knox (2011). From the schools he has studied, both have shown indicators of directive principal behavior as poor school climate. According to him teachers reported negatively on the interview.

**Table 4. Teachers' Behavior in School**

Variable Tested	Computed Chi-Square	P-Value	Decision	Remarks
1. Conflict Management Styles and Engaged Teacher Behavior	34.329	0.357	Accept Ho	Not Significant
2. Conflict Management Styles and Frustrated Teacher Behavior	29.686	0.02	Reject Ho	Significant
3. Conflict Management Styles and Intimate Teacher Behavior	45.364	0.059	Accept Ho	Not Significant

*Conflict Management Styles and Engaged Teacher Behavior*

The computed chi-square is 34.329 and the p-value is 0.357. Since the computed p-value is greater than the 0.05 assumed level of

significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, there is no significant relationship between conflict management styles of school principals and organizational climate in terms of engaged behavior.

Lazrido (2011), in his study, has described teacher engagement as enigmatic. He suggested that investigation of Greek teachers' professionalism may be fruitful, to determine whether certain dimensions of their professionalization may need strengthening and thus to identify ways of improving how teachers are trained and certified.

#### *Conflict Management Styles and Frustrated Teacher Behavior*

The computed chi-square is 29.686 and the p-value is 0.020. Since the computed p-value is less than the 0.05 assumed level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected which means that the assessment of the management styles and frustrated behavior are statistically significant. Similarly, Yoon (2002) has found out that the level of stress teachers feel affects their attitude toward teaching as well as impacts the quality of the relationship they have with their students. As difficult as it may be, the teachers ultimately in control of, and therefore responsible for, the educational climate provided to their students. Providing a positive educational climate may be a challenging area that requires more support to the teachers.

Moreover, the finding that the school teachers were seen as not being much frustrated by or diverted from teaching by the behaviors of administrators and/or colleagues is also somewhat unexpected. One possible explanation, as other research suggests, is that teachers may have become inured to the constraints of a highly centralized, bureaucratic education system (Ladridou, 2011).

#### *Conflict Management Styles and Intimate Teacher Behavior*

The computed chi-square is 45.364 and the p-value is 0.059. Since the computed p-value is greater than the 0.05 assumed level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that there is no significant relationship between the conflict management styles of school principals and organizational climate in terms of intimate teacher behavior. Knox (2011) has described, in his study, the teacher intimate behavior. He has referred to them as the ones who "demonstrated a cohesive network when working together in the

faculty training and in the instances I observed of teacher collaboration. The teachers also had opportunities to visit with each other during their duty-free lunch, when some groups met in the cafeteria and others in classrooms or teacher lounges. No disagreements, arguments, altercations, or obvious problems were evident.”

The results are supported with the research output of Ogretir (2008). Her research found out that there is a relationship between the culture variables and conflict styles. It was concluded that there is a sub-culture in the community that can be characterized as collaboration/integrating styles. In addition, based from an article by the American Institute of Stress (2019), 28% of the causes of stress in the workplace is people issues and 46% came from the workload. The existence of conflict in the workplace has some effects in the organization’s productivity and positive environment of the workplace.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Principals in the Division of City Schools of Quezon City are supportive to their teachers and to the entire school community. They motivate their teachers through constructive criticism and by being a good example to them. They, as well, set an example in terms of working hard, assisting the teachers with their needs and explain their reason for criticism. On the other hand, teachers in the division help and support each other. Their morale is high and they respect the competence of their colleague.

When resolving conflicts, the principals tend to satisfy the needs of the parties involved which is very evident from the result where principals’ prevalent conflict styles are Collaborating and Compromising. On the other hand, results have indicated that some administrators do not use only conflict style in resolving problems. Principals may use several types of mode depending on the extent and depth of the situation they are facing. Moreover, every person is capable of using all five conflict-handling modes.

There is no significant relationship between the Conflict Management Styles of school principals and the following organizational climate: Supportive Principal Behavior and Engaged

Teacher Behavior, Directive Principal Behavior, and Intimate Teacher Behavior. However, relationship exists between the school principals' Conflict Management Styles and Frustrated Teacher Behavior. This means that conflict management styles of principals affects the frustrated behaviors of teachers.

The Department of Education may organize a conflict management trainings or seminars` to all school principals in order to prepare them for conflict management in school administration. In addition, a conflict management program for the new principals can also be considered in order to simulate various approaches in solving conflicts in educational institutions. In order to assess the overall organizational climate, student evaluation of the organizational climate of the school can also be designed and conducted to make the assessment more inclusive. School principals may plan and develop programs that will help improve school system and build good rapport among all the teachers and staffs of the school.

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