

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS: VOICES OF PUBLIC-SCHOOL HEADS

Jovelyn L. Godes¹

¹Student, Graduate School, Rizal Memorial Colleges, Inc.

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to explore the perspectives and experiences of public school heads in managing conflicts between parents and teachers. It aims to uncover the common sources and types of conflicts that arise within public schools, shedding light on the underlying issues that contribute to these disputes. By delving into the strategies employed by school heads to mediate and resolve conflicts, the study intends to highlight effective practices that promote constructive communication and collaboration among stakeholders. Phenomenology aims to explore and understand individuals' lived experiences of a particular phenomenon. In this study, researchers likely employed a phenomenological approach to delve into the subjective experiences of school leaders in resolving conflicts between teachers and parents. A total of ten (10) participants are considered in this study who will join the in-depth interview and focused group discussion respectively. The findings of this study offer several valuable insights and implications for practice in conflict resolution within school environments. As schools increasingly recognize the importance of effective conflict management strategies, the role of principals, teachers, and parents in fostering a cooperative and harmonious atmosphere becomes more crucial. As schools continue to evolve, so too must the approaches to conflict resolution. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into current strategies but also point to the need for continuous improvement and innovation. In the future, further research and the refinement of conflict resolution practices can pave the way for more effective conflict management, helping schools build resilient, harmonious environments conducive to both academic and personal growth.

KEYWORDS- Conflict Management, Parents, Teachers, Voices of Public School Heads

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of education, collaboration between parents and teachers is crucial for fostering a supportive and effective learning environment for students. However, despite the shared goal of promoting academic success and personal growth, conflicts between parents and teachers can arise, posing challenges to the educational process. These conflicts may stem from differences in perspectives, communication breakdowns, or varying expectations regarding the child's education. Public school principals often find themselves at the forefront of managing and resolving such conflicts, navigating the complexities inherent in balancing the needs and interests of both parties.

Understanding the dynamics of conflicts between parents and teachers is essential for creating strategies and interventions that promote harmony and cooperation within the educational community. This study delves into the experiences of public school principals in resolving conflicts between parents and teachers, shedding light on the underlying factors, effective practices, and challenges encountered in this process.

Additionally, it analyzes the impact of organizational culture, leadership styles, and external influences on the dynamics of conflict. The study analyzes the most effective strategies utilized by public school principals in resolving disagreements, such as mediation, negotiation, and collaborative problem-solving procedures. It emphasizes the significance of establishing unambiguous channels of communication, defining expectations, and fostering transparency.

Conflict resolution is crucial for a positive school environment in Kenya. This training equips parents and teachers with communication strategies to manage conflicts effectively. Key components include understanding conflict, distinguishing between work-related and personal conflicts, and using active listening, I-statements, and open-ended questions. Problem-solving techniques include collaborative approaches, brainstorming, compromises, emotional regulation, empathy, and follow-up. Work-related conflicts between teaching staff and principals can be caused by poor communication, competition for limited resources, and the nature of the conflict. Strategies include clear communication channels, transparent decision-making processes, collaborative budgeting, and prioritizing resources. Professional development includes training on conflict resolution and problem-solving, workshops, and team-building activities (Nyabera et. al, 2023).

Meanwhile, the findings of Sannadan et.al. (2020) also demonstrated that the learners overwhelmingly supported the court's ruling. This implies that in every court decision, the best interests of the children remain the first concern. The study's findings may teach higher-level officials at the Department of Education about how to prevent such conflicts from occurring. Furthermore, based on the findings, it is recommended that the education department take additional steps to strengthen the implementation of the Child Protection Policy in order to keep every learner informed of their rights and to make every stakeholder aware of their duties and responsibilities in promoting learners' well-being and education.

In Nabunturan, Davao de Oro, it was discovered that, despite the numerous challenges educational leaders face in the twenty-first century, they are consistently able to find ways to manage and adapt. It is recommended that educational leaders continually

enhance their personal and professional skills by participating in training sessions and seminars, supported by the department of education. These findings will act as a foundation for future research into the experiences of other school administrators, teachers, and students who have also experienced the transformations in 21st-century education (Panibon, 2023).

Moreover, the study also examines prevalent challenges encountered by principals, including power dynamics, emotional intensity, and opposing priorities. The study proposes suggestions for improving support networks, opportunities for professional growth, and collaborative frameworks within educational institutions. It also advocates for the incorporation of conflict resolution skills into leadership training programs and educational policy. The study seeks to provide information for evidence-based practices, encourage discourse, and facilitate collaborative collaborations within the educational community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Phol (2021) emphasized a set of strategies for resolving conflicts between teachers and parents in schools. It explains the common causes of conflicts, such as misunderstandings and communication breakdowns, and emphasizes the importance of addressing them constructively. Effective communication is emphasized, with practical tips for both teachers and parents. The resource encourages a collaborative approach to problem-solving, focusing on open dialogue, mutual respect, and solutions that benefit students' well-being and academic progress. It suggests seeking support from school administrators, counselors, or mediators trained in conflict resolution, emphasizing impartiality and confidentiality. Building positive relationships between teachers and parents is also emphasized, promoting trust, empathy, and mutual understanding. This resource serves as a practical guide for educators, parents, and school administrators to navigate conflicts effectively and promote constructive partnerships for students' educational experiences.

Public school principals frequently encounter conflicts due to legislative, financial, and communication issues. Parents' concerns often stem from differing interpretations of legislation, leading to misunderstandings and disputes. Additionally, periodic problems related to legislative changes, financial constraints, and communication breakdowns exacerbate these conflicts. Principals must navigate these challenges to address parents' concerns about their students effectively and maintain a positive school environment. This study examines the experiences of principals in managing these conflicts, providing insights into effective strategies and common obstacles (Serkan, 2022).

The study of Akif (2019) highlighted the need for principals to have conflict resolution skills and support mechanisms to manage conflicts effectively. It suggests professional development opportunities and resources for addressing complexities in educational contexts. Proactive measures like open communication and clear protocols can be implemented. The findings provide insights into public school principals' experiences and offer a foundation for further research and interventions promoting constructive collaboration.

Also, Public school principals often face conflicts due to legislative, financial, and communication issues. Parents' concerns frequently arise from differing interpretations of legislation, leading to misunderstandings and disputes. Additionally, periodic problems related to legislative changes, financial constraints, and communication breakdowns intensify these conflicts. Parents' concerns about their students are often linked to these recurring issues. This study explores the experiences of principals in managing these conflicts, highlighting effective strategies and common challenges (Ariciouglu, 2022).

Moreover, Alinsunurin (2020) stated that school administrators play a critical role in mediating disputes between parents and instructors. It highlights the necessity of equipping them with the abilities, tools, and support systems needed to resolve disputes amicably. The paper makes recommendations for further investigation into the long-term effects of interventions in conflict resolution on student outcomes and school culture.

Research Questions

This study examines the roles of parents and teachers in the educational process, their duties, and the influence of conflict resolution tactics on school culture and community relations.

1. What are the experiences encountered by public school principals in managing conflicts between parents and teachers?
2. How do public school principals manage to address the conflict between parents and teachers?
- 3.What lessons can be drawn by the principals in resolving conflicts between parents and teachers?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Phenomenology aims to explore and understand individuals' lived experiences of a particular phenomenon. In this study, researchers likely employed a phenomenological approach to delve into the subjective experiences of school leaders in resolving conflicts between teachers and parents. Phenomenology allows researchers to uncover the underlying meanings, perceptions, and interpretations that school leaders attribute to their experiences.

Research Participants

In this study, the participants primarily consisted of school leaders, including principals, school heads, and other administrators with leadership responsibilities within educational institutions. These individuals were selected because of their firsthand experience in managing conflicts between teachers and parents. As central figures in school leadership, they were well-positioned to offer valuable insights into conflict resolution processes, having direct involvement in facilitating communication and resolving disputes within their respective school communities.



Efforts were made to ensure diversity among the participants to capture a broad range of perspectives on conflict resolution in various educational contexts. This diversity encompassed factors such as educational settings geographic locations, and demographic characteristics. By including participants with diverse backgrounds and experiences, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of conflict resolution dynamics within different school environments.

Furthermore, participants varied in their levels of experience and expertise in conflict resolution. Some school leaders may have had extensive experience in managing conflicts, while others may have been relatively new to their leadership roles. This variation allowed the study to explore how differing levels of experience and expertise influence approaches to conflict resolution. By including participants with a range of experiences, the researchers could examine the nuances and complexities of conflict resolution processes and identify potential factors contributing to effective resolution strategies.

Overall, the purposeful sampling strategy and diverse characteristics of the participants facilitated a comprehensive exploration of school leaders' experiences in resolving conflicts between teachers and parents, contributing to the depth and richness of the research findings.

A total of ten (10) participants are considered in this study who will join the in-depth interview and focused group discussion respectively. Five (5) of them will join the in-depth interview (IDI) while the remaining participants will be subjected to the focus group discussion (FGD). All data gathered during IDI and FGD will be recorded and transmuted to summarize the responses of the participants in an orderly manner.

Research Instrument

In this qualitative study exploring the lived experiences of public school heads in managing conflicts between parents and teachers, the interview guide plays a vital role as the primary research instrument for gathering in-depth and meaningful data. Designed using a semi-structured format, the interview guide allows for both consistency and flexibility—ensuring key areas are explored while also enabling school heads to freely share personal stories, reflections, and strategies that go beyond scripted responses.

The semi-structured format ensures that each interview covers all necessary themes while still accommodating follow-up or probing questions based on participants' responses. This format is particularly suitable for exploring complex interpersonal dynamics and leadership practices, as it encourages respondents to describe real-life scenarios, share personal reflections, and offer context-specific strategies.

Data Analysis

The collected interview data will be analyzed using phenomenological analysis techniques, which involve a systematic exploration of the lived experiences described by participants. Researchers engage in a process of bracketing, setting aside preconceptions and biases, to focus solely on the participants' accounts. Through a process of thematic coding and interpretation, researchers identify common patterns, themes, and essences that emerge from the data, capturing the shared lived experiences of stakeholders.

Creswell (2013) outlines six crucial stages in qualitative data analysis that are necessary for assessing and interpreting published research findings in the realm of education. This approach typically involves a systematic process of analyzing qualitative data, often following steps such as coding, categorizing, and thematic analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, we will discuss the key implications of the findings from the study on conflict resolution strategies within school environments, particularly focusing on the role of principals, teachers, and parents. The chapter will also explore how these insights can be applied to enhance the management of conflicts in schools and improve the overall school climate.

Additionally, we will examine the limitations of the study and propose future research directions that could further explore and refine conflict resolution strategies in educational settings. This chapter aims to offer practical recommendations for school leaders and educators to foster a more collaborative, empathetic, and fair approach to conflict management, benefiting all stakeholders involved.

Implications

The findings of this study offer several valuable insights and implications for practice in conflict resolution within school environments. As schools increasingly recognize the importance of effective conflict management strategies, the role of principals, teachers, and parents in fostering a cooperative and harmonious atmosphere becomes more crucial.

This section will delve into the implications of the study's findings, particularly how the principles of empathy, communication, neutrality, and collaboration can be applied to enhance conflict resolution efforts. By understanding these implications, school leaders can better navigate conflicts, promote positive relationships, and ensure that all stakeholders, students, staff, and parents, are equipped to contribute to a healthier and more productive school environment. Furthermore, these implications can guide policy development, professional development programs, and school practices aimed at addressing conflicts in a proactive and constructive manner.



Main Theme 1: The Art of Conflict Resolution in Educational Environment

The findings of this study highlight the multifaceted role of principals in effectively managing conflicts within educational settings. First and foremost, navigating the complexities of conflict mediation requires a nuanced approach where understanding, communication, and empathy are central. Principals, as key figures in school leadership, must uphold objectivity and impartiality in their mediation efforts, ensuring that all parties involved feel heard and understood. This objectivity fosters a sense of fairness and trust, which is essential for resolving conflicts constructively.

Moreover, celebrating the fruits of successful resolution—such as improved relationships and a more cohesive school environment—serves as a powerful reinforcement of the benefits of collaborative problem-solving. It also highlights the value of conflict resolution not only as a tool for immediate issue management but also as a long-term strategy for nurturing a positive school culture.

The principal's role emerges as a catalyst for constructive dialogue, guiding the process from conflict identification to resolution. By embracing these comprehensive strategies—mediating conflicts, remaining neutral, celebrating outcomes, and facilitating open dialogues—principals can create an environment where conflicts are not only resolved but transformed into opportunities for growth and stronger relationships. This holistic approach to conflict resolution is essential for the continued success and well-being of the entire school community, ensuring that conflicts are managed in ways that benefit all stakeholders involved. Therefore, schools should prioritize professional development for principals and staff to equip them with the skills necessary to address conflicts in a thoughtful, effective, and empathetic manner.

Main Theme 2: Building a Conflict-Resilient School Climate

The findings of this study emphasize the importance of establishing a conflict-resilient school climate where open communication, fairness, and proactive measures are central to conflict management. Open and transparent communication is essential for building trust among all members of the school community. When communication channels are clear, misunderstandings are minimized, and potential conflicts can be addressed before they escalate. Schools should encourage regular feedback sessions and ensure that all stakeholders—parents, teachers, students, and administrators—are able to voice their concerns and expectations freely.

Neutrality and fairness in mediation are also critical components for fostering an environment where conflicts are resolved equitably. Principals and educators must remain impartial in their decision-making, ensuring that all parties feel equally heard and respected. This fairness builds a foundation for a positive school culture, where individuals feel safe to express their concerns without fear of bias.

Proactive conflict prevention is equally vital, requiring schools to anticipate potential conflicts and take preventive measures before issues arise. Educators and administrators should work to identify patterns, offer conflict resolution training, and create environments where positive relationships are encouraged from the outset. By taking these proactive steps, schools can mitigate the risk of conflicts and create a supportive atmosphere where conflicts are less likely to emerge in the first place.

Finally, collaborative problem-solving and follow-up ensure that conflict resolution efforts are not merely temporary fixes but are sustainable solutions. By working together, all stakeholders can co-create solutions that address the root causes of conflicts. Furthermore, follow-up ensures that resolutions are effective and that relationships are nurtured over time. This holistic approach to conflict management not only resolves conflicts but also strengthens the school community as a whole.

Main Theme 3: Mediation and Negotiation Strategies

The findings of this study highlight the critical role of mediation and negotiation strategies in resolving conflicts within educational settings. To ensure these strategies are effective, schools must prioritize communication, empathy, neutrality, and collaboration, all of which contribute to fostering a positive and conducive learning environment.

Effective conflict resolution hinges on open communication and active listening. Educators and administrators must establish environments where all parties feel safe to express their perspectives and concerns. Active listening fosters understanding, reduces misunderstandings, and lays the groundwork for cooperative problem-solving. Principals and teachers should facilitate transparent communication processes that enable everyone to feel heard and respected, minimizing the chances of escalation and promoting resolution.

Empathy and emotional intelligence are essential components of effective mediation. Principals and educators who demonstrate empathy can better understand the emotions of all parties involved in a conflict, which allows them to manage tensions with sensitivity and compassion. Addressing the emotional aspects of conflict, not just the factual details, creates a safe space where individuals feel validated and understood. This approach strengthens relationships and encourages cooperation, as individuals are more likely to work toward solutions when they feel emotionally supported.

Principals and mediators must maintain neutrality and fairness throughout the mediation process. By remaining impartial, they ensure that all parties feel equally valued and that resolutions are not skewed in favor of one group. This impartiality fosters trust in the mediation process, enabling more successful outcomes. Educators and principals should be mindful of their role as neutral facilitators, ensuring that the focus remains on finding solutions that are fair and beneficial for all involved.

Conflict resolution is not only about solving problems; it is also about fostering collaboration. When schools focus on shared goals, such as student well-being and academic success, all parties involved are more likely to work together toward a mutually agreeable resolution. By encouraging collaboration, principals and educators can turn conflicts into opportunities for growth and

improvement. The focus should always be on collective problem-solving, where each party contributes to the development of solutions that benefit the school community as a whole.

To effectively implement these strategies, schools should invest in training principals, educators, and other stakeholders in mediation techniques, active listening, empathy, and conflict resolution skills. By embedding these practices into the school culture, educators and administrators can address conflicts proactively and constructively, creating a more harmonious and productive educational environment for all.

Future Directions

As schools continue to evolve, so too must the approaches to conflict resolution. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into current strategies but also point to the need for continuous improvement and innovation. In the future, further research and the refinement of conflict resolution practices can pave the way for more effective conflict management, helping schools build resilient, harmonious environments conducive to both academic and personal growth.

Department of Education (DepEd):

DepEd should continue to develop and implement policies that support effective conflict resolution strategies in schools. Future directions should include the creation of standardized guidelines for conflict management that all schools can adopt. Additionally, professional development programs focused on conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and communication skills should be prioritized for teachers, administrators, and even parents.

Also, DepEd should encourage the collection and analysis of data on conflict-related issues in schools. By tracking trends and outcomes of conflict resolution efforts, DepEd can provide more targeted resources and support to schools that face specific challenges, ensuring continuous improvement.

School Principals

School principals should prioritize ongoing training for themselves and their staff in conflict resolution strategies. Principals should not only model effective conflict management but also lead by example in fostering open communication, empathy, and collaboration within the school community.

Moreover, Principals must establish clear, accessible, and transparent conflict resolution processes within their schools. This includes setting up mechanisms for both informal and formal resolution, such as mediation, peer support systems, and clear pathways for escalating issues when necessary.

Parents

Parents should be encouraged to take an active role in fostering a positive school environment by being open to communication and collaboration with school staff. Engaging in regular meetings, providing constructive feedback, and addressing issues with empathy can significantly contribute to early conflict resolution.

Establishing and maintaining open lines of communication between parents and teachers is essential in resolving conflicts before they escalate. Parents should feel comfortable reaching out to educators for discussions or to express concerns, promoting an environment of shared responsibility in conflict management.

Students

Students should be encouraged to participate in conflict resolution programs and workshops that teach effective communication, negotiation, and emotional regulation. Empowering students with these skills can help them navigate interpersonal conflicts on their own and promote peer mediation practices within the school.

It is important for students to learn how to take responsibility for their actions and understand how their behavior affects others. Encouraging students to reflect on their own behavior and its impact on the school environment can promote a more responsible and accountable student body.

The future directions for DepEd, school principals, parents, and students emphasize the collective responsibility of all parties in fostering a positive and conflict-resilient school environment. By working together, each stakeholder can contribute to the development of a school culture that values collaboration, effective communication, empathy, and proactive conflict resolution. By continually evolving and refining their approaches, these groups can ensure that conflicts are managed constructively, leading to a healthier, more harmonious learning environment for all.

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