

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TEACHERS' DEMOGRAPHICS AND THEIR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES AT ANUBAN DAMRONGRACHANUSORN SCHOOL, SISAKET, THAILAND

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Abstract: This study was conducted mainly to determine the correlation between the teachers' demographics and their conflict management styles at Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School, Sisaket, Thailand in the academic year 2015. The demographics and the conflict management styles of the teachers were both surveyed and investigated by a questionnaire developed by Patana (2003). The demographics questionnaire surveyed the education background, age, and years of work experience while the conflict management styles questionnaire which was based on Thomas and Kilmann's (2008) theory of conflict management investigated the conflict management styles of the teachers. Eighty- four full- time teachers at the school participated in the study.

Various tools were used to calculate the data gathered for this study: descriptive statistics (Percentage and Mean) and Pearson Product- Moment Correlation Coefficient.

The findings indicated that majority of the teachers were bachelor's degree holders, 49 years old and below, and had at least 10 years of work experience. Moreover, the teachers' conflict management styles, ranked from the highest to the lowest, were often compromising, often accommodating, often collaborating, occasionally avoiding, and occasionally dominating. Furthermore, the teachers' conflict management styles as classified by their education background were accommodating and compromising; by their age were compromising and accommodating; and by their years of work experience were collaborating, compromising, and accommodating. Finally, there was no significant relationship between the teachers' demographics and their conflict management styles at Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School, Sisaket, Thailand.

Keywords: Demographics, Conflict Management Styles, Teachers, Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School.

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Introduction

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the study and development of conflict knowledge began to escalate. Humans started investigating the processes of conflicts, the constructive management approaches, and the solutions for mounting the scale and cost of human conflict through several abstract and formal ways like schools, universities, research programs, seminars, and trainings (Wehr, 1998).

Conflicts, a common issue in humans' daily life, are generated from countless disagreements -- in motivations, goals, opinions, and processes between and within educational entities (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). These disagreements yielding either positive or negative consequences are resulted due to people's unrelated views, ideologies, and unhealthy competitions.

Moreover, conflicts are influenced by culture differences. This is due, in a large part, to the evolution of every country from various norms which caused each one to emerge as an independent nation under their own social pattern (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1996). Hereby, individuals' approaches of naming, framing, accusing, and undertaking conflicts are destructed (LeBaron, 2003).

Furthermore, conflicts are incessantly a challenge in the academic life (Fleetwood, 1987). While conflicts persistently appear and manifest the different complications of communities, schools continually serve as tension centers. Accordingly, this is because schools absorb all the tensions. Schools are most directly concerned with the shaping of learners' futures, and many of the forces that sustain the task of raising the learners had virtually lost all the ancient forces (Spillane, 1972).

With these types of conflicts rising, the call for executing effective and efficient management styles engaging courage and risk-taking are very essential. With these, the negative effects produced are transformed into positive energies (Luke, 2014). People's attentions will be grasped, relationships and morale will be progressed, ideas will be refined, and formulations of intentional and adaptive choices will be enhanced.

Few of the institutions aiming to establish an effective and efficient type of environment is Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School, Sisaket, Thailand. Apparently, a greater part of its conflicts root from the lack of proper communication -- there is lack of English knowledge and unclear or misinterpreted messages. Other marked conflicts found were classroom supervision, in-service education, placement of teachers, promotion, salary and fringe benefits, selection and appointment of teachers, and transfer or suspension and dismissal.

Conflicts do not always appear to be a snag. From time to time, when there are effective and efficient management techniques, there will be substantial values, stronger relationships, and increased understanding (Azurin, 2013).

Objectives

The following were the research questions for this study:

1. What are the teachers' demographics at Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School, Sisaket, Thailand?
2. What are the teachers' conflict management styles at Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School, Sisaket, Thailand?

3. How do the teachers in different demographics tend to choose a certain style of conflict management at Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School, Sisaket, Thailand?
4. Is there any significant relationship between the teachers' demographics and their conflict management styles at Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School, Sisaket, Thailand?

Literature Review

Conflict is viewed as the disagreement, discord, or friction that stems in a group when the actions or beliefs of its members are unacceptable or resisted by the members of the opposite group (Conflict, n.d.). Apparently, they transpire within an individual, in choosing a career path, in making significant life decisions, and in making other major choices; between individuals, due to individual's uniqueness; within a group, caused by disagreements and misconceptions between members; and between groups, because of group competition.

The management of these conflicts requires diagnoses and interventions on the affective and substantive conflicts. There is diagnosis when there is a need to analyze the underlying and unrecognizable causes and effects of conflicts, and there is intervention when there are too many affective conflicts or too few or many substantive conflicts (Rahim and Bonoma, 1979).

When handling conflicts, individuals and organizations ought to perform various types of styles: dominating/competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. While these are applied to handle conflicts, individuals and organizations ought to work out strategies which will effectively and efficiently reduce the tensions, disruptions, and tensions derived from conflicts such as acknowledging conflicts, listening actively, analyzing issues, and mitigating conflicts (Duggan, 2015).

The Thomas- Kilmann Theory of Conflict Management was carried out to support the claims presented in this study. As explained, this theory depicts two basic dimensions of individuals' behaviors, namely: cooperativeness and assertiveness (Thomas and Kilmann, n.d.). In the application of these two behaviors, varying modes of handling conflicts are resulted: dominating/competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating.

A few studies which focused on conflict management styles have been conducted, for example, the studies organized by Patana (2003), Violetta (2012), and Harper (2004). Patana (2003) studied "*Conflict Management Styles of the Deans at Assumption University of Thailand and the University of Santo Tomas of the Philippines: A Comparative Study*". At the 0.05 level of significance, there was no significant difference on the conflict management styles of the deans in both universities in relation to age, gender, educational qualification, and years of work experience. Furthermore, Violetta (2012) studied "*Conflict Management Strategies to Increase the Organizational Effectiveness in Nordic Companies*". Based on the findings, it was revealed that collaborating was the most popular strategy used. Lastly, Harper (2004) studied "*The Conflict Management Styles, Strength of Conflict Management, Self- Efficiency, and Moral Development Levels of School*

Counselors”. In this study, it was found that compromising was the main approached applied.

Background of Kantharalak District

Kantharalak (etymology: *Kanthara* meaning *cliff*, *lak* meaning *sign*) is a district situated in the southern part of Sisaket Province, in the northeastern region of Thailand (Kantharalak District, 2013). Originally, this district was named as Mueang Uthumphon Phisai, under the control of Mueang Khukhan. However, in 1939, amendments were made and it was renamed to Kantharalak District (Thai: กันทรลักษ์).

Geographically, Kantharalak district is bounded by various districts: from the north clockwise, Nam Khun and Thung Si Udom of *Ubon Ratchathani Province*, Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear of *Cambodia*, and Benchalak, Si Rattana, and Khun Han of *Sisaket Province*. Based on statistics, Kantharalak district has a total land area of approximately one thousand two hundred and thirty- six square kilometers and a total population of two hundred and nine thousand, four hundred and forty- eight (KD, 2013).

Background of Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School

Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School was first established by the late Mr. Phraya Damrong Rachanubhap in 1915 to accommodate the needs of learners in Kantharalak District, Sisaket Province, Thailand (Khanthaprateep, 2012). This institution offers four programs: EP- English Program, IEP- Intensive English Program, MSEP- Math Science English Program, and Regular Program. The main goal of this institution was to cater the finest and dynamic teaching and learning to both kindergarten and primary students

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 showed the framework used to study the relationship between the teachers’ demographics and their conflict management styles at Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School, Sisaket, Thailand. The demographics used were education background, age, and work experience while the styles of conflict management used were dominating/competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating.

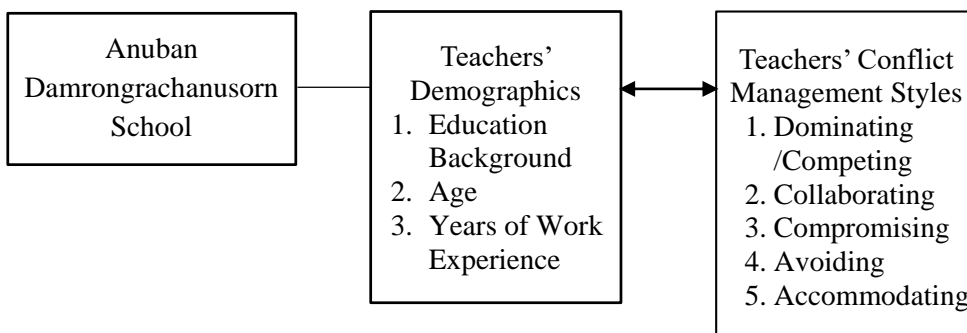


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of The Study

Method

Research Design

This study was quantitative and relationship which both used descriptive statistics and Pearson product- moment correlation coefficient. The descriptive statistics were used to survey the demographics and investigate the conflict management styles of the teachers, and determine how the teachers in different demographics tend to choose a certain style of conflict management. The Pearson product- moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between the teachers' demographics and their conflict management styles.

Population

This study was conducted at Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School in Sisaket, Thailand. A total number of eighty- four (84) teachers teaching from kindergarten to primary six (6) were the representatives in this study.

Instrumentation

A two- part questionnaire was used as the primary instrument for this study. It was adapted from the study of Patana (2003) on "Conflict Management Styles of the deans at Assumption University of Thailand (AU), Thailand and University Santo Tomas (UST), Philippines: A Comparative Study". Few of the items were modified to suit the stated objectives and the target respondents. Others were omitted as they are conceptually identical with some of the constructed questions.

The first part of the questionnaire has three (3) items surveying the respondents' demographics, namely: age, education background (degree), and years of work experience (teaching experience).

The second part of the questionnaire has twenty- five (25) items investigating the respondents' conflict management styles, namely: competing/dominating, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. Each item was designed to represent one of the five styles which were randomly distributed.

Table 1: Breakdown of Survey Questions

	Styles	Items	Total
1	Dominating/Competing	4, 6, 11, 15, and 24	5
2	Collaborating	3, 10, 14, 20, and 25	5
3	Compromising	1, 8, 13, 18, and 23	5
4	Avoiding	5, 7, 12, 16, and 19	5
5	Accommodating	2, 9, 17, 21, and 22	5

To determine the level of teachers' conflict management styles at the institution, the teachers were asked to rate each of the items designed. The criteria of scale interpretation of the teachers' conflict management were as follows:

4.51 – 5.00	Always
3.51 – 4.50	Often
2.51 – 3.50	Occasionally
1.51 – 2.50	Seldom
1.00 – 1.50	Never

The content validity for this instrument was conducted by Patana (2003) through the assistance of various professors, namely: Associate Professor Dr. Kitima Preedeedilok, Associate Professor Dolores de Leon, Associate Professor Sen Keoyote, late Dr. Prudencio B. Sanchez, and Dr. Sonia dela Cruz.

The reliability of this instrument as tested by Patana (2003) was .85. In this study, through the collected responses of the teachers at Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School, its reliability was calculated as .83.

The two parts of this questionnaire were translated from English to Thai language through the assistance of Siam Translation Center. Three experts were then approach to study its translation accuracy, namely: Mr. Sathian Sisan, Ms. Ounruen Ounon, and Ms. Nuneer Suparat.

Procedure

This study was carried out on 29th, 30th, and 31st of November, 2014. Firstly, the researcher requested permission from the institution's director then floated the questionnaires to the foreign and Thai teachers. A total of eighty- four (84) questionnaires were distributed but only seventy- five (75) which represented eighty-nine (89) percent were validated and tabulated.

Findings

Based on the research objectives, the findings of this study were:

- Research Objective 1. The majority of the teachers was bachelor's degree holders (57.34 %), 49 years old and below (66.67%), and had 10 to 19 years of work experience (36.00%).
- Research Objective 2. The teachers' conflict management styles, ranked from the highest to the lowest, were often compromising, often accommodating, often collaborating, occasionally avoiding, and occasionally dominating /competing.
- Research Objective 3. The mean of the teachers' conflict management styles classified by *education background* were accommodating style (bachelor's degree) and compromising style (higher than bachelor's degree); *age* were compromising style (49 years old and below) and accommodating style (above 49 years old; and *years of work experience* were collaborating style (below 10 years), compromising style (10 to 19 years), and accommodating style (above 19 years).

- Research Objective 4. There was no significant relationship between the teachers' demographics and their conflict management styles, which means that the conflict management styles of the teachers were not directly affected by their demographics.

Discussion

Demographics

Education Background: This study found that most of the teachers held a bachelor's degree and least of the teachers held a degree higher than bachelor's degree.

On the basis of the requirements issued by the Khurusapa (2555), teachers ought to hold a bachelor's degree which benefits education and it must be certified by either the Teachers' Council of Thailand (TCT) or the Teacher Civil Service and Educational Personnel Commission (TEPC) or the Civil Service Commission (CSC). The teachers should further need to pass the Test of English for International Communication, except for teachers coming from The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ireland, The United States of America, Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, or pass on the other foreign language foreign test such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

The teachers' education background at Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School in the academic year 2015 disclosed that a number of them have the need to finish their higher degree to be able to corroborate their experiences and knowledge to the teaching and learning process. As specified by the thriving education system of Finland, at minimum, teachers should have a master's degree when teaching at the primary level (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014). Hereby, the teachers could be more effective and efficient educators and conflict managers in the new century.

Age: The result of this study on the teachers' ages found that more than half of the teachers at Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School were 49 years old and below and less than half with those who were below above 49 years old. This finding is beneficial as Khurusapa (2555), also known as the Teachers' Council of Thailand, entails teachers to be at least 20 years of age.

To some extent, this requirement was supported by the article published by Clairemont High School (as cited in The Arrow, 2014), as teachers' performances are not measured according to their age but rather on their capability to teach.

Years of Work Experience: In the finding of this study, it was found that most of the teachers had 10 to 19 years of teaching experience, followed by those who had more than 19 years of work experience, then least with those who had less than 10 years of teaching experience.

Years of work experience plays a significant role in the management of conflicts. It assist the people (educators) to understand the everyday realities of managing conflicts, effectively manage all sorts of conflicts, understand their own weaknesses and strengths in managing conflicts, and professionally develop themselves as conflict managers.

Conflict Management Styles

An analysis of the responses revealed that the teachers at Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School, Sisaket, Thailand, were “often” compromising, accommodating, and collaborating, and “occasionally” dominating and avoiding.

Firstly, the compromising style of the teachers showed that they were often using a give-and-take policy to achieve a compromised solution to their conflict, often letting others have some of their concerns if they let them have some of theirs, often finding solutions which balances the losses for their conflict, often negotiating with their colleagues to reach a compromised solution to their conflict, and often working out a fair combination of their gains and losses.

Secondly, the teachers’ responses revealed that they were always attempting not to hurt the feelings of their colleagues, often submitting themselves to the caprices of their colleagues to avoid conflict, often going along with the views of their colleagues, often giving in to the suggestions of their colleagues despite the reservations, and often attempting to satisfy the expectations of their colleagues at their own expense.

Thirdly, the teachers’ collaborating style revealed that they were often jointly developing a mutually agreeable plan that merges all our views, often attempting to find ways to satisfy all their needs, often agreeing with their colleagues on the rules and procedures of resolving their conflict, often attempting to investigate an issue with their colleagues to find a solution which will be acceptable to them, and occasionally convincing their colleagues of the merit of their position.

Fourthly, the teachers’ responses revealed that they were often attempting to avoid being on the spot and they keep their conflicts to themselves to not affect the resolution of their conflict, occasionally gaining agreement for their position by avoiding details on which they disagree, occasionally avoiding their conflicts to be discussed in the open, occasionally does not know whether their colleagues have factions or not, and occasionally ignoring the conflicts existing within their school.

Finally, the teachers’ dominating style showed that they were often sticking to their solution to the conflict, occasionally arguing their case with their colleagues to show the merits of their position, occasionally are firm in pursuing their side of the conflict, seldom ignore the suggestions of their colleagues in resolving their conflicts, and seldom oppose the views of their colleagues.

In an overall view of the teachers’ five conflict management styles, it was shown, ranked from the highest to the lowest, that they were often compromising, often accommodating, often collaborating, occasionally avoiding, and occasionally dominating.

A similar finding was found by Violetta (2012) on her study of the “Development of Conflict Management Strategies to Increase the Organizational Effectiveness in Nordic Companies” where collaborating style was the most used conflict management style. Likewise, Harper (2004)’s study on “*The Conflict Management Styles, Strength of Conflict Management, Self-Efficiency, and Moral Development Levels of School Counselors*” found a similar finding where compromising style was the main conflict management style used.

Baumgardner (2013) and SNU (2001) explained that, in general, people *dominate* because they know they are right, time is short and a quick decision is

needed, they need to stand up for their rights, and a strong personality is trying to steamroller them and they do not want to be taken advantage of. They *collaborate* because they trust each other, they want their colleagues to also have ownership of the solutions, they need to work through animosity and hard feelings, and their colleagues are willing to change their thinking as more information is found and new options are suggested. They *compromise* because they are equally committed to the goals, time can be saved by reaching intermediate solutions on the individual parts of complex issues, and goals are moderately important. They *avoid* because conflict is small and their relationship is at stake, they are upset and they need to cool off, more important issues are available, they have no power and no chance of meeting their concerns, and they are too emotionally involved and their colleagues can solve the conflict more successfully. They *accommodate* because an issue is not as important to them as it is for their colleagues, they realize they are wrong, the time is not right to solve the issue and you would prefer to simply build credit for the future, and harmony in the relationship is extremely important.

How the Teachers in Different Demographics Tend to Choose A Certain Style of Conflict Management

In the examination of how the teachers in different demographics tend to choose a certain style of conflict management, the data disclosed that (a) the bachelor's degree holders were accommodating and the higher than bachelor's degree holders were compromising, (b) the 49 - year olds and below were compromising and the above 49 -year olds were accommodating, and (c) the teachers who had *below 10 years of work experience* were collaborating, *10 to 19 years of work experience* were compromising, and *above 19 years of work experience* were accommodating.

In the overall rating, the teachers tend to choose the compromising, accommodating, and collaborating style. This finding was fairly similar to the previous study on the "Conflict Management Styles of the Deans at Assumption University of Thailand and University of Santo Tomas: A Comparative Study" by Patana (2003), where the deans conflict management styles, as rated by the deans themselves, were avoiding, collaborating, compromising. As rated by the teachers, the dean's conflict management styles were accommodating, collaborating, and compromising.

Relationship between the Teachers' Demographics and Their Conflict Management Styles

This study tested the relationship between the teachers' demographics (education background, age, and years of work experience) and their conflict management styles at Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School, Sisaket, Thailand.

The findings, at the 0.05 level of significance, showed that there was no significant relationship between the teachers' demographics and their conflict management styles at Anuban Damrongrachanusorn School, Sisaket, Thailand for the academic year 2015.

This finding was fairly similar to the study of Vokic and Sontor (2010) on "Conflict Management Styles in Croatian Enterprises - The Relationship between Individual Characteristics and Conflict Handling Styles" where there was no

significant correlation between the Croatian employees' conflict management styles and their individual characteristics.

In a related concept, in the comparative study by Patana (2003) on the deans' conflict management styles, it showed that there was no significant difference between the deans' conflict management styles and demographics. As concluded, education background was not a determinant of one's styles of conflict management, age did not affect the handling styles of the deans, and quantity of work experience does not have any important bearing to the conflict management styles.

As published by Southern Nazarene University (2001), demographics and conflict management styles do not have any correlation as the five styles are dependent on a variety of factors, for example, the levels of the conflicts and the given situation.

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