

From Conflict to Performance: Proposed Frameworks for School Heads and Teachers in the Philippine Public Schools

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Abstract:

Background: Conflict is an inevitable occurrence in educational organizations, potentially obstructing effectiveness and influencing student learning performance. Effective management of conflict through appropriate negotiating styles is crucial for maintaining harmonious relationships and achieving educational goals.

Objective: This study aimed to develop management models linking negotiation styles to learning performance and conflict resolution among school heads and teachers.

Methods: Employing a descriptive-quantitative research design, the study involved 276 teachers and 18 school heads from nine central schools in the Schools Division of Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines. Data were gathered using a validated Conflict Negotiation Style Survey and National Achievement Test (NAT) scores.

Statistical analyses included frequency, percentage, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and Covariance.

Results: Findings revealed distinct negotiating style configurations associated with improved outcomes. Teachers' problem-solving style demonstrated a significant positive correlation with learning performance. Conversely, school heads' accommodating, avoiding, and compromising styles showed significant positive correlations with school performance. Conflict triggers varied, with teachers citing miscommunication and school heads citing gossip as primary factors.

Conclusion: The study proposes two management models: one for advancing learning performance and another for facilitating conflict resolution. These frameworks suggest that specific negotiating style configurations between school leaders and teachers can constructively complement student learning performance and resolve institutional conflicts.

Keywords: Negotiating Styles, Conflict Resolution, Learning Performance, School Management, Thomas-Kilman Model, Philippine Public Schools

Introduction

Conflict is an inevitable occurrence within every organization, and educational institutions are no exception. In public schools, where an inherent hierarchical structure manifests through teaching role specifications, status hierarchies, and the interdependence of teachers and school heads, the potential for conflict is ever-present. These organizational realities, often compounded by interlocking activities involving parents and external stakeholders, create a complex environment where disagreements can arise frequently. When left unchecked, such conflicts have the potential to obstruct the effectiveness of school heads and teachers, consequently influencing the learning performance of students. The smooth and facilitative interaction among educators is

critical for the overall school's delivery of quality basic education, and persistent friction within this dynamic 116 can have detrimental effects on institutional goals.

The connection between organizational conflict and the delivery of quality education is particularly pressing in the context of public schools in the Philippines. Data from the National Achievement Test (NAT) in previous years revealed that in various learning areas, the Mean Percentage Score (MPS) often showed below-average performance, failing to reach the mastery level set by the Department of Education. Tracing the factors affecting academic performance calls for thorough investigation to come up with effective interventions. While it is imperative that school leaders, teachers, and stakeholders work together towards the improvement of learners' performance, managing conflict in schools presents a significant avenue that warrants attention. Effective management of conflict may encourage creativity, the adaptation of school innovations, and, crucially, harmonious relationships among all stakeholders. Conversely, when conflict is mismanaged, such as when school heads impose decisions without consulting teachers, it can lead to disengagement. Teachers may lessen their interest in cooperating with administration, thereby affecting the performance of the learners and the school in general.

The human cost of unmanaged conflict further underscores the need for effective negotiation strategies. Conflict within an educational institution can cause teachers to become frustrated if they feel their opinions go unrecognized or if there is no solution in sight. Research indicates that employees often equate conflict with negative sentiments such as tension, anger, and stress. These emotions can lead to anxiety and negative behaviors among teachers, adversely affecting their professional and personal lives. In the wake of challenges such as the shift in learning delivery modalities during recent global disruptions, addressing pressures through effective negotiation became even more significant. Stakeholders had to balance the demand for quality education with health concerns and resource limitations. In such scenarios, the ability of school heads to combine assertiveness and cooperation, and for teachers to understand and cooperate considering the situation, becomes vital for sustaining school performance.

To understand how these dynamics play out, it is essential to examine the negotiating styles employed by school personnel. Knowledge of conflict management entails familiarity with different negotiating styles, which is crucial for the professional development of teachers and school heads. Theoretical frameworks, such as the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, posit that handling conflict emphasizes two dimensions: assertiveness and cooperativeness. These dimensions manifest in five distinct styles: competing, accommodating, avoiding, compromising, and problem-solving. In a school setting, the manner in which teachers and school heads handle conflicts is often a reflection of their individual characteristics and dispositions. However, negotiating styles are not mutually exclusive; individuals may adopt a particular style as dominant depending on the nature and circumstances of the conflict situation. Therefore, the resultant negotiating styles adopted by teachers and school heads could be the ones that best fit the specific context of their school environment.

Despite the recognized importance of conflict management, there remains a significant gap in the existing literature regarding the specific link between negotiating styles and student learning performance in the Philippine public-school setting. While numerous studies have been conducted on conflict management in the workplace, many are foreign studies centered on individual and situational factors without directly correlating these styles to academic achievement metrics. Existing local studies have explored leadership styles or organizational commitment in relation to conflict, but few have attempted to configure management models that link negotiating styles directly to learning performance outcomes such as NAT results. Furthermore, there is a dearth of studies that examine the interlocking negotiating styles between school heads and teachers and how this interplay facilitates conflict resolution specifically within central schools. This gap dictates the need for a

study that not only identifies the prevalent negotiating styles but also determines their bearings on learning performance and conflict resolution to craft viable management models. 117

Addressing this gap, the present study aims to develop management models linking negotiation styles to learning performance and conflict resolution among school heads and teachers. By examining the negotiating styles commonly used in public schools, this research provides a theoretical basis for management models relative to learning performance and conflict resolution within the school setting. The study seeks to move beyond merely identifying conflict triggers to proposing actionable frameworks that can be utilized in professional development seminars and training workshops. Ultimately, the findings intend to fill the knowledge gap by offering insight into how specific configurations of negotiating styles between school leaders and teachers can constructively complement student learning performance and resolve institutional conflicts. Through this inquiry, the study contributes to the broader discourse on educational management by providing evidence-based models that transform potential conflict into a catalyst for improved school performance

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), a seminal theoretical framework advanced by Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann (1974) that conceptualizes conflict handling through two fundamental behavioral dimensions: assertiveness and cooperativeness. Assertiveness reflects the extent to which an individual attempts to satisfy their own concerns, while cooperativeness denotes the degree to which one attempts to satisfy the concerns of others. The intersection of these two dimensions yields five distinct negotiating styles: competing (high assertiveness, low cooperativeness), accommodating (low assertiveness, high cooperativeness), avoiding (low assertiveness, low cooperativeness), compromising (moderate assertiveness, moderate cooperativeness), and problem-solving or integrating (high assertiveness, high cooperativeness).

In the context of educational institutions, the TKI framework provides a robust lens for examining how school heads and teachers navigate interpersonal and organizational conflicts. School heads, by virtue of their administrative authority, may naturally lean toward more assertive styles when addressing performance-related issues, whereas teachers, operating within a collaborative professional culture, may favor cooperative approaches to maintain harmonious working relationships. However, as McKenna and Richardson (1995) observed, negotiating styles are not rigid personality traits but rather situational responses influenced by personal dispositions, organizational culture, and the specific nature of the conflict at hand. This theoretical insight is particularly salient in Philippine public schools, where hierarchical structures coexist with strong cultural values of *pakikisama* (smooth interpersonal relations) and *utang na loob* (reciprocity), potentially shaping the expression and effectiveness of different negotiating styles.

Review of Related Literature

Conflict is an inevitable feature of organizational life, and educational institutions are no exception. In public schools, the inherent interdependence among teachers, school heads, parents, and external stakeholders creates fertile ground for disagreements over instructional strategies, resource allocation, policy implementation, and professional expectations (Rahim, 2002). When managed constructively, conflict can stimulate innovation, foster critical dialogue, and strengthen organizational resilience. Conversely, unmanaged or poorly managed conflict can erode trust, diminish morale, and ultimately compromise student learning outcomes (Göksoy & Argon, 2016; Manesis, Vlachou, & Mitropoulou, 2019).

A substantial body of international research has examined conflict management styles across various organizational contexts. Studies in Western settings have consistently found that problem-solving or integrating styles are associated with higher job satisfaction, better team performance, and more effective leadership outcomes (Boucher, 2013; Ghaffar, Zaman, & Naz, 2012). However, cultural context significantly moderates these relationships. Research in collectivist societies, including several Asian countries, suggests that accommodating and avoiding styles may be more culturally congruent and sometimes more effective in preserving group harmony and long-term relationships (Kozan, 2002; Morris et al., 1998). Within the Philippine educational landscape, emerging studies have begun to explore conflict dynamics among school personnel. Solijon (2004) found that public school administrators in Iligan City predominantly employed collaborative styles when

addressing conflicts, whereas teachers tended toward avoiding strategies. More recent investigations by Pastrana, Wagan, 118 and Nuqui (2021) and Uri and Briones (2021) have highlighted how leadership styles—autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, and transactional—interact with conflict negotiating approaches to influence organizational commitment and school climate in the Philippine context. These studies underscore the importance of situational adaptability, suggesting that effective school leaders often blend multiple negotiating styles depending on the nature of the conflict and the stakeholders involved.

Despite this growing attention to conflict management in Philippine schools, a significant gap persists in the literature. First, most existing studies focus on leadership styles or organizational commitment as primary variables, with conflict management treated as a secondary or mediating factor. Second, few investigations have directly examined the relationship between specific negotiating styles and measurable student learning outcomes, such as National Achievement Test (NAT) results. Third, there is a dearth of research that configures management models explicitly linking the interplay of school heads' and teachers' negotiating styles to both learning performance and conflict resolution outcomes.

This gap is particularly consequential given the persistent challenges in Philippine basic education. National Achievement Test data from recent years have consistently revealed below-mastery performance levels across key learning areas, prompting calls for multifaceted interventions that address not only instructional quality but also the organizational and relational conditions that enable effective teaching and learning (Department of Education, 2019). If conflict among school personnel undermines collaboration, instructional coherence, and professional morale, then understanding and optimizing negotiating styles becomes not merely an administrative concern but a critical lever for improving student achievement.

The present study addresses this gap by configuring management models that link negotiating styles to learning performance and conflict resolution in Philippine public central schools. Building on the TKI framework and informed by local empirical findings, the study posits that specific configurations of school heads' and teachers' negotiating styles—rather than isolated styles in isolation—may constructively complement student learning outcomes and facilitate institutional conflict resolution. By moving beyond descriptive accounts of conflict prevalence to propose actionable, evidence-based models, this research contributes to the broader discourse on educational leadership and organizational effectiveness in resource-constrained, culturally distinct settings.

Methodology

Research Design and Locale This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between negotiating styles and learning performance within the public-school setting. This design was selected to allow for systematic description of the negotiating styles employed by school heads and teachers and to statistically determine the extent of the relationship between these styles and student learning outcomes. The study was conducted in the Schools Division of Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines, specifically within nine public central schools. These schools were selected as they represent key educational hubs within the division, providing a diverse context for examining organizational conflict and performance metrics. The data collection period covered the school year 2015-2016, with learning performance data aggregated from the National Achievement Test (NAT) results spanning school years 2012 to 2015 to ensure a stable measure of academic output.

Participants and Sampling The participants of the study comprised two distinct groups: teachers and school heads. The population included 875 teachers and 18 school heads across the nine central schools. For the teacher respondents, a stratified proportionate random sampling technique was utilized to ensure representative participation from each school. Based on the total population, a sample size of 276 teachers was determined, representing approximately 31.5% of the total teacher population. The sampling was stratified by school to maintain proportional representation, and participants were selected using a simple random sampling method without replacement. All 18 school heads within the nine central schools were included in the study using purposive sampling, as their total number was small and each held a critical administrative role influencing school climate and conflict management. The demographic profile of the respondents varied, with the majority

of teachers being female (92.75%) and holding master's degrees (50.36%), while school heads were more evenly distributed by gender (55.56% female) and predominantly held master's degrees (88.89%). 119

Instruments and Measures Data were gathered using two primary instruments: a survey questionnaire for negotiating styles and archival records for learning performance. The negotiating styles were measured using an adapted Conflict Negotiation Style Survey based on the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). The instrument assessed the five standard negotiating styles: competing, accommodating, avoiding, compromising, and problem-solving. It utilized a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (All the time) to measure the frequency of use for each style. The instrument underwent validity and reliability testing prior to administration. A pilot test was conducted with 32 teachers not included in the final sample, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.88, indicating high internal consistency and reliability. This reliability coefficient exceeds the standard threshold of 0.70 recommended for social science research.

Learning performance was operationalized using the Mean Percentage Score (MPS) from the National Achievement Test (NAT). The NAT is a standardized assessment administered by the Department of Education to measure student competency in key learning areas. For this study, the four-year average NAT MPS (SY 2012-2015) for each of the nine central schools was computed and used as the dependent variable. This aggregate measure was chosen to mitigate annual fluctuations and provide a more robust indicator of sustained school performance. Additionally, semi-structured interview guides were used to gather qualitative insights regarding conflict triggers and resolution experiences, though the primary analysis for the proposed models relied on the quantitative survey and performance data.

Data Collection Procedure Ethical clearance and administrative permissions were secured prior to data collection. A formal letter of request was submitted to the Schools Division Superintendent of Cagayan de Oro City to obtain permission to conduct the study within the division schools. Upon approval, the researcher coordinated with the principals of the nine central schools to schedule the administration of the questionnaires. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they were aware of the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was strictly maintained; all questionnaires were coded to prevent the identification of individual respondents. The researcher personally distributed and retrieved the survey questionnaires to ensure a high response rate and to clarify any items if necessary. Concurrently, official NAT results were requested from the division planning office to ensure the accuracy of the learning performance data.

Data Analysis The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools to address the research objectives. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, and means, were used to profile the respondents and describe the prevailing negotiating styles among teachers and school heads. To determine the relationship between negotiating styles and learning performance, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (Pearson r) was employed. This statistical test measured the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the frequency of specific negotiating styles and the schools' average NAT scores. Additionally, covariance analysis was conducted to understand the directional behavior of the variables, indicating whether changes in negotiating styles corresponded with similar or opposite changes in learning performance.

The level of significance was set at $p < 0.20$ for the correlation analysis, aligning with the exploratory nature of model configuration in this specific context, though standard interpretations of correlation strength (weak, moderate, strong) were applied. All statistical analyses were performed using standard statistical software to ensure computational accuracy.

Ethical Considerations The study adhered to ethical standards for research involving human participants. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all teachers and school heads. The

researcher ensured that no personal identifiers were linked to the data in the final analysis, protecting the privacy of the respondents and the schools. Furthermore, the data gathered were used solely for the purpose of this study and the development of the proposed management models. The study respected the hierarchical structure of the educational institution, ensuring that the data collection process did not disrupt regular school operations or create undue pressure on the participants.

Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The study involved 276 teachers and 18 school heads from nine public central schools in the Schools Division of Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines. The demographic profile of the respondents revealed distinct patterns relevant to their roles in the educational setting, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Teacher and School Head Respondents (N=294)

Demographic Variable	Category	Teachers (n=276)		School Heads (n=18)	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Sex	Male	20	7.25	8	44.44
	Female	256	92.75	10	55.56
Educational Attainment	Baccalaureate	123	44.57	0	0.00
	Master's Degree	139	50.36	16	88.89
	Doctoral Level	14	5.07	2	11.11
Age Classification	Young Adult (<35 yrs)	63	22.83	1	5.56
	Middle-Aged Adult (35–45 yrs)	112	40.58	5	27.78
	Late Adult (≥46 yrs)	101	36.59	12	66.67
Length of Service in DepEd	Neophyte (<10 yrs)	70	25.36	5	27.78
	Experienced (11–20 yrs)	82	29.71	13	72.22
	Most Experienced (≥21 yrs)	124	44.93	0	0.00

Note. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Among teachers, the vast majority were female (92.75%, n=256), while school heads showed a more balanced gender distribution, though still female-predominant (55.56%, n=10). In terms of educational attainment, half of the teacher respondents (50.36%, n=139) held master's degrees, with 44.57% (n=123) at the baccalaureate level and 5.07% (n=14) pursuing doctoral studies. All school heads had pursued graduate education, with 88.89% (n=16) holding master's degrees and 11.11% (n=2) at the doctoral level. Regarding age distribution, teacher respondents were predominantly middle-aged adults (35–45 years old; 40.58%, n=112), followed by late adults (46 years and above; 36.59%, n=101), and young adults (below 35 years old; 22.83%, n=63). School heads, reflecting their administrative seniority, were mostly late adults (66.67%, n=12). In terms of length of service, nearly half of the teachers (44.93%, n=124) were classified as most experienced (21 years or more in DepEd service), while the majority of school heads (72.22%, n=13) fell within the experienced category (11–20 years of service).

Learning Performance of Central Schools

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Student learning performance was operationalized using the four-year average Mean Percentage Score (MPS) from the National Achievement Test (NAT) covering school years 2012 to 2015. Table 2 presents the NAT results for each of the nine central schools.

Table 2. Four-Year Average National Achievement Test (NAT) Mean Percentage Scores by Central School (SY 2012–2015)

Central School	SY 2012	SY 2013	SY 2014	SY 2015	4-Year Average MPS	Performance Classification*
Kauswagan CS	85.63	85.97	48.10	73.23	73.23	Approaching Mastery
Lumbia CS	78.52	34.07	70.09	60.89	60.89	Below Mastery
Lapasan CS	70.33	59.25	44.70	58.09	58.09	Below Mastery
Bulua CS	68.06	59.06	42.91	56.68	56.68	Below Mastery
South CS	48.16	68.67	48.37	55.07	55.07	Below Mastery
City CS	77.66	39.39	42.94	53.33	53.33	Below Mastery
West CS	61.71	48.98	45.90	52.20	52.20	Below Mastery
Bugo CS	73.82	38.68	42.07	51.52	51.52	Below Mastery
Puntod CS	42.10	32.20	34.71	36.34	36.34	Far Below Mastery

Note. DepEd mastery level threshold = 75.00 MPS. Classification: ≥ 75 = Mastery; 60–74.99 = Approaching Mastery; 40–59.99 = Below Mastery; < 40 = Far Below Mastery.

Among the nine central schools, Kauswagan Central School exhibited the highest average NAT performance at 73.23 MPS, approaching the Department of Education's mastery level threshold of 75.00. This was followed by Lumbia Central School (60.89 MPS) and Lapasan Central School (58.09 MPS). Conversely, Puntod Central School recorded the lowest average at 36.34 MPS, indicating substantial room for instructional and organizational improvement. The fluctuating NAT results across the four-year period underscored the persistent challenge of sustaining academic achievement.

Negotiating Styles of Teachers and School Heads

The frequency of use of the five negotiating styles—competing, accommodating, avoiding, compromising, and problem-solving was assessed using a validated Conflict Negotiation Style Survey based on the Thomas Kilmann framework. Table 3 presents the frequency distribution of negotiating styles for both teachers and school heads.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Negotiating Styles by Teachers (N=276) and School Heads (N=18)

Negotiating Style	Frequency Category	Teachers (n=276)		School Heads (n=18)	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Competing	Very High (9–10/10)	1	0.36	0	0.00
	High (7–8/10)	128	46.38	8	44.44
	Moderate (5–6/10)	145	52.54	10	55.56
	Low (3–4/10)	2	0.72	0	0.00
	Very Low (1–2/10)	0	0.00	0	0.00
Accommodating	Very High	8	2.90	0	0.00
	High	106	38.41	7	38.89
	Moderate	157	56.88	10	55.56
	Low	5	1.81	1	5.56
	Very Low	0	0.00	0	0.00
Avoiding	Very High	1	0.36	2	11.11
	High	122	44.20	13	72.22
	Moderate	153	55.43	3	16.67
	Low	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Very Low	0	0.00	0	0.00
Compromising	Very High	2	0.72	0	0.00
	High	128	46.38	11	61.11
	Moderate	143	51.81	7	38.89
	Low	3	1.09	0	0.00
	Very Low	0	0.00	0	0.00
Problem-Solving	Very High	2	0.72	2	11.11
	High	130	47.10	13	72.22
	Moderate	143	51.81	3	16.67
	Low	1	0.36	0	0.00
	Very Low	0	0.00	0	0.00

Note. Frequency categories based on 5-point Likert scale interpretation: Very High = 4.01–5.00; High = 3.01–4.00; Moderate = 2.01–3.00; Low = 1.01–2.00; Very Low = 0.00–1.00.

For teachers, the modal frequency of use across all five styles was moderate, indicating that teachers typically applied each style five to six times out of ten conflict situations. Specifically, 52.54% of teachers reported moderate use of the competing style, 56.88% moderate use of accommodating, 55.43% moderate use of avoiding, 51.81% moderate use of compromising, and 51.81% moderate use of problem-solving. High frequency use was also notable, particularly for problem-solving (47.10%) and competing (46.38%), suggesting situational adaptability in teachers' conflict approaches.

School heads demonstrated a comparatively different pattern. Their modal frequency of use was high for three styles: avoiding (72.22%), compromising (61.11%), and problem-solving (72.22%). In contrast, competing and accommodating styles were used moderately by 55.56% of school heads each. Notably, no school heads

reported very low or very high frequency use of competing or accommodating styles, indicating a preference 123 for balanced, context-sensitive approaches.

Conflict Context: Triggers, Frequency, and Parties Involved

Understanding the nature of conflicts encountered by teachers and school heads provides essential context for interpreting negotiating style preferences. Table 4 presents the factors triggering conflict as reported by teachers and school heads.

Table 4. Factors Triggering Conflict in Schools: Teachers vs. School Heads

Conflict Trigger	Teachers (n=276)		School Heads (n=18)	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Miscommunication	70	25.36	1	5.56
Work-Related Issues	48	17.39	2	11.11
Differences in Personal Traits	46	16.67	1	5.56
Professional Jealousy	37	13.41	3	16.67
Decision-Making Disputes	29	10.51	1	5.56
Gossip	27	9.78	10	55.56
Unresolved Personal/Work Issues	19	6.88	0	0.00
Total	276	100.00	18	100.00

Regarding conflict triggers, teachers most frequently identified miscommunication (25.36%, n=70) as the primary factor leading to conflict, followed by work-related issues (17.39%, n=48) and differences in personal traits (16.67%, n=46). In contrast, school heads predominantly cited gossip (55.56%, n=10) as the foremost conflict trigger, with professional jealousy (16.67%, n=3) and work-related concerns (11.11%, n=2) as secondary factors. This divergence in perceived triggers highlights potential gaps in communication channels and interpersonal dynamics within the school setting.

Table 5. Frequency of Conflict Occurrence: Teachers vs. School Heads

Frequency Category	Teachers (n=276)		School Heads (n=18)	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
All the Time	0	0.00	1	5.56
Most of the Time	28	10.14	2	11.11
Occasionally	131	47.46	2	11.11
Rarely	93	33.70	10	55.56
Not at All	24	8.70	3	16.67
Total	276	100.00	18	100.00

The frequency of conflict occurrence also differed between the two groups, as shown in Table 5. Nearly half of 124 the teachers (47.46%, n=131) reported encountering conflict occasionally, while a third (33.70%, n=93) experienced it rarely. School heads, however, predominantly reported rare occurrences of conflict (55.56%, n=10), with only 11.11% (n=2) indicating occasional encounters.

Table 6. Parties Involved in Conflict: Teachers vs. School Heads

Party in Conflict	Teachers (n=276)		School Heads (n=18)	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Co-Teachers	188	68.12	—	—
School Head/Principal	15	5.43	—	—
Co-Workers (Non-Teaching)	73	26.45	3	16.67
Teachers	—	—	14	77.78
Assistant School Head	—	—	1	5.56
Total	276	100.00	18	100.00

Note. Dashes (—) indicate categories not applicable to the respondent group.

Regarding the parties involved in conflict (Table 6), teachers most frequently reported conflicts with coteachers (68.12%, n=188), whereas school heads most often cited conflicts with teachers (77.78%, n=14). These patterns underscore the centrality of teacher-to-teacher and teacher-to-administrator interactions as focal points for conflict management interventions.

Correlation Between Negotiating Styles and Learning Performance

Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between negotiating styles and school-level learning performance, as measured by the four-year NAT average MPS. Table 7 presents the correlation and covariance coefficients for both teachers and school heads.

Table 7. Correlation and Covariance Coefficients Between Negotiating Styles and Learning Performance (NAT Average MPS)

Negotiating Style	Teachers			School Heads		
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	Covariance	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	Covariance
Competing	-.030	.938	-210	-.164	.674	-9
Accommodating	-.003	.993	-15	.492	.178	+32
Avoiding	-.028	.943	-151	.531	.141	+37
Compromising	-.033	.932	-170	.531	.141	+29
Problem-Solving	.546	.135	+22	-.090	.817	-5

Note. N = 9 central schools. r = Pearson correlation coefficient; p = two-tailed significance level; Covariance indicates directional relationship. Bold values denote statistically significant correlations at p < .20. Positive covariance indicates variables move in the same direction.

For teachers, only the problem-solving style demonstrated a statistically significant positive correlation with learning performance ($r = .546, p < .20$). This moderate correlation indicates that increased use of problem solving strategies by teachers is associated with higher student achievement outcomes. The positive covariance coefficient further confirms that these variables tend to move in the same direction: as teachers more frequently employ integrative, win-win approaches to conflict, school learning performance tends to improve.

In contrast, the other four teacher negotiating styles—competing ($r = -.030$), accommodating ($r = -.003$), avoiding ($r = -.028$), and compromising ($r = -.033$)—showed very weak, non-significant correlations with learning performance. The negative direction of these correlations, albeit negligible, suggests that more frequent use of these styles may not contribute positively to academic outcomes.

For school heads, a different pattern emerged. Three negotiating styles showed statistically significant positive correlations with learning performance: accommodating ($r = .492, p < .20$), avoiding ($r = .531, p < .20$), and compromising ($r = .531, p < .20$). Each of these correlations was moderate in strength, and the positive covariance coefficients indicated that increased use of these styles by school heads was associated with improved school-level NAT results. Conversely, school heads' competing ($r = -.164$) and problem-solving ($r = -.090$) styles showed weak, non-significant correlations with learning performance.

Interlocking of Teachers' and School Heads' Negotiating Styles

To understand how the negotiating styles of teachers and school heads interact during conflict situations, correlation analyses were conducted between each of the five school head styles and each of the five teacher styles. Table 8 presents these correlation coefficients.

Table 8. Correlation Coefficients Between School Heads' and Teachers' Negotiating Styles (N=9 Schools)

School Head Style \ Teacher Style	Competing	Accommodating	Avoiding	Compromising	Problem-Solving
Competing	.535 (.138)	.527 (.145)	.502 (.168)	.519 (.152)	.489 (.181)
Accommodating	.453 (.221)	.454 (.220)	.459 (.214)	.470 (.202)	.468 (.204)
Avoiding	.289 (.451)	.298 (.437)	.281 (.464)	.310 (.418)	.311 (.416)
Compromising	-.103 (.792)	-.077 (.843)	-.131 (.737)	-.141 (.718)	-.120 (.759)
Problem-Solving	.241 (.533)	.216 (.577)	.236 (.540)	.246 (.523)	.232 (.548)

Note. Values represent Pearson correlation coefficients (r); values in parentheses are two-tailed p -values.

Bold values denote statistically significant correlations at $p < .20$. $N = 9$ central schools.

A notable finding was that only the school heads' competing style demonstrated consistent, statistically significant positive correlations with all five teacher negotiating styles. Specifically, school heads' competing style correlated significantly with teachers' competing ($r = .535, p < .20$), accommodating ($r = .527, p < .20$), avoiding ($r = .502, p < .20$), compromising ($r = .519, p < .20$), and problem-solving ($r = .489, p < .20$) styles. Each of these correlations was moderate in strength, suggesting that when school heads adopt a more assertive, competing approach, teachers tend to respond with increased frequency across their entire repertoire of negotiating styles.

In contrast, the other four school head styles (accommodating, avoiding, compromising, and problem-solving) 126 did not show statistically significant correlations with any of the teacher styles at the $p < .20$ level. While some moderate positive correlations were observed (e.g., school heads' accommodating style with teachers' compromising style, $r = .470$), these did not reach the threshold for statistical significance given the small sample size of nine schools. These findings suggest that the competing style of school heads may serve as a catalytic variable that elicits responsive negotiating behaviors from teachers, regardless of the specific style teachers employ.

Summary of Key Statistical Findings

In summary, the quantitative results revealed three principal patterns: (1) Teachers' problem-solving style was the only negotiating approach significantly associated with improved learning performance; (2) School heads' accommodating, avoiding, and compromising styles were significantly correlated with higher school-level NAT results; and (3) School heads' competing style showed consistent, significant positive correlations with all five teacher negotiating styles, suggesting a dynamic interplay during conflict resolution. These findings provide the empirical foundation for configuring management models that link negotiating styles to both learning performance and conflict resolution outcomes, as presented in the subsequent Discussion section.

Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to configure management models linking negotiation styles to learning performance and conflict resolution among school heads and teachers in Philippine public schools. By anchoring the analysis in the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) framework, this study elucidates how the interplay of assertiveness and cooperativeness manifests differently for teachers and school heads within the hierarchical and collectivist context of the Philippine educational system. The findings provide empirical evidence that specific negotiating style configurations are associated with improved educational outcomes, challenging the universal applicability of Western conflict management norms.

The demographic profile presented in Table 1 reveals a female-dominated workforce (92.75% of teachers), which aligns with the broader context of the Philippine teaching profession. Literature suggests that gender may influence conflict handling, with some studies indicating females often favor accommodating or avoiding styles to preserve relationships (Brahnam et al., 2005; Çetin & Hacifazlioglu, 2004). However, the high educational attainment (50.36% of teachers and 88.89% of school heads holding master's degrees) suggests a professional cadre capable of complex cognitive processing, such as problem-solving. This demographic backdrop is crucial for interpreting the negotiating styles observed, as the cultural expectation of *pakikisama* (smooth interpersonal relations) often intersects with professional responsibilities.

The learning performance data in Table 2 underscores the urgency of this study. With only one school (Kauswagan Central School) approaching the mastery level (73.23 MPS) and the majority falling below mastery, the organizational climate likely plays a role in instructional effectiveness. As noted in the introduction, unmanaged conflict can obstruct school heads' and teachers' effectiveness, consequently influencing student learning performance (Göksoy & Argon, 2016). The fluctuating NAT results across the four-year period highlight the need for stable organizational interventions, such as optimized conflict management, to sustain academic achievement.

Table 3 illustrates distinct patterns in negotiating styles. Teachers predominantly used all five styles moderately, indicating situational adaptability. In contrast, school heads showed high frequency use of avoiding, compromising, and problem-solving styles. This divergence supports the theoretical proposition that leadership roles demand different conflict behaviors than instructional roles (Rahim, 2002). School heads' preference for

avoiding and compromising may reflect a strategic choice to maintain organizational harmony in a collectivist culture, rather than an inability to confront issues. This finding resonates with local studies suggesting that Philippine administrators often utilize collaborative or avoiding styles to preserve hierarchy and relationships (Solijon, 2004; Uri & Briones, 2021). 127

The context of conflict, detailed in Tables 4, 5, and 6, reveals critical friction points. Teachers identified miscommunication (25.36%) as the primary trigger, whereas school heads cited gossip (55.56%). This perceptual gap suggests a breakdown in formal communication channels, where informal networks (gossip) fill the void for administrators while teachers struggle with clarity in directives. Furthermore, while teachers reported conflict occasionally (47.46%), school heads reported it rarely (5.56%). This discrepancy may indicate that school heads perceive conflict as less frequent because they avoid it (consistent with Table 3), whereas teachers experience the residual tension. The parties involved (Table 6) confirm that conflict is primarily interpersonal (teacher-to-teacher and head-to-teacher), reinforcing the need for dyadic negotiation models rather than broad policy interventions alone.

The core contribution of this study lies in the correlation between negotiating styles and learning performance, as shown in Table 7. The finding that teachers' problem-solving style significantly correlates with learning performance ($r = .546, p < .20$) supports the notion that integrative strategies foster better organizational outcomes. When teachers employ problem-solving styles, they prioritize collaborative solutions that address the concerns of all parties, including students. This approach likely translates into classroom practices that are more responsive to learner needs. Conversely, the significant positive correlation of school heads' accommodating, avoiding, and compromising styles with performance is nuanced. In Western literature, competing or problem-solving styles are often privileged for leaders (Boucher, 2013). However, in this context, these "yielding" styles may preserve organizational morale, reducing teacher stress and turnover, which indirectly supports student performance. This aligns with the cultural value of *utang na loob* (reciprocity), where heads who accommodate teachers may elicit greater commitment in return.

The interlocking analysis in Table 8 reveals a dynamic relationship during conflict resolution. The school heads' competing style consistently correlated with all five teacher negotiating styles. This suggests that administrative assertiveness serves as a catalytic variable; when heads take a firm stance, teachers respond by activating their own negotiating repertoires. However, the quality of this response varies. If a head's competing style elicits a teacher's problem-solving style (Model II-E), the outcome is constructive. If it elicits competing or avoiding styles, the outcome may be escalatory or stagnant. This underscores the importance of situational adaptability (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). The data suggests that while heads may need to be assertive to drive agenda, teachers must be equipped to respond integratively to prevent conflict from becoming detrimental.

Based on these findings, two management models are proposed. Model I: Negotiating Styles for the Advancement of Learning Performance recommends a differentiated approach. Teachers should be encouraged to adopt problem-solving styles as their default mode, as this directly correlates with higher NAT scores. School heads, however, should be trained to utilize accommodating, avoiding, and compromising styles when interacting with teachers regarding instructional matters. This configuration leverages the teachers' collaborative potential while ensuring leadership does not stifle initiative through excessive assertiveness. Model II: Negotiating Styles for the Facilitation of Conflict Resolution addresses the interpersonal dynamics. It proposes that school heads may employ a competing style to initiate resolution, provided teachers are equipped to respond with problem-solving strategies that transform assertiveness into constructive dialogue. The model cautions against the pairing of competing styles from both parties, as this risks escalation.

The implications of these models extend to policy and practice within the Department of Education (DepEd). 128 Current professional development seminars often focus on instructional leadership, with less emphasis on conflict negotiation. The findings suggest that incorporating negotiation style training into School Heads' Induction Programs and Teachers' Professional Development plans could yield tangible improvements in school climate and performance. Specifically, training should focus on helping teachers strengthen their problem solving capabilities and helping school heads recognize when accommodating or compromising strategies are more beneficial than assertive directives.

Despite these contributions, several limitations must be acknowledged. The study employed a correlational design, which precludes causal inferences; while negotiating styles are associated with performance, other unmeasured variables (e.g., resource availability, community support) may also influence NAT results. The sample size, particularly at the school level (nine central schools), limited the statistical power, resulting in significance levels set at $p < .20$ for some correlations. Future research should employ experimental designs or larger sample sizes to validate the proposed models. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported negotiating styles, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Triangulating survey data with observational methods could provide a more robust understanding of actual conflict behaviors. Finally, the context is specific to urban public schools in Cagayan de Oro City; generalizing these models to rural settings or private institutions requires further investigation.

In conclusion, this study bridges a critical gap in educational management literature by linking negotiating styles directly to student learning performance and configuring actionable management models. The findings underscore that conflict is not merely an administrative hurdle but a strategic variable that, when managed through appropriate negotiating styles, can enhance educational effectiveness. By adopting the proposed models, school heads and teachers can transform potential conflict into a catalyst for improved performance, fostering a school environment where both organizational harmony and academic excellence thrive.

Conclusion

This study set out to configure management models linking negotiation styles to learning performance and conflict resolution among school heads and teachers in Philippine public central schools. Anchored on the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, the research examined how the interplay of assertiveness and cooperativeness manifests in educational leadership and teaching practice, and how these manifestations correlate with measurable student outcomes. The findings affirm that conflict is not merely an administrative challenge but a strategic variable that, when managed through contextually appropriate negotiating styles, can enhance educational effectiveness.

The empirical evidence revealed three principal patterns that inform the proposed models. First, teachers' problem-solving style demonstrated a statistically significant positive correlation with learning performance, suggesting that integrative, collaborative approaches to conflict among educators translate into classroom practices that better support student achievement. Second, school heads' accommodating, avoiding, and compromising styles showed significant positive correlations with school-level National Achievement Test results, indicating that in the collectivist and hierarchical context of Philippine public schools, leadership approaches that prioritize harmony and flexibility may indirectly foster conditions conducive to learning. Third, the interlocking analysis revealed that school heads' competing style consistently correlated with all five teacher negotiating styles, suggesting that administrative assertiveness can serve as a catalytic variable that elicits responsive engagement from teachers, though the quality of that engagement depends on how teachers interpret and respond to such assertiveness.

These findings challenge universalist assumptions in conflict management literature that privilege problem solving or competing styles across all organizational contexts. Instead, they underscore the importance of cultural and situational adaptability. In Philippine public schools, where pakikisama (smooth interpersonal relations) and respect for hierarchy are deeply embedded cultural values, the effectiveness of a negotiating style cannot be assessed in isolation from the relational and institutional context in which it is deployed. The proposed management models, Model I for advancing learning performance and Model II for facilitating conflict resolution embody this contextual sensitivity by recommending differentiated style configurations for teachers and school heads rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. 129

Model I posits that teachers should be encouraged to adopt problem-solving styles as their default mode when addressing instructional or interpersonal conflicts, as this style directly correlates with higher student achievement. Simultaneously, school heads should be trained to utilize accommodating, avoiding, and compromising styles when interacting with teachers on matters related to instructional supervision, as these styles appear to preserve organizational morale and enable teachers to focus on pedagogical priorities. Model II addresses the dynamic interplay between administrators and faculty during conflict episodes. It proposes that school heads may employ a competing style to initiate resolution, provided teachers are equipped to respond with problem-solving strategies that transform assertiveness into constructive dialogue. The model cautions against the pairing of competing styles from both parties, as this risks escalation, and instead advocates for awareness training that helps teachers recognize administrative assertiveness as a cue for integrative engagement rather than confrontation.

The study acknowledges several limitations that temper the generalizability of its conclusions. The correlational design precludes causal inferences; while negotiating styles are associated with performance outcomes, unmeasured variables such as resource availability, community support, or policy constraints may also influence National Achievement Test results. The sample size, particularly at the school level (nine central schools), limited statistical power, necessitating significance thresholds at $p < 0.20$ for some correlations. Future research should employ experimental designs or larger, more diverse samples to validate the proposed models. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported negotiating styles may introduce social desirability bias; triangulating survey data with observational or ethnographic methods could yield a more robust understanding of actual conflict behaviors. Finally, the study's focus on urban public schools in Cagayan de Oro City warrants replication in rural settings, private institutions, or other regional contexts to assess the transferability of the models.

Despite these limitations, the study makes a meaningful contribution to educational management literature by bridging a critical gap: the direct linkage between negotiating styles and student learning performance in the Philippine public-school context. By moving beyond descriptive accounts of conflict prevalence to propose actionable, evidence-based models, the research offers school leaders, teachers, and policy-makers practical frameworks for transforming potential conflict into a catalyst for improved performance. The findings affirm that effective conflict management is not about eliminating disagreement but about channeling it through styles that align with institutional goals, cultural values, and the ultimate mission of public education: to foster student learning and development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and proposed models, the following recommendations are offered for practice, policy, and future research.

For Professional Development and Training. The Department of Education (DepEd) should integrate conflict negotiation training into existing professional development programs for school heads and teachers. Specifically, School Heads' Induction Programs and Teachers' Continuing Professional Development modules should include experiential workshops on the Thomas-Kilmann framework, with emphasis on situational adaptability and cultural responsiveness. Training should help teachers strengthen their problem-solving capabilities through role-playing, case analysis, and reflective practice, while equipping school heads with strategies to recognize when accommodating, avoiding, or compromising approaches may better serve instructional leadership goals. Additionally, division-level training workshops could facilitate inter-school learning communities where educators share context-specific conflict resolution strategies and refine the proposed models through collaborative inquiry.

For School-Level Implementation. School heads are encouraged to institutionalize structured dialogue mechanisms such as regular faculty forums, conflict mediation committees, or peer coaching circles—that operationalize the interlocking styles identified in Model II. These mechanisms should create safe spaces for teachers to respond to administrative assertiveness with integrative problem-solving, thereby transforming potential tension into constructive collaboration. Furthermore, school improvement plans should explicitly link conflict management objectives to learning performance targets, ensuring that relational health is treated as a lever for academic achievement rather than a peripheral concern.

For Policy and Systems-Level Action. The Schools Division Office should consider developing a division-wide conflict management framework that aligns with the proposed models while allowing for school-level contextualization. This framework could include standardized protocols for addressing common conflict triggers (e.g., miscommunication, gossip, workload disputes) and guidelines for matching negotiating styles to conflict types. Additionally, performance evaluation systems for school heads and teachers could incorporate indicators of effective conflict management—such as team cohesion, staff retention, or climate survey results—to incentivize the adoption of contextually appropriate negotiating styles.

For Future Research. Subsequent studies should employ longitudinal or experimental designs to test the causal pathways proposed in the models. For instance, a quasi-experimental study could compare schools that receive targeted negotiation-style training with control schools to assess impacts on both conflict resolution efficacy and student learning outcomes. Researchers should also expand the scope of learning performance indicators beyond National Achievement Test scores to include formative assessments, student engagement metrics, or socio-emotional learning outcomes. Furthermore, qualitative investigations such as ethnographic case studies or narrative inquiries could illuminate the lived experiences of teachers and school heads as they navigate conflict, providing richer insights into how cultural values shape the enactment of negotiating styles. Finally, comparative studies across regions, school types (public vs. private), or educational levels (elementary vs. secondary) would help determine the boundary conditions of the proposed models and refine their applicability across diverse Philippine educational contexts.

In sum, this study invites educational leaders, practitioners, and scholars to reconceptualize conflict not as an obstacle to be minimized but as an opportunity to be managed strategically. By aligning negotiating styles with institutional goals, cultural values, and the imperative of student learning, Philippine public schools can foster organizational environments where both harmony and high performance thrive. The proposed management models offer a starting point for this transformative work a work that requires ongoing reflection, adaptation, and commitment from all stakeholders invested in the future of Philippine education.

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