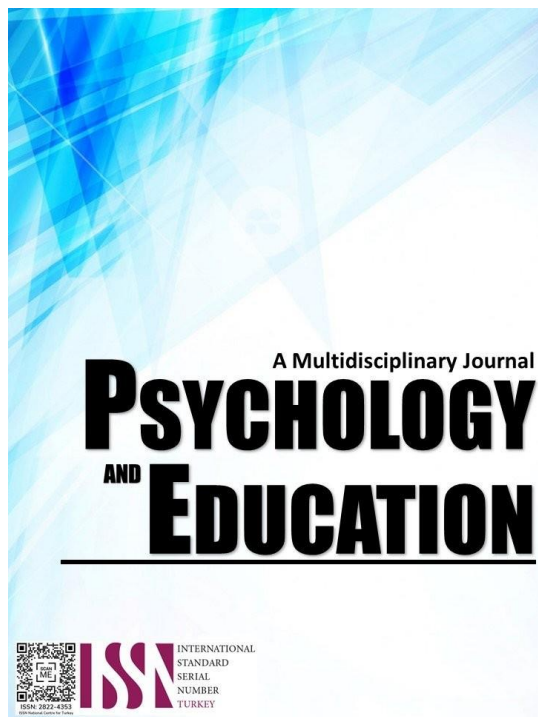


# **EXPLORING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES: A PHENOMENOLOGY APPROACH UTILIZED BY STAND-ALONE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS**



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## Exploring Conflict Management Strategies: A Phenomenology Approach Utilized by Stand-Alone Senior High School Administrators

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### Abstract

This dissertation aimed at exploring the lived experiences of the administrators in managing conflicts within their work environment. Specifically, the study sought to describe the participants' experiences on understanding the nature of conflict, causes of conflicts, examples of conflicts and their strategies in managing conflicts. Looking into the participants' challenges and coping mechanisms was also the objective of the study. Hermeneutic Phenomenology was utilized to describe and interpret the basic structures of lived experience, and recognition of the pedagogical experience. The result of this study was a theme found on the lived experiences of the administrator and challenges they encountered in managing conflicts - Nature of Conflict, Human Conflict, Human Behaviour, Conflict Management Strategies and Challenges in Conflict Management. Five major conflict management strategies were identified such as integrating, competing, avoiding compromising and obliging. It was concluded that administrators utilized different strategies which are congruent to their leadership styles and based on the context where conflict takes place. It was recommended that administrator should recognize diversity as one factor key element that may cause disagreements among the school stakeholders.

**Keywords:** *conflict management strategies, human conflict, human behavior, stand-alone senior high school*

### Introduction

Conflict management is used to resolve disagreements for the purpose of achieving an outcome that satisfies all parties concerned and benefits the group. Therefore, to ensure the success of a team, group, unit or employee they lead, leaders must possess conflict management skills, (Ronquillo et al., 2023). One of the main duties of teachers and administrators is to manage conflicts instead of ignoring it, according to Arslan (2020). He put emphasis on the important duties and responsibilities of school administrators specifically in the positive result of the conflicts in schools.

It is then significant that school administrators should be able to convert conflict into an opportunity for the school, making it more efficient and effective by applying good conflict management. The success of an educational institution is highly dependent on the leadership of the principal, because he is fully responsible for his institution, he must take the institution towards the achievement of the goals that have been set, he must be able to see changes and be able to see the future in a better global life (Ikhwan, 2019).

Conflicts do exist, because they are unavoidable in the organization. Due to the need for regular interaction between school stakeholders to achieve the organisational objective, it is inevitable that there will be disagreements and conflicts between school stakeholders in terms of facilities and relationships Erturk (2021).

Schools are among the institutions where conflict takes place. Arslan (2020) stressed that conflicts happen naturally in the spiral of administrator-teacher-student-parent. Conflict is a problem that needs to be dealt with, as it has detrimental effects and reduces organizational effectiveness in accordance with the behavioural and traditional approaches. Due to the negative effects of conflict, productivity, cooperation and teamwork will be reduced in the workplace. These negative effects will therefore lead to a deterioration in the organisation's commitment, job satisfaction, motivation and performance of its staff. Due to the negative effects of conflict, productivity, cooperation and teamwork will be reduced in the workplace. These negative effects will therefore lead to a deterioration in the organisation's commitment, job satisfaction, motivation and performance of its staff. The effectiveness and efficiency of the teachers would be affected, and they would be reluctant to be in the classroom if they were demotivated.

School administrators as managers must possess management skill in maintaining a peaceful and productive working environment. Imperial and Madrigal (2021) disclosed in their study that conflicts in public schools are on the rise based on the statement of the Department of Education (DepEd). Such examples are unresolved disagreements between teachers and school authorities. Consequently, this predicament created a negative impact on the school's and student's academic achievement.

This is especially true in public high schools, in the case of senior high schools, which are newly established. If these conflicts are transparent in well-established schools which had been run and supervised overtime, more so in small and newly introduced schools.

Many teachers have been confused by the transition from K to 12 basic education. There is a new educational policy in place. The opening of Stand -alone Senior High School was one of them. It is not surprising that, although the curriculum and functioning of schools have yet to be addressed, conflict has arisen between stakeholders. The school administrators, particularly the headmasters, are therefore under great pressure to do so.

It has been observed that administrators in Stand-alone Senior High School are faced with various conflicts that occur among the stakeholders. These include work and related issues between and among administrators, teachers, students, external stakeholders, and non-teaching. The presence of conflict contributes to negative outcomes on stakeholders' performance and productivity. This could affect the school as this will impede the achievement rate and success of the school which could affect the school performance. Cognizant of the prevailing issues and conditions the school administrators are facing, the Division of Quezon City also share the same plight on how they can manage conflicts within their work environment.

As suggested by previous studies, the need for research with focus on the experiences and views of the administrators is considered as it gives deeper insights and information that are deemed important for an in-depth understanding of conflict management. Hence, the researcher was prompted to explore the lived experiences of administrators in managing conflicts in their respective schools particularly the school heads in Stand-alone Senior High schools in Quezon City since most of the research conducted focused on the conflict management strategies in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and most of the participants are the presidents of the university.

## Research Questions

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Stand-alone Senior High School administrators in handling conflicts in their respective schools and the conflict management strategies that they usually employed with the individuals within their work environment. Their personal experiences and views towards conflict and how it should be properly managed would provide a deeper understanding and insights which would guide other school heads in mediating conflicts within their institution.

This qualitative study of the lived experiences of school administrators of Senior High School describes the personal account and insights of the school leaders, specifically the school head, assistant principal and PSDS who were appointed as OIC- principal towards conflict management strategies. The following questions guided this study:

1. What are the lived experiences of Stand-alone Senior High School administrators in managing conflict within their work environment?
2. What are the challenges being experienced by the Stand-alone Senior High School administrators in managing conflict within their work environment?
3. How did the administrators respond to the challenges they encountered in managing conflicts in their work environment?

## Literature Review

As conflict becomes a perennial matter in an organization, a wealth of research has been conducted and several literatures have been written as this topic, if not controlled, may have dysfunctional effects.

### *Nature of Conflict*

Conflicts can happen anywhere in the world, including among education institutions. Conflicts between institutions of higher learning arise as a result of issues relating to leadership, management, the differences in points of view, interest and so on (Aula et al., 2020). Bushnell (2023) defined conflict as something that's thwarted, endangered and opposed to desire. He's referring to a story where tension arises, plots begin and themes are aroused. Conflicts among people who work together as a group have been deemed to be the most serious and in unpredictable problems within organizations (Kuzmin et al., 2020). Conflicts are part of an organisation's nature, but the way in which it determines their root causes and deals with them is critical (Maiti & Choi, 2018).

Different perspectives, in terms of context, process, intervention and discipline, form the basis for defining and classifying conflict. Conflicts are intrinsic to human beings who have a fundamental part in their evolution, and can't be extinguished (Valente et al., 2020). In addition, he enumerated the different conflict classification which are based on theoretical proposals such as structural, value, relationship, interest, and data.

Structural conflicts are linked with inequality in terms of controlling situations, possession, or resource distribution, unequal power and authority, geographical, or environmental factors that block cooperation and time pressure. Value conflicts are differences in ideas or behaviours, different ways of life, ideology, or religion. Whereas, relationship conflicts are a product of strong emotions, misperceptions, or stigmatization, deficiency in communication and negative or unchanging behaviours. Meanwhile, interest conflicts are caused by real competition over basic interests, procedural interests, and psychological interests. Finally, data conflicts underscore the insufficiency of information or wrong information, diverse opinions on what matters, different data interpretations and different assessment procedures.

Conflict is a situation where two parties are at odds. The inability of the parties concerned to resolve their differences is therefore a characteristic of a conflict situation. The inevitable feature of life in an organization is conflict. The state of the organisation's health is on a continuum from a conflict free organisation to a conflict-ridden organisation (Omene, 2021). He further discussed that a conflict can occur with an individual which is known as intra-personal conflict; between two groups which is known as interpersonal; between or among groups of people, units or department which is known as intergroup or unit conflict and between or among different organizations or nations which is known as international conflict.

Conflict is viewed in different ways. First, traditional view believes that conflict is negative and is associated with violence. This is caused by poor communication and lack of trust between people. For conflict to be resolved, it requires a high level of management. Second, the human relations or contemporary view. Conflict is considered natural and must accepted. It is believed that conflict may benefit a group's performance. Third, the interactionist view. It considers conflict to be more than a positive force; it is essential for an individual to perform well. Conflicts can be regarded as either dysfunctional or functioning, argues interactionists. Conflicts in all organisations are a part of our people's lives, and they happen naturally. In daily operations, a low level of conflict will not be detrimental, but will contribute to the smooth functioning of the system by better understanding the current challenges. When dealing with issues and solving conflicts, conflict at the desired level can become an inspiration for creativity.

Farooq (2022) described conflicts as normal unavoidable situations and behaviours that happen within a society as a result of communication process, both internal and external discordance due to differences in perceptions, values, ideas, or emotional state between two or more people. Unbearable situations are caused by many factors for instance; group, individual, staff, student and management leadership styles.

### ***Sources of Conflicts***

Perera (2021) listed five major reasons why conflicts arise. Information, surroundings, abilities, values, and identity are a few of these. The majority of the common reasons for conflict at work have been determined. Their personality or perspective, unresolved problems from their past, feelings of competition with each other, lack of communication skills and uncertainties as to how they should act are among these (Herrity 2024).

Furthermore, Culbertson (2022) and Roi (2024) listed the same causes of the high number of interpersonal disputes. Factors such as disparities in values and beliefs, which can cause conflicts if they are not acknowledged or understood, scarce resources like money, land, power, or opportunities, and misunderstandings or poor communication, which can intensify into conflicts when people can't express themselves clearly or interpret messages incorrectly. In addition, there are historical and societal factors such as grievances, societal inequalities, systemic injustices, fear of change, or insecurity about one's own position or identity, as people may act defensively or aggressively to protect themselves or their interests. Ego and pride are also present, with the desire to assert dominance or superiority, particularly in situations where there is a perceived threat to one's status or reputation. Group dynamics such as conformity, prejudices, and peer pressure can intensify disputes by creating animosity towards those who are viewed as outsiders or dissenters. Power disparities within relationships, organizations, or communities can result in oppression, exploitation, and resistance. Finally, a lack of empathy and understanding for the needs, perspectives, and experiences of others can hinder people from reaching a peaceful resolution to a conflict because they may put their own interests ahead of those of others. Psychological factors like personality traits, traumatic experiences from the past, or unresolved conflicts can also affect how people react to and participate in interpersonal conflicts.

Aula et al (2020) also stressed that errors in communication or distortion, organizational structure and human factors are conflict stems. Other factors that he mentioned include differences in functions within the organizations such as power clash between individuals and sub-systems, different roles, and the imposition of pressure from the external organization. Differences in opinions, misunderstanding, feeling of being disadvantaged and being too sensitive are among the sources of conflict.

Leadership positions, wrong conceptions of issues, influence of god fathers and the like are also attributed to causative factors that make conflicts inevitable and indispensable. Moreover, the surge of internal contradictions among the seniors and junior administrators have not been left out as some of the reasons that cause conflicts Farooq (2022).

### ***Effects of Conflicts***

Conflict can be categorized as constructive and destructive (Erturk, 2021 and Aula et al., 2020) pointed out that conflict helps institutions because its existence provides internal organizational dynamics. It will also coerce the leadership group and the members to perform their functions and roles openly, democratically and respectfully among members of their organization. Conflict can, in fact, be positive if it is managed properly. Conflict can promote team-building skills, critical thinking, new ideas, and alternative resolutions (Ronquillo et al., 2023). Conflict improves creativity and enhances performance if it is tolerated within limits. Optimum level of conflict has to be maintained to prevent stagnation, stimulate creativity, release tension, create change and rejuvenation. Since conflict is unavoidable, this has to be resolved. Valente (2020) emphasized that conflict can inspire innovations and creative strategies in addressing challenging issues, as well as improving work, results, and encouraging organizations to achieve higher levels of quality and achievement.

Moreover, a well-managed conflict has positive effects and results. Organizational relations become more positive and stronger as employees can easily express their feelings and thoughts thanks to conflict. Conflict allows employees to listen to each other, accept each other's thoughts and get rid of being egocentric and reach psychological maturity (Erturk, 2021).

On the other hand, conflicts which are not well- managed can be destructive and cause serious damage. Conflicts in the working environment or currently exist can lead to disruption or complete cessation of daily operations. As a matter of fact, a conflict process which is not managed well can lead to negative feelings and situations such as rivalry in group targets, interdependence, decreased

cooperation and stability blood pressure, irritability, anger, stress, hostile attitudes, demoralization, decrease in work motivation and satisfaction, decreased energy, efficiency and organizational commitment, polarization and absenteeism. The dynamics of the organisation can be disturbed by a conflict that is greater than its levels (Aula et al., 2020).

Additionally, Roi (2024) stressed conflicts can have detrimental impacts on everyone involved in the workplace, even those who are not directly involved in the disagreement, such as emotional stress, lower productivity, project failure, absenteeism, turnover, and a generally toxic and bad work atmosphere. It should go without saying that settling conflicts at work is important.

In a study conducted by Farooq (2022) research done on Japanese organizations showed that there was overworking of staff and this situation resulted into severe staff deaths and suicide due to their failure to accomplish the tasks and agendas given. In conclusion, it would be advisable for institutional leaders and managers to refrain from challenging situations that might lead to conflict and tension in view of the fact that they could have an impact on complexity and little pressure when legislation is introduced.

The success of an organisation depends on the ability to achieve constructive rather than destructive conflict results, which is why a well-defined process for dealing with conflicts matters.

As for schools, teachers also want to take part in facilities which they succeed in. However, teachers sometimes could be assigned duties which they do not want, which in turn result in a conflict at schools. It is not possible for activities to be carried out in schools by a single person. Therefore, the communication of all stakeholders of the school is to ensure that the school is effective and efficient. However, there may be problems between students, teachers, administrators and parents who have different desires, emotions and personalities for various reasons. In this case, a conflict between individuals arises, which in turn have positive or negative consequences and effects. For the negative consequences of the conflict as well as its positive effects and consequences to be evaluated, the causes of the conflict must first be revealed through examining these in depth as the emerging reasons will help the parties decide what kind of strategy and tactics to resolve it. Minimizing the negative effects of the conflict process and completing it successfully requires teachers and administrators to have adequate knowledge of conflict and negotiation.

### ***School Conflicts***

The school is a microsystem of the society, reflecting the constant changes. Preparing students, teachers and parents to cope with the challenges of a world that is full of change and personal conflicts contributing to each individual's development has thus become one of the principal tasks of schools. Thinking, feeling, relationship, is a space conducive to interpersonal conflict because it is a society microsystem that brings together different ways of life Valente (2020).

He further discussed that school conflicts can be classified based on their causes. Conflicts between teachers are usually caused by lack of communication, personal interests, previous conflicts, issues of power, or political or ideological differences. For teacher-students' conflicts, lack of understanding of the teacher's explanation, arbitrariness on grades and divergence in the evaluation criteria, lack of pedagogical material, discrimination, less interesting study material. Conflicts between students can occur due to misunderstandings, fights, rivalry between groups, discrimination, bullying, use of spaces and assets, dating, sexual harassment, loss or damage of school assets, diverse elections, travel and parties. Conflicts between parents, teachers, and administrators can arise due to aggression that occurred between students and between teachers, due to the loss of work material, problems in the school canteen or similar, lack of teachers, lack of pedagogical assistance by teachers, evaluation, approval and disapproval criteria, failure to meet bureaucratic and administrative requirements of management.

Moreover, Valente (2020), indicates four main causes: ideological scientific, related to different pedagogical, ideological, and organizational options, and the type of school culture or cultures that coexist; power causes, related to organization control, professional promotion, access to resources and decision making; causes of structure, related to the ambiguity of objectives and functions, organizational fragility, organizational and variable contexts; and personal and interpersonal causes, related to self-esteem, security, professional dissatisfaction, and communication.

### ***Conflict Management Strategies***

Conflict management strategy is a catalyst for change and may have a positive effect on the organisation's satisfaction with its employees and performance. On the contrary, a lack of conflict can lead to employee dissatisfaction and job loss, and low performance (Omene, 2021).

Moreover, Ronquillo et al. (2023) stressed that the emotional intelligence of future managers could be enhanced by the provision of conflict management skills. The manager is able to resolve interpersonal problems and conflicts with excellent communication skills. In order to bridge generational gaps and develop an organisation's culture, it is essential that new leaders are trained. Mentoring can help a new leader to navigate organizational hierarchy and develop his or her own style of leadership, which fits well within the structure.

There are a lot of different types of conflict management strategy. Avoidance, which means that the existence of a conflict is simply avoided or ignored, is the first style. In the long run, this is a bad situation. There's still a conflict going on. It's going to grow and get worse, creating more confrontation. But it might be useful to deescalate a very tense, nonurgent situation on the basis of this approach.



The other style is accommodative in nature. One side wins and the other loses in this way of conflict management. A single opinion is given and the other one loses. Instead of everyone involved, the resolution will benefit one person. It is a sore spot for the person who's in charge of the conflict, and it's a source of resentment. Although it is capable of resolving the dispute, no one concerned can be satisfied. The third style is competitive, in which one party wins and the other loses. It will bring this situation to an end, but it will not support a common or team approach in resolving problems. The next style is compromise, which means neither side will be fully satisfied with the result. The result will have resulted in resentment among the parties concerned. Each party will sacrifice part of its solution in the resolution. It is possible to exclude a substantial part of the resolution, and this may not lead to an optimal outcome. And the last style is collaborative. In this type of conflict management, all interested parties are brought together to resolve the dispute. In order to achieve the best possible result, active listening, respectful communication and an open mind shall be part of the solution process. All parties involved have a say, and all parties involved reach a solution. The best outcome for all parties concerned is accepted as this solution Ronquillo et.al. (2023)

Similarly, Culbertson (2022) argued that there is no such thing as a 'one size fits all' solution. A number of factors, such as the level of conflict assessment, will determine which one is best suited for a particular situation. He referred to five conflict management strategies, such as collaboration, compromise, accommodation, competition and avoidance. Collaboration is based on the principle of teamwork and cooperation, which can help everyone reach their targets while preserving connections. It is best used when there is a high level of trust, when one doesn't want to have full responsibility, when one wants others to have ownership of the solutions, when the people involved are willing to change their thinking as more information is found and new options are suggested, and when one needs to work through hard feelings. This strategy, however, has its drawbacks such as the time and energy needed for this process; some can take advantage of other people's trust and openness to do so. Compromising is founded on its premise to win something while losing a little is okay. It is best used when people of equal status are equally committed to objectives, when time can be saved by reaching intermediate agreements on individual parts of complex issues, and when objectives are of moderate importance. Important values, as well as the possibility of derailing long-term objectives, are also drawbacks. Accommodating focuses on a common purpose is more important than any of the other concerns. It takes the view that there is a trauma of dealing with differences, which can damage relationships. This is the best approach to take when the issue is not as important to both parties, when one accepts responsibility for his mistakes, when one is willing to let others make mistakes before him, when one knows he cannot win, when the time is not right, when harmony is crucial, and when the parties' common ground greatly outweighs their differences. It is disadvantageous to utilize, though, as one's own ideas may not receive the attention they deserve, and one may lose their credibility and influence. "Winning" is linked to competing. This is done when achieving goals is crucial and using force is occasionally necessary to succeed. It works best when one is certain of his position, needs to defend his rights, and has little time to decide. As its advantage, it can escalate conflict and losers may retaliate. The foundation of avoiding is the idea that this is not the appropriate moment or location to deal with the problem. By retreating, evading, or delaying, it avoids confrontation. It is possible to make crucial judgments by default, and waiting to respond could make things worse.

Herrity (2023) provided a list of actions to take in addition to the previously discussed tactics to assist a team in managing a disagreement. These include of exercising self-awareness, respecting diversity, organizing team-building exercises, putting expectations in writing, encouraging candid communication, and serving as an impartial third party.

### ***Types of conflicts***

In the workplace, disagreements can take many various forms. Task-based conflicts can occur for a number of reasons, according to Silvera (2022), including poor coordination and teamwork, deliberate work delays, improper task assignment, and poor communication about roles and duties. Employee education regarding efficient teamwork and communication can help to settle this conflict and finish the task. Conflicts between leaders are another sort of leadership conflict. Everybody works differently, and the most frequent reason for conflict in the workplace is divergent leadership philosophies. When leaders don't interact with one another, work relationships suffer. Employee uncertainty and decreased productivity might result from a new boss or supervisor in the same area managing in a different way. In order to boost performance and build the working connection, mutual respect should be established. Conflicts over workstyles are another. Conflicts might arise because each individual approaches their work differently and has a distinct opinion. While some people like working in groups and interacting with colleagues, many people prefer to work alone. While some employees arrive on time and complete their work ahead of schedule, others put off doing their work until the very last minute. Despite the fact that each person may work in a different way, teamwork is essential to achieving objectives. Conflicts in the workplace can also result from discrimination against people on the basis of their age, race, gender, gender transition, physical attributes, handicap, religion, or political convictions. It results from a lack of tolerance, comprehension, and acceptance of different cultures. Work performance may suffer if coworkers or superiors mistreat or discriminate against employees based on these qualities. Personality conflicts are another. Everybody is unique, both in terms of their thoughts and beliefs. People can be bothersome and downright unbearable at times, yet we all encounter tough people from time to time. It can affect your mental health, particularly if you deal with them daily. It's important to keep in mind that while you have no control over other people's actions, you do have power over how you respond to them. Productivity rises when personal disputes are settled.

Westmaas and MSc (2022) talked about conflict on several levels. One of these is internal conflict, or intrapersonal conflict. It results from roles not being played equally. Interpersonal conflict arises between people, including employees, managers, and coworkers.

Conflict between groups occurs when there is a difference of opinion on objectives, principles, or means of subsistence. A disagreement that arises in the same workplace between two organizations is known as an interorganizational conflict.

In addition, he distinguished four categories of disputes. When one person or group has distinct goals from the others, goal conflict may arise. This is only a conflict over who will pursue their objectives. When an individual or group has beliefs that differ from those of others, cognitive conflict may arise. Differences in attitudes, beliefs, values, and worldviews are frequently the basis of cognitive conflicts; these notions may also be connected to strongly held political, religious, or cultural beliefs. When a person or group's sentiments, emotions, or attitudes are incompatible with those of others, conflict of this kind arises. When two people are just not compatible with one another, affective conflict arises. When an individual or group behaves in a way that is seen objectionable by others, behavioral conflict arises. Using foul language and dressing in a way that "offends" others at work are two instances of behavioral conflict.

### ***Roles of Administration/ Principal in Conflict Management***

The principal is the most important educational leader as he plays a direct role in implementing school programmes. The leadership skills and wisdom of the principal are a crucial factor for achieving goals in education. Authority and power, as well as competence, are conferred on the principal as the chief executive. To organize and train his subordinates professionally, he is required to have a professional competence, in particular: the principal as a leader, as a manager, as an educator, as an administrator, as an entrepreneur, as the creator of a work environment, Supervision Supervisor as Aula et al. (2020).

The word principal has been defined by combining the words "head" which means the chairman or leader in an organization and "school" which refers to an institution, a place to receive and give lessons (Mohamady, 2018). Thus, the principal shall be an individual who is responsible for educational administration. A place where the teaching and learning process is organized between teachers, students. A person who controls the wheel of command is the principal. The progress of an institution lies in the policy of the principal and it has a significant role to play.

Given the definition of role as an obligation to be carried out by an individual based on his position, it is a dynamic aspect of position. It includes norms associated with one's position or place in a society; role as a concept of what people can do in society and role which encompasses important behavior for social structure Aula et.al. (2020).

### ***Principal as a Leader***

One of the most essential factors in an organization is leadership. Mostly, the success and failure of an organization is based on the leadership in the organization. As cited by Aula et.al. (2020) leadership is referred to by, Ikhwan (2019) as the ability to influence and convince other people to be motivated to work together as a team to achieve a certain goal. From this definition, it can be said that leadership is the ability of someone to push others to work hand in hand and be willing to take actions to achieve the common goals set by the organization.

### ***Methodology used in similar studies conducted***

Many studies have attempted to investigate and explore the phenomenon related to conflict management strategies. Different methods were employed based on the design of each study.

Erturk (2021) on attempting to investigate the causes of conflicts in school, levels and type of conflicts, effects of conflicts, methods used to solve conflicts employed qualitative research methods in particular with case study design. In choosing the sample, criterion sampling technique within the scope of convenience sampling and purposive sampling was used. Also, the data were collected through interviews and were analyzed with content analysis. On exploring how conflicts are managed at the Islamic University, Farooq (2022) qualitative- phenomenological approach was used and interview designs were used to collect data. Thematic data analysis was used. Data was collected, transcription of the interview was done through the use of Express Scribe Transcription Software, and a data matrix was created. Valente et.al. (2020) used qualitative design specifically utilizing bibliography review as the method in underscoring the need for teachers to undergo management skills development.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The researcher utilized the qualitative research method by Moustakas (1994) because it is most appropriate in studying things in a natural setting and it brings meaning to shared phenomena. Following a naturalistic process to seek an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of Stand-alone Senior High School administrators, the researcher found qualitative research the best to use. The study focused on the "why" of social phenomena and would make meaning based on the direct experiences of human beings. In addition, the researcher aimed to identify the essential or the essence of the lived experience as described by the participants (Moustakas, 1994) as mentioned by Alhazmi and Kaufman (2022). Villanueva (2023) also utilized this method as he believed that he can gain rich data through interviews and observations.

The most appropriate qualitative research design for this study is phenomenology-hermeneutic based on the theory of van Manen

(2007) as mentioned in the study of Fuster (2019) as the study aimed to explore the lived experience of the school heads in Stand-alone Senior High School in managing conflict within their working environment. As he mentioned in his article, phenomenological approach to research came out in response to a revolution of the term objectifiable. Study of life experiences, regarding an event, from the subject's perspective is where the study is rooted. According to Fuster (2019), phenomenology seeks to actualize the "thing itself," as things are for consciousness, and conduct in-depth research into the domain where experience is located. To put it another way, the phenomenological method acknowledges the exploration that takes place in an individual's consciousness, which can be a means of comprehending the essence itself and a means of viewing life as it is. Each person defines their experiences and meanings inside their psychic life. Phenomenology is the study of experiences; by its very nature, it is concerned with the daily, the meaning of the human being, or, more precisely, the experience of what it means to be human.

Since the researcher would like to make her study rich and extensive, she utilized Hermeneutic as she had to gather data not only from the participants' stories but also from her observations. She tried to create meaning out of the emotions and other non-verbal cues that the participants had manifested. A reflection from the participant's meaningful experiences could also be reflected.

A hermeneutic phenomenological study is the best approach to describe and interpret the basic structures of lived experience, and recognition of the pedagogical importance of this experience. The hermeneutical phenomenology of research is derived from empirical collection of experiences and reflection on their meaning. In this respect, according to Van Manen (2007), methods include describing personal experiences, speaking to one another and observing closely.

### Participants

Quezon City is regarded as the largest city in Metro Manila. Due to its high level of urbanization and population density, people from other provinces come here in droves to seek for available jobs. This city is home to most existing schools. Moreover, Quezon City has the greatest number of newly established Stand-alone Senior High School. Most of the participants are newly installed administrators with minimum number of experiences in supervision. Some of the participants are assistant principal not a full-fledged school head. Others are technically Schools District Supervisors who are deployed in the Division Office to oversee teaching pedagogy. They are not principalship test passer and technically not school head themselves. But in the absence of the school head, they take charge of the school supervision. The Stand-alone Senior High Schools are divided into five districts.

Based on the initial information gathered by the researcher, there are 13 Stand-alone Senior High Schools in Quezon City. Five (5) Districts were used for the establishment of Stand-alone SHS. District I is where Nick Joaquin, Carlos P. Romulo, and Lucrecia Kasilag Senior High Schools are located. District III has also one SHS named Vito Belarmino High School. District IV has four which includes Pedro Tuason, Jose V. Palma, Eugenio Lopez Center for Media Arts and Fernando Amorsolo SHS. District V has three senior high schools. These are Jose Maria Panganiban Senior High School, Sta. Lucia High Senior High School and Sta. Monica Senior High School and District VI is where Talipapa and Apolonio Samson National Senior High Schools.

Moreover, there has been an existence of Integrated Senior High School which caters both the Junior and High Students. Two of these which were utilized in the study are Ramon Magsaysay High School and Ernesto Rondon High School.

The researcher created a pre-selection survey questionnaire which contains set of criteria to qualify the participants. She made use of both written and digital form to collect basic information from the target population which served as her basis in choosing her sampled respondents. Out of 13 administrators in Stand-alone Senior High Schools, only eight (8) responded to the invitation and expressed willingness to participate in the study. Worried of the insufficiency of number of participants, she added administrators who passed the pre-selection process from Integrated Senior High School to ensure the validity of the study.

### Instrument

The researcher made use of triangulation or multiple methods to collect data such as Pre-selection survey Questionnaire, Interview Questions, Observation and documents such as letters and incident reports to validate and further enrich her study.

#### Pre-selection survey Questionnaire

It is an instrument used to qualify the participants based on the criteria set by the researcher. This includes the demographic profile of the participants, years in service and experience in conflict management.

#### Semi-structured Interview

This is an instrument used by the researcher which contains interview guide questions to gain insights about the lived experiences of the participants, the strategies they utilized in managing conflicts and the challenges they encountered.

#### Observation

Using no quantitative measurements or data, the features or attributes of a phenomenon are reported through the study method known as qualitative observation. Instead, the observation is predicated on the subjective perception of the observer regarding what they hear, taste, smell, feel, or see (George 2023).



## Written Documents

These are artifacts that potentially support the study's findings. These include memorandums, letters from the parties involved in the conflict, and incident reports from the guidance office. The guidance counselor was visited by the researcher, who briefly interviewed her and shared the study's findings with her. She then inquired about the records that would support her conclusions. The researcher was able to obtain a copy of the required paperwork from the guidance office with her permission. She also went to the principal's office to get additional paperwork. She was able to obtain memo copies.

## Procedure

The researcher adhered to the protocol for gathering data. The researcher first wrote a permission letter, addressed it, and sent it to the Division Office in Quezon City for clearance and review by the research committee. The researcher's second step was to go to each school's principal's office and ask for permission to conduct the study so that the researcher could begin the interview after the letter was approved and received a reply via email or text message from the Division Office, specifically from the Office of School Governance and Operations Division and Chair of Schools Division Research Committee.

Prior to beginning the study, she asked the respondents if they would be willing to participate. She scheduled an interview with each participant depending on their availability and desired time after they gave their consent to participate. The interview was scheduled once both she and the participant agreed on the time and location. She performed the interview in person. She made an introduction to the participants before to the interview in an effort to establish a personal connection. In this method, the demographic profile of the participants was collected for profiling. Interview questions were formulated through the assistance of the researcher's adviser and with the help of her colleagues and friends. It was validated to serve its use and purpose. Interview questions underwent content and language validation to ensure accuracy and reliability based on the statement of the problem. She made sure that the participants could understand the questions and would answer them without the feeling of being harmed psychologically or emotionally. With the consent of the participants, the interview sessions were video recorded using her laptop via face to face.

Third, open-ended questions were asked throughout the interview. In order to make sure the researcher would get detailed and insightful answers from the participants, follow-up questions were also asked. She documented the participants' answers after the interview. The researcher used her laptop to record video. The video recordings were preserved and safeguarded. She paid careful attention to her interviewees as she heard their stories during the interview. To better enhance the information, she gathered, she kept a notebook based on her observations. The researcher listened extensively to each respondent during the interview, closely observing their emotions, facial expressions, and other non-verbal indicators. She used her field notes to record her observations. Furthermore, multiple viewings of the video recordings were conducted to verify the authenticity of the observation.

## Data Analysis

The researcher used the modified Van Kaam Analysis which was popularized by Moustakas (1994) as cited by Corley et.al. (2020).

The first step is Horizontalization which means that the researcher treated all the data equally. The researcher began the process of preliminary coding and grouping every quote that is significant to the phenomenon under investigation. Second, the researcher did reduction and elimination. The researcher asked whether the quote is important to the participant's lived experience of the phenomenon or not, thus, this helps her decide what quote was to be eliminated. This process helped the researcher to separate the invariant constituents of the experience from redundancy and irrelevancy. Third, the researcher thematized the invariant constituents. The researcher began to explore latent meanings and group excerpts. The groupings form the themes derived from the experience of each participant. Fourth, the researcher checked the themes against the data to ensure that themes represented the participant's experiences and helped tell their story. Fifth, the researcher created individual textual descriptions. She would utilize verbatim excerpts and quotes from the participant. The researcher would then interpret the data that comes into play. Sixth, the researcher created a composite structural description. This is where the researcher examined the emotional, social, and cultural connections of the participants across all the participants. Common elements of their experiences were described. And the last step is creation of a composite structural-textual description which is referred to as synthesis. In this stage, the researcher gave a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Finally, the researcher got the essence of the study by putting meaning into it.

## Results and Discussion

The data gathered were analyzed in an individual level analysis which involved thorough understanding of the statements. In generating themes, the researcher identified the commonality among the responses of the participants during the face-to-face interview. Responses of the students were according to the codes and categories. Thereafter, the themes of the recounted experiences were formulated.

Four (4) themes were generated based on the codes and categories. The first theme was nature of conflict in which the participants shared about their understanding of the meaning and descriptions of conflict and their attitude towards it. Conflict according to them is constructive and part of the system so it must be embraced. Participants also mentioned that differences in culture, personalities and perspectives are causes of disagreements in an organization.

Second theme was about the several types of human conflicts. Two major types are interpersonal conflict and intrapersonal conflicts.

Interpersonal conflict occurs among individuals which includes administrator and other administrator or higher authority, administrator and external stakeholders, administrator and non-teaching, administrator to teacher, administrator and students, teacher and another teacher, teacher and students, parent and teacher, students and another student, and non-teaching themselves. Most of the conflicts are linked to false accusation, improper channelling, resistance, incompetence, non-observance of protocols, negligence, personal and professional jealousy, insubordination, unprofessionalism, injustices, miscommunication, indebtedness, rivalry, work assignments, indecency, embarrassment, miscommunication, aggressiveness and violence, bullying and others. Intrapersonal conflict on the other hand arises within a person. This type of conflicts is being experienced by the participants because of their struggle of what they want to do and what should they do in managing a conflict.

The third theme was about human behavior such as irregularity in people's behavior, disengagement, inability of people to change, debilitating environment and feedbacking. Most of these are negative consequences of conflict which may affect the performance of the school in totality.

The fourth theme has something to do with conflict management strategies which are being utilized by the administrators to solve or at least minimize the occurrence of conflict. These include the five major conflict management which are anchored on philosophical underpinnings such as integrating, avoiding, competing, compromising, and obliging. Other approaches were being personalized by the participants based on their principles and their context such as the use of positive approach and mitigation. Practice of values and ethics such humanitarian approach, cheerful disposition, affection, openness, courtesy, fairness, teamwork, people empowerment, reinforcement, democratic approach, positive mindset, collegial approach, humility, honesty, empathy and observance of work ethics were found effective as these create an atmosphere of positivity and are helpful in minimizing conflicts. Mitigation is also part of conflict management which can be applied to lessen the gravity a conflict may cause to someone. LGU Intervention, communication in black and white, immediate proper investigation, dialogue or constant communication, differentiated supervision, immersion, root cause analysis, proper tasking, prompt action, management of emotion, observance of protocol, endorsement of problem to higher authority, general approach meeting, awareness and establishing priorities were enumerated.

One (1) theme was generated based on the information coming from the participants. According to them, they were challenged emotionally, psychologically and biologically as their health was also compromised.

Theme number four (4) which is conflict management is where the answer for this question is traced such as the participants coping mechanisms. Participants tried to be resilient amidst the difficulty they had experienced in conflict management. Among these coping mechanisms they shared are discernment, spiritual nourishment, communion with God, building support system, diversion, adaptability and self-empowerment.

## Conclusions

The researcher came up with the following conclusions:

Disagreements will inevitably arise; it is critical to learn how to identify and resolve them since only then will work environment relationships improve over time. Positively accepting the conflict and giving ourselves permission to view it from various perspectives can also lead to fresh perspectives and new methods of approaching the problem. By doing this, we also show respect for the opposing side of the dispute because we acknowledge that, often, we are all unique individuals with distinct interests.

Well-managed conflicts enhance decision outcomes and guarantee group efficiency, new lines of communication with staff members, providing quick comment on the policies of work environment must be open to prevent conflicts of interest. An organization will perform well and accomplish its aims and objectives if it can effectively and efficiently handle conflict within its operations. Effective conflict management has a cascading effect that enables administrators to establish an environment where workers can flourish.

When disagreements arise, it can be difficult and stressful for the administrators as well as the other parties involved. Handling conflicts is not a simple task. It calls for the administrators to put in a great deal of work. In handling unresolvable issues, administrators' emotional, physical, and mental health may even be jeopardized. Therefore, it is important to consider self-empowerment, effective communication, empathy, and teamwork.

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