

# An Assessment on the Conflict Management Strategies of School Administrators at Parang East District – Division of Sulu: Teachers’ Perspectives

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**ABSTRACT.** This study assessed the conflict management strategies of school administrators as perceived by teachers in Parang East District, Division of Sulu. It specifically determined the extent to which avoiding, accommodating, compromising, competing, and collaborating strategies are practiced, and examined the relationships among these strategies. A descriptive–correlational research design was employed, involving 100 elementary school teachers as respondents. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from established conflict management frameworks and were analyzed using weighted mean, standard deviation, and Pearson product-moment correlation. The findings revealed that accommodating, compromising, competing, and collaborating strategies are often practiced by school administrators, while avoiding is only sometimes utilized. This indicates that administrators generally prefer active and relationship-oriented approaches in managing conflicts. Furthermore, the results showed that all conflict management strategies are positively and significantly correlated, suggesting that administrators apply these strategies in combination rather than in isolation. The study concludes that effective conflict management among school administrators requires flexibility in selecting and integrating different strategies based on the situation. Such an approach contributes to maintaining positive relationships, resolving conflicts efficiently, and promoting a harmonious school environment.

**KEYWORDS:** *conflict management strategies, school administrators, avoiding, accommodating, compromising, competing, collaborating*

## ARTICLE DETAILS

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict is an unavoidable condition in organizations, particularly in educational institutions where individuals with diverse roles, beliefs, and expectations interact on a daily basis. In school environments, conflicts may arise from differences in communication styles, leadership approaches, allocation of resources, and interpersonal relationships. When not effectively managed, such conflicts may disrupt collaboration, reduce teacher morale, and negatively affect

school performance. However, conflict is not always detrimental. As emphasized by Robbins (2005), conflict can be functional when managed properly, as it can stimulate critical thinking, improve decision-making, and strengthen professional relationships.

The concept of conflict management has been widely explored in organizational and educational research. One of the most influential frameworks was developed by Thomas and Kilmann (1974), who identified five primary conflict management strategies: avoiding, accommodating, compromising, competing, and collaborating. These strategies are based on varying levels of assertiveness and cooperativeness. Supporting this model, Follett (1926) earlier emphasized the importance of integration and collaboration in resolving conflicts, highlighting that cooperative solutions tend to produce more sustainable outcomes. Similarly, Katz and Kahn (1978) noted that effective conflict management contributes to organizational stability and improved interpersonal relations.

In educational leadership, conflict management is considered a critical skill for school administrators. School leaders are expected to address disputes constructively while maintaining fairness and professionalism. According to the Department of Education, administrators play a vital role in fostering a positive school climate, which includes resolving conflicts among teachers and staff in a manner that promotes cooperation and respect. However, studies in the Philippine context indicate that not all school administrators consistently apply appropriate conflict management strategies. Aquino (2018) pointed out that ineffective handling of conflicts may result in strained relationships, reduced collaboration, and decreased work satisfaction among teachers.

Moreover, international research further supports the importance of appropriate strategy selection in conflict management. Rahim (2002) emphasized that collaborative and compromising approaches are generally associated with more positive organizational outcomes, as they encourage mutual understanding and shared decision-making. In contrast, excessive reliance on avoiding or competing strategies may lead to unresolved conflicts and weakened professional relationships. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of conflict management depends not only on the presence of conflict but on how it is addressed by leaders.

At the local level of Parang East District, Division of Sulu, school administrators operate within a culturally diverse and socially complex environment. Variations in cultural practices, communication norms, and institutional conditions may influence both the occurrence of conflicts and the strategies used to manage them. Teachers, as primary stakeholders in the educational process, are directly affected by these management approaches. Their perceptions provide valuable insights into how effectively administrators handle conflicts and maintain harmony within the school setting.

Despite the extensive body of literature on conflict management, there remains a scarcity of localized studies focusing specifically on teachers' perspectives, particularly in the context of Sulu. Furthermore, many existing studies emphasize demographic differences, which may divert attention from understanding the relationships among conflict management strategies themselves. There is a need to examine how these strategies function collectively and to what extent they are practiced in actual school settings.

In response to this gap, this study aimed to assess the conflict management strategies of school administrators as perceived by teachers in Parang East District, Division of Sulu. Specifically, it focused on determining the extent to which avoiding, accommodating, compromising, competing, and collaborating strategies are practiced, and examining the relationships among these strategies. The findings are expected to contribute to improving leadership practices and promoting a more harmonious and collaborative educational environment.

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1. Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive–correlational research design employing a quantitative approach. The descriptive component was used to determine the extent of conflict management strategies practiced by school administrators as perceived by teachers. Meanwhile, the correlational component examined the relationships among the five conflict management strategies: avoiding, accommodating, compromising, competing, and collaborating.

As explained by Creswell & Creswell (2018), correlational research is appropriate for determining the degree of relationship between variables without manipulating them, while descriptive methods provide a clear summary of participants’ perceptions.

### 2.2. Research Locale

The study was conducted in Parang East District, Division of Sulu, during the School Year 2025–2026. The district consists of several public elementary schools under the supervision of the Department of Education. This locale was selected as it provides a relevant setting for examining conflict management strategies within a real educational environment.

### 2.3. Participants of the Study

The respondents were 100 elementary school teachers from selected schools in Parang East District. These teachers were chosen because they directly experience and observe the conflict management practices of school administrators, making them suitable sources of data for the study.

**Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by School**

School	Number of Respondents
Akuk Sangkula Central Elementary School	10
H. Tomoay Sabdani Elementary School	10
Badjao PS Annex I	10
Lahi PS Annex II	10
Lipunos Elementary School	10
Guimba Lagasan Primary School	10
Tukay Primary School	10
Lagasan Higad Primary School	10
Lumnaan Mahabah Elementary School	10
Jaika Primary School	10
Total	100

### 2.4. Sampling Procedure

The study employed a purposive sampling technique, a non-probability method in which respondents were selected based on specific criteria. Teachers included in the study had at least one year of teaching experience and direct interaction with school administrators. This ensured that participants could provide informed and relevant assessments of conflict management strategies.

### **2.5. Research Instrument**

The study utilized a structured questionnaire adapted from established conflict management frameworks, particularly from Rahim (2002) and the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument developed by Thomas and Kilmann (1974).

The instrument focused on assessing the extent of conflict management strategies across five dimensions:

- Avoiding
- Accommodating
- Compromising
- Competing
- Collaborating

Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale:

Table 2. Scale of Measurement

Scale	Range	Interpretation
5	4.50–5.00	Always
4	3.50–4.49	Often
3	2.50–3.49	Sometimes
2	1.50–2.49	Seldom
1	1.00–1.49	Never

### **2.6 Data Gathering Procedure**

The researcher followed a systematic process in collecting data. Permission was first secured from the School of Graduate Studies, the Schools Division Office of Sulu, and the district and school administrators.

After approval, questionnaires were personally distributed to the respondents. Participants were provided with clear instructions and informed about the purpose of the study. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately to ensure accuracy and completeness of responses.

### **2.7 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured, and no harm was caused to participants.

All data were handled with integrity, and the researcher-maintained objectivity in the analysis and interpretation of results.

## **3. RESULTS**

### *Extent of Conflict Management Strategies*

**Table 3.** Extent of Conflict Management Strategies in terms of Avoiding

No.	Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	The administrator avoids direct confrontation during conflicts.	3.56	1.208	Often
2	The administrator delays addressing conflicts hoping they resolve themselves.	3.36	1.360	Sometimes
3	The administrator withdraws from conflict situations.	3.00	1.531	Sometimes
4	The administrator ignores minor disagreements to maintain peace.	3.36	1.097	Sometimes
5	The administrator shows little concern for conflicts unless necessary.	3.32	1.127	Sometimes
6	The administrator postpones decisions when conflicts arise.	3.20	1.477	Sometimes
7	The administrator avoids personal involvement in disputes.	3.20	1.393	Sometimes
8	The administrator allows conflicts to cool down before intervening.	3.24	1.342	Sometimes
9	The administrator keeps silent instead of engaging in conflict.	3.00	1.333	Sometimes
10	The administrator prefers to sidestep controversial issues.	3.40	1.393	Sometimes
Weighted Mean		3.264	1.085	Sometimes

The avoiding strategy is sometimes practiced ( $M = 3.264$ ), indicating that administrators occasionally delay or withdraw from conflict situations. This suggests that while they recognize the need to manage conflict, they may prefer to allow tensions to subside before intervening. Such an approach can help prevent escalation in minor disagreements; however, excessive avoidance may lead to unresolved issues if not followed by appropriate action. Overall, avoiding is used selectively rather than as a primary strategy.

**Table 4.** Extent of Conflict Management Strategies in terms of Accommodating

No.	Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	The administrator prioritizes harmony over personal viewpoint.	4.20	0.853	Often
2	The administrator yields to teachers' requests to settle disputes.	4.52	0.858	Always
3	The administrator sacrifices preferences to resolve conflict.	4.12	0.913	Often
4	The administrator avoids asserting authority to maintain relationships.	4.08	0.748	Often
5	The administrator satisfies others' needs at their own expense.	3.68	0.886	Often
6	The administrator maintains peace even by setting aside opinions.	3.68	0.886	Often
7	The administrator puts relationships above winning arguments.	3.72	1.006	Often
8	The administrator gives in to avoid escalation.	3.60	1.271	Often
9	The administrator accepts others' solutions.	4.36	0.560	Often
10	The administrator values goodwill over being right.	4.44	0.499	Often
Weighted Mean		4.040	0.579	Often

The accommodating strategy is often practiced ( $M = 4.040$ ), showing that administrators frequently prioritize maintaining harmony and positive relationships. High ratings on yielding and valuing goodwill indicate that administrators are willing to adjust their positions to preserve cooperation among teachers. This approach is beneficial in fostering a supportive work environment, although overuse may sometimes limit assertiveness in decision-making. Overall, accommodating reflects a relationship-oriented leadership style.

**Table 5.** Extent of Conflict Management Strategies in terms of Compromising

No.	Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	The administrator encourages give-and-take solutions.	4.28	0.604	Often
2	Both parties' concerns are partially satisfied.	3.92	0.849	Often
3	The administrator suggests middle-ground solutions.	4.12	0.913	Often
4	The administrator negotiates to reduce tensions.	4.04	0.724	Often
5	The administrator resolves conflicts by splitting differences.	4.20	0.985	Often
6	The administrator looks for fair trade-offs.	3.08	1.606	Sometimes
7	Teachers and administrators meet halfway.	4.16	0.838	Often
8	The administrator promotes balanced outcomes.	4.28	1.045	Often
9	Compromise is preferred over disagreement.	3.56	1.506	Often
10	The administrator encourages concessions.	3.96	0.828	Often
Weighted Mean		3.960	0.646	Often

The compromising strategy is also often practiced ( $M = 3.960$ ), indicating that administrators regularly seek balanced solutions that satisfy both parties. The emphasis on give-and-take and negotiation suggests that administrators aim to resolve conflicts fairly and efficiently. This strategy promotes mutual understanding and reduces tension; however, it may not always fully address deeper issues. Overall, compromising demonstrates a practical approach to conflict resolution.

**Table 6.** Extent of Conflict Management Strategies in terms of Competing

No.	Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	The administrator asserts authority strongly.	2.96	1.543	Sometimes
2	The administrator uses rules to win conflicts.	3.20	1.583	Sometimes
3	The administrator focuses on own goals.	3.24	1.372	Sometimes
4	The administrator defends decisions strongly.	3.68	1.162	Often
5	The administrator emphasizes discipline.	4.12	0.868	Often
6	The administrator dominates discussions.	3.60	1.206	Often
7	The administrator enforces solutions.	3.40	1.206	Sometimes
8	The administrator prioritizes school rules.	4.20	0.899	Often
9	The administrator insists on their way.	3.40	0.853	Sometimes
10	The administrator views conflict as a challenge.	3.32	1.162	Sometimes
Weighted Mean		3.512	0.881	Often

The competing strategy is often practiced ( $M = 3.512$ ), suggesting that administrators sometimes assert authority, particularly in situations requiring discipline and adherence to rules. Higher ratings on enforcing policies indicate that administrators prioritize organizational order when necessary. While this approach can be effective in urgent or critical situations, frequent use may reduce collaboration if not balanced with other strategies. Overall, competing is applied when firm decision-making is required.

**Table 7.** Extent of Conflict Management Strategies in terms of Collaborating

No.	Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	The administrator seeks win-win solutions.	3.52	1.367	Often
2	Teachers and administrators work together.	4.48	0.948	Often
3	The administrator promotes open discussion.	4.64	0.482	Always
4	The administrator encourages cooperation.	4.20	0.804	Often
5	The administrator ensures all sides are heard.	3.64	0.847	Often
6	The administrator promotes trust.	3.56	1.242	Often
7	The administrator builds consensus.	3.56	1.242	Often

8	The administrator integrates teachers' ideas.	4.12	0.769	Often
9	The administrator fosters teamwork.	3.52	1.176	Often
10	The administrator ensures long-term solutions.	3.72	0.922	Often
Weighted Mean		3.896	0.684	Often

The collaborating strategy is often practiced ( $M = 3.896$ ), reflecting a strong emphasis on cooperation, open communication, and shared problem-solving. High ratings on promoting discussion and teamwork indicate that administrators actively involve teachers in resolving conflicts. This approach encourages trust and leads to more sustainable solutions, as all parties contribute to the outcome. Overall, collaborating highlights a participative and inclusive leadership style.

**Table 8.** Correlation Among Conflict Management Strategies

Variables	Pearson r	Sig.	Interpretation
Avoiding – Accommodating	0.775**	0.000	High
Avoiding – Compromising	0.380**	0.000	Moderate
Avoiding – Competing	0.894**	0.000	Very High
Avoiding – Collaborating	0.552**	0.000	High
Accommodating – Compromising	0.774**	0.000	High
Accommodating – Competing	0.906**	0.000	Nearly Perfect
Accommodating – Collaborating	0.855**	0.000	Very High
Compromising – Competing	0.661**	0.000	High
Compromising – Collaborating	0.847**	0.000	Very High
Competing – Collaborating	0.817**	0.000	Very High

The results show that all conflict management strategies are positively and significantly correlated, indicating that they are not used independently but rather in combination. The presence of high to very high correlations suggests that administrators adapt their strategies depending on the situation. For instance, strong relationships among accommodating, collaborating, and compromising indicate a preference for cooperative approaches, while the link between competing and other strategies shows that assertiveness is also applied when necessary. Overall, these findings imply that effective conflict management involves flexibility and the ability to use multiple strategies appropriately.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study reveal that school administrators in Parang East District employ a combination of conflict management strategies, with accommodating, compromising, competing, and collaborating strategies being often practiced, while avoiding is only sometimes used. This suggests that administrators generally prefer active and relationship-oriented approaches rather than relying on passive avoidance.

The limited use of avoidance indicates that administrators do not frequently ignore conflicts, but instead choose to address them when necessary. This supports the view of Stephen P. Robbins (2005), who emphasized that unresolved conflict may negatively affect organizational performance if not properly managed. By using avoidance selectively, administrators may be attempting to prevent escalation in minor situations while still maintaining overall control.

The frequent use of accommodating strategies highlights the importance placed on maintaining harmony and positive interpersonal relationships within the school. This aligns with the perspective of Mary Parker Follett (1926), who emphasized cooperation and integration as essential elements in resolving conflict. Administrators who prioritize relationships help create

a supportive work environment, which is important in educational settings where collaboration among teachers is necessary.

Similarly, the use of compromising strategies indicates that administrators aim to achieve balanced solutions through negotiation and mutual agreement. This supports the framework of Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann (1974), which identifies compromise as an effective middle-ground approach when both parties need to reach a fair resolution. This strategy promotes efficiency in resolving conflicts, although it may not always fully satisfy all parties.

The presence of competing strategies further suggests that administrators assert authority when necessary, particularly in maintaining discipline and enforcing school policies. This reflects the idea that leadership sometimes requires decisive action, especially in situations where rules and organizational goals must be upheld. However, as noted by M. Afzalur Rahim (2002), overreliance on competing strategies may reduce cooperation if not balanced with more collaborative approaches.

Among all strategies, collaborating is also frequently practiced, indicating that administrators value open communication and shared problem-solving. This supports the notion that collaborative strategies lead to more sustainable and mutually beneficial outcomes, as all parties are involved in the resolution process. As emphasized in conflict management literature, collaboration is often considered the most effective strategy because it addresses the needs of all stakeholders while strengthening relationships.

The results further reveal that all conflict management strategies are positively and significantly correlated, indicating that these approaches are interconnected and not used in isolation. This suggests that school administrators adopt a flexible approach, selecting strategies based on the nature and complexity of each conflict situation.

The strong relationships among accommodating, collaborating, and compromising strategies indicate a preference for cooperative and relationship-focused approaches. This finding supports the argument of M. Afzalur Rahim (2002), who noted that effective conflict management involves integrating multiple strategies to achieve optimal outcomes.

Moreover, the high correlation between competing and other strategies suggests that administrators balance assertiveness with cooperation. This reflects the model of Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann (1974), which emphasizes that effective conflict resolution depends on adjusting levels of assertiveness and cooperativeness according to the situation.

Overall, the findings indicate that conflict management among school administrators is dynamic and situational. Rather than relying on a single approach, administrators combine different strategies to effectively address conflicts, maintain organizational harmony, and support a positive school climate.

The study highlights that effective conflict management in schools requires flexibility, balance, and strategic decision-making. Administrators who are able to integrate multiple strategies are more likely to resolve conflicts effectively while maintaining positive relationships among teachers. These findings emphasize the need for continuous professional development in conflict management to further enhance leadership practices in educational institutions.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that school administrators in Parang East District, Division of Sulu, demonstrate a consistent use of various conflict management strategies as perceived by teachers. Among the strategies examined, accommodating, compromising, competing, and collaborating are often practiced, while avoiding is only occasionally applied. This indicates that administrators generally prefer active and relationship-oriented approaches rather than relying on passive avoidance in managing conflicts.

The findings further reveal that administrators exhibit a balanced approach to conflict management by integrating both cooperative and assertive strategies. The frequent use of accommodating and collaborating reflects an emphasis on maintaining positive relationships and promoting open communication, while the use of compromising indicates a practical effort to achieve fair and acceptable solutions. At the same time, the presence of competing strategies suggests that administrators are also capable of asserting authority when necessary to maintain order and uphold school policies.

Moreover, the study establishes that all conflict management strategies are significantly related to one another, indicating that these approaches are not used independently but are applied in combination depending on the situation. This highlights the dynamic nature of conflict management, where administrators adjust their strategies based on the demands of specific circumstances.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of flexibility and strategic decision-making in conflict management. School administrators who are able to effectively combine different strategies are better positioned to resolve conflicts, strengthen professional relationships, and foster a positive and collaborative school environment.

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