

Cultural Competence and Conflict Management Skills of Elementary School Heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya as Perceived by their Teachers: Basis for Management Intervention

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the cultural competence and conflict management skills of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya as perceived by teachers, and proposed a management intervention program. It assessed cultural competence in terms of open attitude, self-awareness, awareness of others, cultural knowledge, and cultural studies, and conflict management skills in terms of communication, emotional intelligence, empathy, creative problem solving, and conflict resolution skills. It also determined the relationship between the two variables. A descriptive-correlational research design was employed. The respondents were 90 teachers from 13 public elementary schools, selected through total enumeration sampling. Data were collected using validated survey questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation. Results showed that the cultural competence of school heads was rated Very High in all dimensions, and their conflict management skills were likewise rated Very High. However, the correlation analysis revealed no significant relationship between cultural competence and conflict management skills. The study concludes that although school heads demonstrate high competence in both areas, these variables function independently. A management intervention program is recommended to strengthen leadership practices in culturally diverse schools further.

Keywords: Cultural Competence, Conflict Management, School Leadership, Elementary Schools, Teachers' Perception

Introduction

School leadership plays a pivotal role in creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment, especially in areas with diverse cultural and social contexts. In the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya, schools are characterized by a heterogeneous mix of learners and teachers, coming from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds such as Kalanguya, Ibaloi, Ifugao, Isinai, Gaddang, and other indigenous groups. This cultural diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for school heads in ensuring harmonious relationships, effective communication, and equitable learning experiences for all.

Given this diversity, the cultural competence of school heads becomes a crucial factor in addressing the needs of both teachers and learners. School administrators who demonstrate openness, self-awareness, awareness of others, and adequate cultural knowledge are better positioned to promote inclusivity, minimize misunderstandings, and strengthen collaborative practices within their schools. This is consistent with DepEd Order No. 62, s. 2011 (Adopting the National Indigenous Peoples Education Policy Framework) which emphasizes the integration of culture-sensitive practices in school leadership and instruction.

At the same time, leadership in the Southern District also demands strong conflict management skills. Teachers' perceptions of how school heads handle communication, emotional intelligence, empathy, problem-solving, and conflict resolution significantly affect the overall school climate. In a culturally diverse district, conflicts may arise not only from organizational matters but also from differences in perspectives, values, and expectations. How school heads manage these situations can either strengthen trust and cooperation or exacerbate divisions among stakeholders. This aligns with the principles of Republic Act 10533, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, which promotes inclusive and learner-centered education through effective school leadership and governance.

Grounded in these realities, this study examines the cultural competence and conflict management skills of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya, as perceived by their teachers. By situating the research in this local context, the study recognizes the unique challenges school administrators face in leading multicultural communities. The findings are expected to serve as a basis for management interventions that will enhance leadership capacity, promote harmonious school environments, and support culturally responsive and inclusive education in the district.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The study used a descriptive approach and a survey questionnaire to collect the necessary information. According to Shields and Rangarjan (2013), the descriptive method explores an existing phenomenon and emphasizes its present status. It also describes a current situation, determines the nature of prevailing conditions or practices, and seeks an accurate description of activities, objects, persons, and processes. Patricia Shields (2013) claims that descriptive research describes the characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. It does not answer questions about how, when, or why the characteristics occurred; rather, it addresses the "what" question: what the characteristics of the population or situation are.

Research Environment: The study took place at Santa Fe, Nueva Vizcaya, wherein thirteen public elementary schools in the municipality served as the locale of the study, namely: Atbu Elementary School; Bantinan Elementary School; Baliling Elementary School; Baracbac Elementary School; Buyasyas Elementary School; Cauco Elementary School; Genato Elementary School; Genato Elementary School; Imugan Elementary School; Lawed Elementary School; Santa Fe Central School; Sinapaoan Elementary School; Tan Yan Kee Elementary School; and Unib Elementary School. These schools have a total population of ninety (90) teachers.

Data Gathering Procedure: Permission and approval were sought from the office of the Schools Division Superintendents, Public Schools District Supervisors, and the School Principals prior to the data collection. The survey was conducted immediately upon approval from the school administration. Data collection proceeded only with respondents' informed consent. Respondents were asked to read the consent form carefully. They were given a clear option to participate voluntarily. Respondents were instructed not to write their names in the questionnaire to ensure anonymity. The researchers ensured confidentiality by removing personal identifiers from completed questionnaires. The collected data were tabulated and subjected to statistical treatment.

Respondents of the Study: The respondents of the study were the eighty (90) teachers of the thirteen (13) public elementary schools of Santa Fe District. This study employed **total enumeration sampling**, a method wherein all members of the population are included as respondents. According to Etikan and Bala (2017), total enumeration sampling, also called complete enumeration or census sampling, is appropriate when the population is relatively small, accessible, and manageable. In this technique, the entire population that meets the inclusion criteria is studied rather than selecting a representative sample.

Table 1

Frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents.

Schools	Frequency	%
Atbu Elementary School	6	6.67
Bantinan Elementary School	7	7.78
Baliling Elementary School	7	7.78
Baracbac Elementary School	7	7.78
Buyasyas Elementary School	7	7.78
Genato Elementary School	6	6.67
Imugan Elementary School	7	7.78
Lawed Elementary School	4	4.44
Santa Fe Central School	15	16.67
Sinapaoan Elementary School	7	7.78
Tan Yan Kee Elementary School	7	7.78
Tactac Elementary School	7	7.78
Unib Elementary School	3	3.33
Total	90	100

Research Instruments

Data were collected using the following instruments: a self-survey questionnaire adapted from the Cultural Competencies Self-Assessment *Checklist* that measures the level of cultural competence among elementary school heads in the Southern District. The *Questionnaire on the Cultural Competence of School Heads (as perceived by teachers)* is a structured survey tool designed to assess school leaders' ability to foster inclusive and culturally responsive school environments. It measures cultural competence across five domains: Open Attitude, Self-Awareness, Awareness of Others, Cultural Knowledge, and Cultural Skills. Using a 4-point Likert scale, teachers evaluated their school heads' practices and dispositions.

The *Questionnaire on the Cultural Competence of School Heads (as perceived by teachers)* is grounded in well-established cultural competence and leadership frameworks, ensuring **content validity**. The five domains- Open Attitude, Self-Awareness, Awareness of Others, Cultural Knowledge, and Cultural Skills were derived from the models of **Cross et al. (1989)**, **Tervalon & Murray-García (1998)**, **Campinha-Bacote (2002)**, and **Khalifa et al. (2016)**, which have been widely cited in cultural competence and educational leadership research.

Content Validity: Items were formulated based on the theoretical dimensions of the above models, ensuring that each domain reflects essential aspects of cultural competence. Experts in education and leadership studies may be consulted to further review the appropriateness and clarity of the items.

Construct Validity: The tool operationalizes abstract constructs (attitude, awareness, knowledge, skills) into measurable statements that align with the theoretical framework.

Face Validity: The wording of items is clear, context-appropriate, and directly reflects behaviors and dispositions observable in school leadership.

To identify the school head's level of cultural competence as perceived by their teachers, the four - point Likert scale will be utilized:

Ratings	Mean Range	Descriptive Evaluation	Level
4	3.26 – 4.00	Strongly Agree	Very High Cultural Competence
3	2.51 – 3.25	Agree	High Cultural Competence

2	1.76 – 2.50	Disagree	Low Cultural Competence
1	1.00 – 1.75	Strongly Disagree	Very Low Cultural Competence

Another questionnaire on the *Conflict Management Skills* of school heads was composed of **25 closed-ended items**. The researcher contextualized the questionnaire based on established frameworks in conflict management and leadership (Goleman, 1995; Rahim, 2002; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974; Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991). To ensure **content validity**, the initial draft of the instrument was submitted to a panel of expert educators. Their feedback helped refine the wording, clarity, and alignment of the items with the study's objectives. **Face validity** was also established by ensuring that the questions were clearly stated, relevant, and understandable to the target respondents.

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2	1.76 – 2.50	Disagree	Low Cultural Competence
1	1.00 – 1.75	Strongly Disagree	Very Low Cultural Competence

Three education experts conducted content validation to assess the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of each item. The experts' recommendations were carefully reviewed and incorporated, resulting in minor revisions to improve wording and ensure the items accurately reflected the study's objectives. The validation team used a 1-4 scale. Scale of 4- Strongly Agree with the statement, scale of 3-Agree with the statement, scale of 2- Disagree with the statement, and scale of 1- Strongly Disagree with the statement.

Statistical Tools and Treatment of Data

Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation, Frequency, and Percentage) were utilized to determine the level of cultural competence and conflict management skills of school heads as perceived by teachers. These tools are appropriate because they summarize central tendencies and variability, allowing interpretation of data using the 5-point Likert scale (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Correlation Analysis (Pearson r or Spearman ρ) was used to measure the relationship between cultural competence and school heads' management styles. Pearson's correlation is appropriate for normally distributed data, while Spearman's correlation serves as a non-parametric alternative when assumptions of normality are not met (Pallant, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Problem 1. *What is the level of cultural competence of the elementary school heads of the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of:*

Open attitude;

Self-awareness;

Awareness of others;

1.4. Cultural Knowledge; and

1.5 Cultural Skills?

Table 2a presents the level of cultural competence of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of openness. The overall mean of 3.86, described as Very High Cultural Competence, indicates that school heads consistently demonstrate openness to cultural diversity in their leadership practices. This finding suggests that school heads generally value inclusivity, welcome diverse perspectives, and maintain a receptive attitude toward cultural issues within their schools. A very high overall mean reflects a school leadership environment that supports equity, respect for diversity, and continuous learning, which are essential in managing culturally diverse educational settings.

Table 2.

Level of cultural competence of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya regarding openness.

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description		
Welcomes diverse viewpoints from teachers, learners, and families.	3.87	Very high	competence	cultural
Invites constructive critique about equity and culture in school policies.	3.84	Very high	competence	cultural

Encourages experimentation with inclusive practices.	3.78	Very high	cultural competence
Seeks feedback from culturally diverse staff before finalizing programs.	3.92	Very high	cultural competence
Shows a non-defensive, learning-oriented stance when cultural issues arise.	3.79	Very high	cultural competence
Publicly acknowledges when the school needs to improve inclusion.	3.96	Very high	cultural competence
Overall Mean	3.86	Very high	cultural competence

Among the indicators, “Publicly acknowledges when the school needs to improve inclusion” had the highest weighted mean (WM = 3.96). This result implies that school heads are highly transparent and reflective, recognizing gaps in inclusivity and openly addressing them. Such openness demonstrates ethical leadership and accountability, which are critical in fostering trust among teachers, learners, and stakeholders. This finding aligns with Castillo and Alba (2021), who found that Filipino school leaders who acknowledge cultural gaps and actively address inclusion issues promote stronger school-community relationships and a more inclusive school culture.

The second highest indicator, “Seeks feedback from culturally diverse staff before finalizing programs” (WM = 3.92), shows that school heads value participatory decision-making. This practice reflects respect for diverse voices and ensures that school programs are culturally responsive. Involving culturally diverse staff enhances the relevance and effectiveness of school initiatives. Dela Cruz (2022) supports this, finding that inclusive leadership practices among public school administrators in the Philippines significantly improved teachers’ sense of belonging and participation in decision-making processes.

Closely following is “Welcomes diverse viewpoints from teachers, learners, and families” (WM = 3.87), indicating that school heads maintain open communication with various stakeholders. This finding highlights the importance of stakeholder engagement in culturally diverse school contexts, where different perspectives contribute to more informed and balanced decisions. Such openness strengthens collaboration and mutual respect within the school community.

The indicator “Invites constructive critique about equity and culture in school policies” (WM = 3.84) further underscores school heads’ willingness to critically assess existing policies through a cultural lens. Accepting critique reflects a growth-oriented leadership approach, where feedback is seen as an opportunity for improvement rather than a challenge to authority. This practice supports the development of equitable and culturally responsive school policies.

Next, “Shows a non-defensive, learning-oriented stance when cultural issues arise” (WM = 3.79) indicates that school heads respond constructively to cultural concerns. Rather than becoming defensive, they view such situations as opportunities for professional growth and institutional learning. This attitude is crucial in preventing conflicts and promoting understanding in multicultural school environments.

The indicator with the lowest weighted mean, though still rated Very High, is “Encourages experimentation with inclusive practices” (WM = 3.78). While school heads strongly support inclusive initiatives, this result may suggest that experimentation with new strategies occurs within certain limitations, possibly due to policy constraints, resource availability, or the need to align with DepEd guidelines. Nevertheless, the high rating still indicates a positive inclination toward innovation in inclusive education.

Overall, the results demonstrate that elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya exhibit a very high level of openness as a component of cultural competence. Their leadership practices reflect inclusivity, reflection, stakeholder engagement, and responsiveness to cultural issues. These findings affirm the role of school heads as key agents in fostering culturally competent and inclusive school environments.

Table 2b shows that elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya demonstrate a very high level of cultural competence in self-awareness, as reflected in an overall mean of 3.85. This indicates that school heads are highly reflective leaders who understand their personal beliefs, biases, and how their cultural identity influences leadership decisions, relationships, and school practices.

Among the indicators, allocating time for staff reflection on identity and bias obtained the highest weighted mean (WM = 3.99), highlighting the strong emphasis school heads place on reflective and inclusive professional practices. This finding supports Santos and Ramirez (2020), which emphasized that reflective leadership enhances cultural awareness and minimizes unconscious bias in Philippine schools. Closely following is acknowledging implicit bias and taking steps to mitigate it (WM = 3.97), suggesting that school heads consciously address bias as a professional responsibility to ensure fairness and equity among teachers and learners.

Table 3.

Level of cultural competence of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of self-awareness.

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description		
Welcomes diverse viewpoints from teachers, learners, and families.	3.71	Very high	cultural competence	
Reflects on personal cultural background and how it shapes leadership.	3.76	Very high	cultural competence	
Acknowledges implicit bias and takes steps to mitigate it.	3.97	Very high	cultural competence	
Recognizes power dynamics among administrators, teachers, and students.	3.92	Very high	cultural competence	
Models learning by admitting mistakes related to culture and equity.	3.73	Very high	cultural competence	
Allocates time for staff reflection on identity and bias.	3.99	Very high	cultural competence	
Overall Mean	3.85	Very high	cultural competence	

The indicator recognizing power dynamics among administrators, teachers, and students ranked third (WM = 3.92), indicating high awareness of how authority and cultural differences interact within the school setting. This aligns with Garcia and Villanueva (2022), who found that culturally self-aware school leaders are more effective in promoting equitable participation and reducing conflicts arising from power imbalances. Next, reflecting on personal cultural background and its influence on leadership (WM = 3.76) shows that school heads intentionally examine how their experiences shape decision-making and leadership behavior.

Meanwhile, modeling learning by admitting mistakes related to culture and equity (WM = 3.73) reflects humility and openness to growth, fostering trust and encouraging an environment that values learning from mistakes. The lowest-rated indicator, though still very high, is welcoming diverse viewpoints from teachers, learners, and families (WM = 3.71), suggesting that while openness exists, they could strengthen structured opportunities for stakeholder engagement.

Overall, the results affirm that elementary school heads possess a strong sense of self-awareness as a core dimension of cultural competence. Their ability to recognize bias, understand power relations, reflect on personal identity, and promote reflective practices positions them well to lead culturally diverse schools ethically, inclusively, and transformatively.

Table 2c presents the level of cultural competence of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of awareness of others, with an overall mean of 3.88, interpreted as Very High Cultural Competence. This result indicates that school heads are highly attentive to the needs, experiences, and challenges of culturally diverse learners, families, and community members, reflecting inclusive and responsive school leadership.

The indicator with the highest weighted mean is engaging community partners or elders in school programs (WM = 3.98), highlighting school heads' strong commitment to community collaboration and culturally grounded practices. This approach strengthens school–community relationships and ensures programs respond to local cultural contexts. This finding is consistent with Dela Cruz and Morales (2021), who found that Filipino school leaders who actively involve community stakeholders foster greater inclusivity and learner support.

Table 4.

Level of cultural competence of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of awareness of others.

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description
Actively listens to concerns from culturally diverse families.	3.94	Very high cultural competence
Anticipates barriers (language, cost, schedules) to participation.	3.88	Very high cultural competence
Adapts communication (translation, visual aids) for diverse audiences.	3.88	Very high cultural competence
Protects students who may be marginalized.	3.89	Very high cultural competence
Engages community partners/elders in school programs.	3.98	Very high cultural competence
Responds promptly to cultural insensitivity or discrimination.	3.70	Very high cultural competence
Overall Mean	3.88	Very high cultural competence

Closely following is actively listening to concerns from culturally diverse families (WM = 3.94), suggesting that school heads prioritize open communication and empathy in addressing family concerns. This practice helps build trust and promotes shared responsibility in students' learning and well-being. Similarly, protecting students who may be marginalized (WM = 3.89) reflects a strong advocacy role among school heads, ensuring safe and equitable learning environments.

Both anticipating barriers to participation and adapting communication for diverse audiences obtained the same weighted mean (WM = 3.88), indicating that school heads are proactive in identifying obstacles such as language, cost, and scheduling, and in modifying communication strategies to enhance accessibility. These practices demonstrate sensitivity to contextual differences and align with inclusive leadership principles.

The indicator with the lowest weighted mean, though still rated Very High, is responding promptly to cultural insensitivity or discrimination (WM = 3.70). While school heads generally address such issues effectively, the slightly lower rating may suggest the need for more systematic response mechanisms or continuous capacity-building in handling culturally sensitive concerns.

Overall, the findings reveal that elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya exhibit a very high level of awareness of others as a key dimension of cultural competence. Their responsiveness to family needs, advocacy for marginalized groups, and engagement with community partners demonstrate leadership that supports equity, inclusion, and culturally responsive education.

Table 2d presents the level of cultural competence of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of cultural knowledge, with an overall mean of 3.62, interpreted as Very High Cultural Competence. This finding indicates that school heads possess strong knowledge of cultural contexts, policies, and data-informed practices necessary to support inclusive and responsive school leadership.

Table 5

Level of cultural competence of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of cultural knowledge.

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description
Demonstrates knowledge of the cultural groups in the community.	3.58	Very high cultural competence
Familiar with national and local policies on inclusion.	3.58	Very high cultural competence

Keeps updated with research on culturally responsive schooling.	3.40	Very high cultural competence
Reviews data by subgroup to identify gaps.	3.74	Very high cultural competence
Provides resources about local histories and cultures for staff.	3.46	Very high cultural competence
Aligns school plans with DepEd standards and cultural context.	3.96	Very high cultural competence
Overall Mean	3.62	Very high cultural competence

The highest weighted mean was recorded for aligning school plans with DepEd standards and the cultural context (WM = 3.96). This result suggests that school heads are highly adept at integrating national education policies with the cultural realities of their school communities, ensuring that programs are both policy-compliant and context-sensitive. This aligns with Reyes and Bautista (2022), who emphasized that effective Filipino school leaders apply policy knowledge flexibly to address local cultural needs.

Ranking second is reviewing data by subgroup to identify gaps (WM = 3.74), indicating a strong commitment to evidence-based decision-making. By analyzing disaggregated data, school heads can detect disparities among learner groups and implement targeted interventions. Such practice supports equity and accountability in school leadership.

Both demonstrating knowledge of the cultural groups in the community and being familiar with national and local policies on inclusion obtained the same weighted mean (WM = 3.58). These findings show that school heads are well-informed about the cultural composition of their school communities and the legal frameworks that promote inclusivity, enabling them to respond appropriately to diverse learner needs.

The indicators providing resources about local histories and cultures for staff (WM = 3.46) and keeping updated with research on culturally responsive schooling (WM = 3.40) ranked lower, although they remain within the Very High range. The relatively lower means may suggest that while school heads are knowledgeable, there is room to further strengthen continuous professional learning and the systematic dissemination of cultural knowledge to teaching staff.

Overall, the results demonstrate that elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya exhibit a very high level of cultural knowledge as a component of cultural competence. Their ability to align policies with cultural contexts, utilize data for equity-focused planning, and understand community cultures highlights leadership that is informed, responsive, and grounded in both research and practice.

Table 2e presents the level of cultural competence of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of cultural studies, with an overall mean of 3.80, interpreted as Very High Cultural Competence. This result indicates that school heads strongly support integrating cultural knowledge, inclusive practices, and equity-oriented initiatives into school systems and instructional leadership.

Table 6.

Level of cultural competence of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of cultural studies.

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description
Integrates community culture into school programs and activities in alignment with DepEd Standards.	3.86	Very high cultural competence
Supports curriculum review to ensure inclusion of diverse cultural perspectives.	3.89	Very high cultural competence
Organizes sustained professional development on inclusivity.	3.62	Very high cultural competence
Monitors implementation of inclusive classroom practices.	3.81	Very high cultural competence
Allocates resources for equity and inclusion initiatives.	3.77	Very high cultural competence
Builds partnerships that create cultural learning opportunities.	3.88	Very high cultural competence

Overall Mean	3.80	Very high cultural competence
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The highest weighted mean was obtained by supporting curriculum review to ensure the inclusion of diverse cultural perspectives (WM = 3.89). This finding suggests that school heads actively promote curricula that reflect the diversity of learners and communities, ensuring that instructional content is inclusive and culturally relevant. Closely following is building partnerships that create cultural learning opportunities (WM = 3.88), highlighting the importance of collaborating with community stakeholders to enrich learners' cultural understanding.

Next, integrating community culture into school programs and activities in alignment with DepEd standards (WM = 3.86) indicates that school heads successfully contextualize national standards within local cultural frameworks. Similarly, monitoring the implementation of inclusive classroom practices (WM = 3.81) reflects a strong supervisory role in ensuring inclusive policies translate into classroom practice.

The indicators allocating resources for equity and inclusion initiatives (WM = 3.77) and organizing sustained professional development on inclusivity (WM = 3.62) ranked lower, though both remain within the Very High category. These results suggest that while school heads value inclusive initiatives, sustained professional development and long-term resourcing may be influenced by logistical or funding constraints, warranting continued institutional support.

In Mercado's study (2021), which examined how a primary school offering Indigenous Peoples (IP) education designed and implemented a culturally responsive curriculum rooted in the ancestral domain and local cultural practices. The findings showed that when curriculum and learning activities reflect students' cultural background, teaching becomes more relevant and inclusive, supporting the idea that school heads who support curriculum review and integration of community culture can enhance cultural competence.

In a thesis study entitled "Teaching Practices and Cultural Intelligence as Predictors of Cultural Responsiveness of Public-School Teachers" (2023), a quantitative study among public school teachers found that both teaching practices and cultural intelligence significantly predict cultural responsiveness. Teachers scored "very high" on cultural responsiveness, and the study concluded that when educators (and, by extension, school leadership) emphasize inclusive practices and cultural sensitivity, overall responsiveness to student diversity improves.

Overall, the findings indicate that elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya demonstrate a very high level of competence in cultural studies. Their leadership reflects an ability to translate cultural understanding into curriculum planning, partnerships, professional learning, and equitable resource allocation—key components of culturally responsive and transformative school leadership.

Problem 2. What is the level of conflict management skills of the elementary school of the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of:

2.1. Communication;

2.2. Emotional Intelligence

2.3. Empathy;

2.4. Creative Problem Solving; and

2.5 Conflict Resolution Skills?

Table 7.

Level of conflict management skills of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of communication.

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description
Communicates clearly and effectively with teachers.	3.83	Very high conflict management skills
Encourages open dialogue when conflicts arise.	3.76	Very high conflict management skills
Listens attentively to all parties involved in a disagreement.	3.96	Very high conflict management skills
Ensures transparency in decision-making during conflicts.	3.93	Very high conflict management skills
Uses respectful and non-threatening language when addressing conflicts.	4.00	Very high conflict management skills
Overall Mean	3.90	Very high conflict management skills

Table 3a presents the level of conflict management skills of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of communication, with an overall mean of 3.90, interpreted as Very High Conflict Management Skills. This finding indicates that school heads are highly effective in using communication to manage and resolve conflicts, fostering transparency, trust, and positive working relationships within their schools. Among the indicators, the highest weighted mean was recorded for “Uses respectful and non-threatening language when addressing conflicts” (WM = 4.00), suggesting that school heads consistently use courteous, professional communication that reduces defensiveness and helps prevent disputes from escalating. Closely following is “Listens attentively to all parties involved in a disagreement” (WM = 3.96), reflecting that school heads value active listening and ensure that all perspectives are considered before decisions are made. Other indicators, such as “Ensures transparency in decision-making during conflicts” (WM = 3.93) and “Communicates clearly and effectively with teachers” (WM = 3.83), further demonstrate that school heads strive for clarity and honesty, minimizing misunderstandings and promoting collaborative problem-solving. Even the lowest-ranked indicator, “Encourages open dialogue when conflicts arise” (WM = 3.76), still falls within the Very High range, indicating that school heads foster an environment where staff feel comfortable expressing concerns and contributing to conflict resolution.

These findings are consistent with recent studies highlighting the importance of communication in effective conflict management among school leaders. For instance, Gomez et al. (2022) emphasized that school heads' conflict resolution skills—including transparent and respectful communication—significantly influence teacher engagement and overall school climate, supporting the notion that effective communication is central to resolving disputes in schools. Similarly, Salabi (2021) found that organizational communication and principals' managerial skills are directly related to conflict control and organizational stability, highlighting that clear and professional communication is essential for managing conflicts and maintaining a harmonious work environment. Together, these studies corroborate the current findings, suggesting that school heads' communication competence is a critical factor in ensuring effective conflict management and fostering a positive organizational climate.

Overall, the results indicate that elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya exhibit a very high level of communication skills in conflict management. Their ability to communicate respectfully, listen actively, maintain transparency, and encourage open dialogue reflects a leadership style that promotes collaboration, mitigates misunderstandings, and strengthens harmonious working relationships within the school community.

Table 3b presents the level of conflict management skills of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of emotional intelligence, with an overall mean of 3.84, interpreted as Very High Conflict Management Skills. This finding indicates that school heads are highly adept at managing their own emotions and using emotional awareness to address conflicts effectively. Among the indicators, the highest weighted mean was recorded for “Motivates staff towards resolution despite disagreements” (WM = 3.97), suggesting that school heads actively encourage collaboration and maintain team morale even in tense situations. Closely following is “Uses positive emotions to de-escalate conflict” (WM = 3.88), which reflects their ability to regulate emotional responses and promote a calm environment that reduces tension and fosters constructive problem-solving. The indicator “Is aware of his/her own emotions during tense situations” (WM = 3.86) shows that school heads maintain self-awareness, which allows them to respond appropriately rather than react impulsively. Similarly, “Demonstrates self-control when provoked” (WM = 3.80) and “Remains calm and composed when handling conflicts” (WM = 3.72) indicate strong emotional regulation and resilience in managing conflict situations.

Table 8

Level of conflict management skills of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of emotional intelligence.

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description
Remains calm and composed when handling conflicts.	3.72	Very high conflict management skills
Is aware of his/her own emotions during tense situations.	3.86	Very high conflict management skills
Demonstrates self-control when provoked.	3.80	Very high conflict management skills
Uses positive emotions to de-escalate conflict.	3.88	Very high conflict management skills
Motivates staff towards resolution despite disagreements.	3.97	Very high conflict management skills
Overall Mean	3.84	Very high conflict management skills

These results are supported by recent studies emphasizing the importance of emotional intelligence in conflict management. For example, Al-Hussaini (2021) found that school leaders with higher emotional intelligence are more effective at resolving conflicts, maintaining positive relationships, and fostering a collaborative school climate. Likewise, Gomez et al.

(2022) highlighted that emotional awareness, self-control, and the ability to motivate staff are significant predictors of successful conflict resolution and teacher engagement in Philippine schools. Together, these studies reinforce the current findings, suggesting that school heads' emotional intelligence is a critical factor in ensuring conflicts are handled constructively, minimizing disruption, and promoting organizational harmony.

Overall, the findings indicate that elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya exhibit a very high level of emotional intelligence in conflict management, enabling them to remain composed, regulate emotions, motivate staff, and use positive emotional strategies to resolve disagreements effectively. Such emotional competence contributes to a supportive and collaborative school environment.

Table 3c presents the level of conflict management skills of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of empathy, with an overall mean of 3.80, interpreted as Very High Conflict Management Skills. This indicates that school heads demonstrate a strong ability to understand, acknowledge, and respond to teachers' perspectives and emotions during conflict situations. Among the indicators, the highest weighted mean was recorded for "Treats both parties fairly regardless of position or seniority" (WM = 3.90), suggesting that school heads ensure equity and impartiality when addressing disagreements, fostering trust and credibility among staff. Closely following is "Validates the experiences of teachers before offering solutions" (WM = 3.83), which reflects their recognition of staff concerns and careful consideration of the impact of conflicts before implementing resolutions. The indicators "Demonstrates understanding of the feelings of those involved" (WM = 3.78) and "Acknowledges the stress that conflicts may cause teachers" (WM = 3.77) highlight the leaders' sensitivity to emotional experiences, while "Shows genuine concern for teachers' perspectives during conflict" (WM = 3.73) further confirms their commitment to empathetic leadership.

Table 9.

Level of conflict management skills of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of empathy.

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description
Shows genuine concern for teachers' perspectives during conflict.	3.73	Very high conflict management skills
Demonstrates understanding of the feelings of those involved.	3.78	Very high conflict management skills
Acknowledges the stress that conflicts may cause teachers.	3.77	Very high conflict management skills
Validates the experiences of teachers before offering solutions.	3.83	Very high conflict management skills
Treats both parties fairly regardless of position or seniority.	3.90	Very high conflict management skills
Overall Mean	3.80	Very high conflict management skills

These findings are supported by recent studies emphasizing the role of empathy in effective conflict management. For instance, Singh and Sharma (2021) found that empathetic leadership in schools enhances trust, collaboration, and problem-solving effectiveness among staff, thereby reducing the negative impact of conflicts. Similarly, Gomez et al. (2022) reported that empathy, alongside emotional intelligence and communication skills, is a critical factor enabling school heads in the Philippines to manage disputes effectively while maintaining positive teacher engagement and school climate. Together, these studies corroborate the current findings, demonstrating that empathy is a key leadership attribute that strengthens conflict resolution and promotes harmonious working relationships.

Overall, the results indicate that elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya exhibit a very high level of empathy in conflict management, allowing them to address conflicts fairly, validate teacher experiences, and understand emotional dynamics. This empathetic approach fosters trust, cooperation, and a supportive school environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

Table 10

Level of conflict management skills of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of creative problem solving.

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description
Considers multiple solutions to address conflicts.	3.88	Very high conflict management skills
Encourages collaboration in generating conflict solutions.	3.89	Very high conflict management skills
Adapts strategies based on the situation.	3.97	Very high conflict management skills
Promotes innovative approaches to solving recurring conflict-related issues.	3.84	Very high conflict management skills
Fosters an environment where conflicts are seen as opportunities for improvement.	3.90	Very high conflict management skills
Overall Mean	3.90	Very high conflict management skills

Table 3d presents the level of conflict management skills of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of creative problem solving, with an overall mean of 3.90, interpreted as Very High Conflict Management Skills. This indicates that school heads are highly capable of applying innovative and flexible strategies to address conflicts, ensuring disputes are resolved effectively while maintaining a collaborative school environment. Among the indicators, the highest weighted mean was recorded for “Adapts strategies based on the situation” (WM = 3.97), suggesting that school heads are flexible and responsive, tailoring their approaches to the unique demands of each conflict scenario. Closely following is “Fosters an environment where conflicts are seen as opportunities for improvement” (WM = 3.90), reflecting their ability to reframe challenges as learning experiences and encourage staff to approach conflicts constructively. Other indicators, including “Encourages collaboration in generating conflict solutions” (WM = 3.89) and “Considers multiple solutions to address conflicts” (WM = 3.88), demonstrate that school heads involve staff in collaborative problem-solving and consider diverse alternatives before deciding on the best course of action. The indicator “Promotes innovative approaches to solving recurring conflict-related issues” (WM = 3.84) further emphasizes that school leaders proactively seek long-term solutions rather than relying on conventional methods.

Recent studies support these findings by emphasizing the role of creative problem-solving in effective school leadership. For example, Al-Madani and Al-Johani (2021) found that school leaders who use innovative and collaborative problem-solving approaches improve conflict resolution outcomes, boost staff engagement, and foster a positive organizational climate. Similarly, Gomez et al. (2022) reported that Philippine school heads who involve teachers in generating solutions, consider multiple alternatives, and adapt strategies to the situation are more successful in managing conflicts while maintaining teacher satisfaction and collaboration. Together, these studies support the current findings, highlighting creative and flexible problem-solving as a key component of effective conflict management among school leaders.

Overall, the results indicate that elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya exhibit a very high level of creative problem-solving skills in conflict management, enabling them to adapt strategies, promote collaboration, explore multiple solutions, and turn conflicts into opportunities for organizational learning and improvement. This skill contributes to a responsive, innovative, and resilient school environment.

Table 11

Level of conflict management skills of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in conflict resolution skills.

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Description
Facilitates conflict resolution meetings effectively.	3.94	Very high conflict management skills
Seeks win-win solutions that satisfy all parties.	3.99	Very high conflict management skills
Is consistent in implementing conflict management policies.	4.00	Very high conflict management skills
Follows up to ensure resolved conflicts do not recur.	3.91	Very high conflict management skills
Maintains harmony and positive relationships after conflict resolution.	3.97	Very high conflict management skills
Overall Mean	3.96	Very high conflict management skills

Table 3e presents the level of conflict management skills of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya in terms of conflict resolution skills, with an overall mean of 3.96, interpreted as Very High Conflict Management Skills. This indicates that school heads are highly effective in managing, resolving, and preventing conflicts while maintaining positive working relationships. Among the indicators, the highest weighted mean was recorded for “Is consistent in implementing conflict management policies” (WM = 4.00), suggesting that school heads ensure uniformity and fairness in applying rules and procedures, which enhances trust and accountability. Closely following is “Seeks win-win solutions that satisfy all parties” (WM = 3.99), reflecting their commitment to collaborative and equitable conflict resolution. The indicators “Maintains harmony and positive relationships after conflict resolution” (WM = 3.97) and “Facilitates conflict resolution meetings effectively” (WM = 3.94) further demonstrate that school heads are skilled in conducting structured dialogues and sustaining healthy professional relationships. “Follows up to ensure resolved conflicts do not recur” (WM = 3.91) highlights their proactive approach in preventing future disputes and reinforcing sustainable solutions.

These findings are supported by recent studies emphasizing the importance of conflict resolution skills among school leaders. For example, Salabi (2021) found that effective conflict resolution practices, including consistent policy implementation and follow-up measures, are critical for sustaining organizational harmony and improving staff collaboration. Similarly, Gomez et al. (2022) reported that Philippine school heads who actively seek win-win solutions, conduct effective resolution meetings, and maintain positive relationships are more successful in managing conflicts and enhancing teacher engagement. These studies reinforce the current findings, indicating that strong conflict resolution skills are central to effective school leadership and to promoting a positive, cooperative school climate.

Overall, the results suggest that elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya demonstrate a very high level of conflict resolution skills, enabling them to manage disputes effectively, implement consistent policies, facilitate constructive dialogue, and maintain harmonious relationships. These skills contribute significantly to a collaborative, responsive, and resilient school environment.

Problem 3. Is there a significant relationship between cultural competence and conflict management skills of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya?

Table 12

Relationship Between Cultural Competence and Conflict Management Skills of Elementary School Heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya.

Variables	r value	p value	Significance	Decision
Cultural Competence vs Conflict Management Skills	-0.09363	0.38	Not Significant	Accept Null Hypothesis

Table 4 presents the correlation analysis between Cultural Competence and Conflict Management Skills of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya. The computed Pearson correlation coefficient yielded $r = -0.09363$, indicating a very weak negative relationship between the two variables. This result suggests that cultural competence

has little to no association with respondents' conflict management skills. The correlation between cultural competence and conflict management skills was very weak and not statistically significant ($r = -0.09363$, $p = 0.38$), indicating no significant relationship between the two variables among elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya.

The very weak negative correlation suggests that cultural competence does not significantly influence the conflict management skills of elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya. While cultural competence is often considered an important leadership attribute, the result suggests that conflict management skills may be influenced more by other factors such as leadership experience, communication skills, training in conflict resolution, and organizational policies. The negligible correlation further indicates that improving cultural competence alone may not substantially improve conflict management practices.

Therefore, based on the results, cultural competence and conflict management skills are not significantly related among elementary school heads in the Southern District of Nueva Vizcaya. The very weak negative correlation indicates that the two variables operate independently, and that other variables may play a more critical role in enhancing school heads' ability to manage conflicts effectively.

In the Philippine study by Gomez et al. (2021), they found that conflict resolution skills among school heads were significantly associated with organizational school climate and teacher work engagement — but the focus was on skills such as communication, mediation, and leadership style rather than cultural competence per se.

Similarly, Anuddin (2023) studied administrators' conflict management and decision-making abilities in a different Philippine context (public higher education). The authors identified that conflict management effectiveness is more strongly associated with decision-making competencies and organizational context rather than with cultural-diversity attributes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

School administrators should attend continuing professional development sessions to enhance their cultural competence. Training in areas such as intercultural communication, emotional intelligence and empathy, creative problem-solving, and conflict resolution may also help school heads strengthen their management practices in culturally diverse school settings.

Future studies may look into other factors that may affect school heads' ability to manage conflict. Because this study did not find a statistically significant relationship between cultural competence and conflict management skills, future research may consider other variables. Future research may look into leadership style, organizational climate, emotional intelligence, administrative experience, and school culture.

AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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