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CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION PRAXIS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT COMPETENCE AMONG THE SCHOOL LEADERS IN SOCCSKSARGEN

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ABSTRACT

This study examined culturally responsive conflict resolution and its relationship with conflict management competence among school leaders in SOCCSKSARGEN. Using a three-phase mixed-method design, the research quantitatively assessed the levels and relationships of the variables, qualitatively explored the lived experiences of school leaders, and developed a dissemination plan based on the findings. Results revealed that school leaders consistently demonstrated highly responsive culturally grounded conflict resolution practices across dimensions such as culture and identity, context and history, relationships and communication, social justice and equity, and reflective practice and accountability. Likewise, school leaders exhibited a high level of competence in managing conflicts, particularly in communication, decision-making, negotiation, emotional intelligence, and professional responsiveness. A significant positive relationship was found between culturally responsive conflict resolution and conflict management competence. The study underscores the importance of culturally responsive leadership in fostering inclusive, equitable, and harmonious school environments.

INTRODUCTION

The SOCCSKSARGEN region is characterized by diverse cultural and ethnic communities, requiring school leaders to demonstrate culturally responsive leadership, particularly in managing conflicts within educational settings. Culturally responsive conflict resolution emphasizes respect for cultural identity, awareness of historical and social contexts, and the promotion of equity and inclusivity in decision-making. While existing studies highlight the importance of culturally responsive leadership, limited research has explored its direct

influence on conflict management competence, particularly within the Philippine context. Moreover, previous studies often relied on single-method approaches, limiting a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. This study addressed these gaps by examining the relationship between culturally responsive conflict resolution and conflict management competence among school leaders in SOCCSKSARGEN, while also exploring their lived experiences and proposing a dissemination plan to enhance leadership practices in culturally diverse schools.

METHODS

This study employed a three-phase mixed-method research design. Phase 1 utilized a descriptive-correlational approach to determine the level and relationship between culturally responsive conflict resolution and conflict management competence among school leaders. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed through mean, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression. Phase 2 adopted a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of school leaders in applying culturally responsive practices in conflict resolution. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes. Phase 3 focused on the development of a dissemination plan and policy recommendations based on the findings. The respondents included school leaders from the Schools Division Offices of Cotabato, Kidapawan City, Sultan Kudarat, and Tacurong City. Stratified random sampling was used for the quantitative phase, while criterion-based purposive sampling was applied for the qualitative phases. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for cultural sensitivity were strictly observed throughout the study.

RESULTS

The findings revealed that school leaders demonstrated a highly responsive level of culturally responsive conflict resolution across all dimensions, including culture and identity, context and history, relationships and communication, social justice and equity, and reflective practice and accountability. Among these, relationships and communication and social justice and equity showed particularly strong manifestations, indicating that leaders prioritize trust-building, inclusivity, and fairness in resolving conflicts. In terms of conflict management competence, school leaders exhibited a high level of competence across communication skills, decision-making ability, negotiation and mediation skills, emotional intelligence, and professional responsiveness. Communication skills and professional responsiveness were

among the highest-rated competencies, reflecting leaders' ability to facilitate dialogue and maintain professionalism during conflicts. Statistical analysis revealed a strong and significant positive relationship between culturally responsive conflict resolution and conflict management competence ($r = 0.666$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of cultural responsiveness are associated with stronger conflict management skills. Reflective practice and accountability showed the strongest correlation with conflict management competence, highlighting the importance of self-awareness and continuous improvement in leadership. Qualitative findings further revealed that school leaders rely on empathy, cultural awareness, community engagement, and reflective practices in managing conflicts, while also facing challenges related to balancing cultural expectations and institutional policies.

DISCUSSION

The results affirm that culturally responsive conflict resolution is a critical component of effective school leadership in diverse educational settings. The high levels of responsiveness observed across all dimensions suggest that school leaders are actively integrating cultural awareness, equity, and reflective practices into their conflict resolution strategies. The strong relationship between culturally responsive practices and conflict management competence supports the notion that leadership effectiveness in conflict situations is not solely based on technical skills but is deeply rooted in cultural sensitivity and relational understanding. Reflective practice and accountability emerged as the strongest predictors of conflict management competence, emphasizing the importance of self-awareness and continuous professional growth. Additionally, communication and social justice-oriented practices were found to significantly enhance leaders' ability to manage conflicts constructively. However, the study also highlights challenges faced by school leaders, particularly in balancing cultural expectations with formal policies, indicating the need for institutional support and context-sensitive leadership frameworks. These findings reinforce the importance of integrating culturally responsive leadership into professional development programs for school leaders.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that culturally responsive conflict resolution is a vital and effective approach in enhancing conflict management competence among school leaders in SOCCSKSARGEN. School leaders consistently demonstrate high levels of cultural responsiveness and conflict management competence, indicating their capacity to handle conflicts in inclusive, fair, and culturally sensitive ways. The significant relationship between

the two variables confirms that culturally responsive practices are essential in strengthening leadership effectiveness in conflict situations. Reflective practice, communication, and equity-centered leadership are key factors that contribute to successful conflict management. The study further emphasizes the need for continuous professional development, policy support, and structured dissemination of culturally responsive practices to sustain and enhance leadership effectiveness. The proposed dissemination plan and policy recommendations provide a foundation for strengthening culturally responsive leadership and promoting harmonious, inclusive school environments.