

The Relationship between Administrators' Conflict Management Practices and Job Satisfaction of SJKC Teachers in Central Malacca District

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Abstract

This study purpose of this study to examine the relationship between administrators' conflict management practices and teachers' job satisfaction in Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina (SJKC) in the Central Melaka district. Teacher job satisfaction as the factor in ensuring educational effectiveness, and conflict management by administrators is recognized as an important element that influences the work environment. Quantitative design was used in this research through survey approach. A total of 162 teachers were selected as the study sample uses stratified random sampling technique. The study instrument consisted of a questionnaire that measured administrators' conflict management practices and teachers' job satisfaction. Data were collected through a questionnaire distributed via google form and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation. The findings show a very weak and statistically insignificant relationship between administrators' conflict management style and teachers' job satisfaction ($r = 0.045$, $p > 0.05$). This suggests that other factors, such as recognition, professional development, and the work environment, have a greater influence on teachers' job satisfaction. The implications of this study highlight the need for intensive training for administrators in conflict management, as well as more inclusive leadership practices. In conclusion, although conflict management practices are important, other factors need to be addressed to increase teachers' job satisfaction and support overall educational effectiveness.

Keywords: Conflict Management Practices, Teacher Job Satisfaction

Introduction

In the context of today's education, the role of school administrators as leaders must be implemented to ensure that school management become more effective and excellent. School administrators in Malaysia, especially in National Type Chinese School *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina* (SJKC), face complex challenges in carrying out their duties. The most issues that needs to give attention is the management of conflict in the workplace. The implication if the conflict cannot handled properly will be giving negative impact on the work

environment and subsequently affect teachers' job satisfaction. Therefore, a study on the relationship between administrators' conflict management practices and teachers' job satisfaction is relevant and significant.

Based on the nowadays scenario, as in the Melaka Tengah district, as in other areas, teachers in SJKC always had diversity of work challenges, including work pressure, increased workload, and internal conflicts between colleagues or with the administration. This situation requires an effective conflict management approach by school administrators. Conflicts that are not handled properly can cause teachers to feel dissatisfied with their work environment, which can ultimately affect their performance and motivation to teach.

Through the development of the world of education, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (KPM) introducing important policies and initiatives in order to improve school management and teacher well-being. One of the policy has been implemented that called as Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013-2025, focus on the importance of effective leadership in schools to achieve educational excellence. By this policy, conflict management is considered one of the important components in ensuring harmonious and productive working relationships in schools (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013).

The government has introduced the policies is called as PPPM, the aim of the policy to highlight quality leadership as the important foundation for school transformation. School administrators are required to practice distributive leadership, whereby they not only give instructions but also listen to teachers' views and work together to resolve conflicts (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Administrative conflict management practices refer to the approaches and strategies used by school leaders to address and resolve conflict in the workplace. According to Rahim (2020), conflict management involving the process of identifying the causes of conflict, understanding the perspectives of the parties involved, and taking steps to achieve a resolution that is satisfactory to all parties. Johnson (2021) emphasizes that effective conflict management practices involve communication skills, empathy, and the ability to make fair decisions.

Teacher job satisfaction refers to an individual's level of satisfaction with aspects of their work, including the work environment, administrative support, professional development opportunities, and relationships with colleagues. According to Smith and Shields (2023), teacher job satisfaction is the one of factors that affects teaching effectiveness and career survival in the education profession. Locke (2021) on the other hand defines job satisfaction as a positive emotional state that results from evaluating one's job as something meaningful and satisfying.

The relationship between administrators' conflict management practices and teachers' job satisfaction refers to the extent to which conflict management strategies used by administrators affect teachers' perceptions and job satisfaction. A study by Kim and Lee (2020) stated that administrators who used a collaborative problem-solving approach were successful in increasing teachers' job satisfaction. This approach reflects inclusive leadership, where teachers' views are respected and taken into account in the decision-making process.

According to Thomas (2022), there are positive relationship between conflict management and job satisfaction results will exists when administrators show emotional support, practice open communication, and provide opportunities for teachers to actively engage in conflict resolution. A study by Hassan and Wong (2023) also emphasizes that poor conflict management practices, such as authoritarian attitudes or ignoring conflict, can lead to decreased teacher job satisfaction.

This study aims to:

- i) Identify the level of conflict management practices of administrators at SJKCs in the Central Melaka District.
- ii) Identify the level of job satisfaction of teachers at SJKCs in the Central Melaka District.
- iii) Identify the relationship between conflict management practices of administrators and job satisfaction of teachers at SJKCs in the Central Melaka District.

Literature Review

The professional conflict management by school administrators will helps to increases teacher job satisfaction. Abdullah & Noor's (2023) in his research shows that the good conflict management by administrators increases teacher job satisfaction and improves the work atmosphere in schools. Cheng & Tan (2021) in his finding of research found that more collaborative conflict management style can increase teacher job satisfaction in schools. Leadership styles that resolve conflict well have a positive impact on teacher motivation and job satisfaction (Ismail & Saad, 2020). Effective conflict management practices can reduce workplace tension, increase collaboration, and help overcome problems that can damage morale and relationships between teachers. Yusof & Ali (2019) found that constructive conflict resolution increases teacher job satisfaction. The role of administrators in managing conflict has a significant impact on teacher job satisfaction (Zulkifli & Roslan, 2019).

When administrators manage conflicts with professionally teachers will feel valued, supported, and more focused on their tasks, which can ultimately increase their job satisfaction. As the statement in research by Amin & Rahman's (2022) in his finding found that there is a positive relationship between a leadership style that is responsive to conflict and teacher job satisfaction. This statement supported by Salleh & Iqbal (2021) found that good conflict management study that has a direct impact on teacher job satisfaction. Nguyen & Phan (2020) found that fair and open conflict management increases teacher job satisfaction.

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Management Model

The Thomas-Kilmann (1977) conflict management model is a tool used to understand and deal with conflicts that may arise in organizations or social situations. It helps individuals or groups identify the most effective ways to interact with others when faced with differences in views, interests, or desires. Effective conflict management involves not only resolving current issues but also maintaining good interpersonal relationships in the future. By using the right model, managers or administrators can create a more harmonious and productive work environment.

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Management Model (TKI) is one of the most well-known models used to understand and manage conflict in organizations, including schools. The

model classifies conflict management styles into five types: competitive, collaborative, compromising, avoiding, and yielding. Each of these styles is appropriate for different situations, and an understanding of these styles allows school administrators and teachers to choose the most appropriate approach to managing conflicts that arise.

This model is suitable for use in conflict management practice because it:

- i) Introduces a variety of conflict management styles: TKI helps individuals identify their own style in dealing with conflict and how to adapt this style to the situation at hand, whether in the context of teacher-student relationships or among teachers.
- ii) Increase awareness: By knowing conflict management styles, administrators and teachers can resolve conflicts more effectively, reduce tension, and enhance a positive work atmosphere. Flexibility in application:
- iii) This model offers flexibility, as it is not only limited to conflicts in the classroom, but can be used to deal with conflicts in a variety of social and professional contexts.
- iv) Improves collaboration and communication: In conflict situations that require creative solutions, the collaborative style in TKI can improve teamwork and communication between teachers and administrators.
- v) Tension reduction: By using a more constructive conflict management style (such as collaborative or compromising), this model helps in reducing tension and increasing job satisfaction among teachers.

Koh & Tan's (2023) study examined how the Thomas-Kilmann model can be used to manage conflict in schools by choosing the appropriate style for a particular situation, and found that the use of this model increased effective conflict resolution among teachers. Azman & Lee's (2022) study also showed that the Thomas-Kilmann model increased the effectiveness of conflict management in schools, especially in reducing tension between teachers and administrators. A more collaborative and compromising conflict management style based on the TKI model can increase cooperation among teachers and increase their job satisfaction (Hamid & Zainuddin, 2021).

Herzberg's Theory of Job Satisfaction

Herzberg's Theory of Job Satisfaction, known as the Two-Factor Theory, states that there are two groups of factors that influence job satisfaction: motivator factors and hygiene factors. Motivator factors (such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, and opportunities for growth) drive job satisfaction, while hygiene factors (such as pay, work environment, and relationships with co-workers) if insufficient can cause job dissatisfaction but do not create satisfaction if improved.

This theory is suitable for use in the context of teacher job satisfaction because it emphasizes elements that can increase teacher motivation and job achievement as well as factors that reduce dissatisfaction. Some reasons why this theory is suitable for use in teacher job satisfaction are:

- i) Increased motivation: The motivator factors in this theory, such as recognition and opportunities for growth, are very relevant in the educational context where teachers often seek positive feedback and opportunities to improve their skills.

- ii) Satisfaction from achievement: Teachers who feel they have achieved something in their careers will be more satisfied with their jobs. The achievement factors outlined by Herzberg can increase teachers' job satisfaction.
- iii) Balance between hygiene and motivator factors: Achieving a balance between these two factors is very important in the school context, where a comfortable physical environment (hygiene factors) and opportunities for personal development (motivator factors) influence teachers' motivation and job satisfaction.
- iv) Peningkatan kualiti pendidikan: Dengan meningkatkan faktor motivator, seperti penghargaan dan peluang untuk memberi sumbangan yang lebih besar, guru lebih cenderung untuk bekerja dengan lebih bersemangat dan komited kepada pekerjaan mereka, yang membawa kepada peningkatan kualiti pengajaran.
- v) Fokus pada keperluan psikologi: Herzberg menekankan keperluan psikologi yang lebih mendalam, seperti pencapaian peribadi dan rasa dihargai, yang sering menjadi keutamaan dalam profesion perguruan, di mana pengiktirafan dan kepuasan terhadap hasil kerja memainkan peranan penting.
- vi) Improved quality of education: By increasing motivator factors, such as appreciation and opportunities to make a greater contribution, teachers are more likely to work with more enthusiasm and commitment to their jobs, leading to improved teaching quality. Focus on psychological needs: Herzberg emphasized deeper psychological needs, such as personal achievement and a sense of being valued, which are often a priority in the teaching profession, where recognition and satisfaction with work results play an important role.

This statement also similar with the study by Amin & Suhaimi (2023) which found that motivator factors such as recognition and personal development opportunities play an important role in increasing teacher job satisfaction in Malaysia. The study by Ahmad & Ismail (2022) showed that teachers who are given opportunities to develop and are recognized for their achievements are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs, confirming the relevance of motivator factors in the educational context. Siti & Zulkifli (2021) confirmed that both motivator and hygiene factors influence teacher job satisfaction, where motivator factors have a greater impact in increasing job satisfaction among secondary school teachers.

Study Methodology

This study used a survey design to collect data on administrators' conflict management practices and teachers' job satisfaction in SJKC Melaka Tengah District. The survey design was chosen because it allowed for broader data collection and represented the views of many respondents (teachers) in a systematic and structured manner. The survey also allowed this study to conduct statistical analysis to measure the relationship between conflict management practices and teachers' job satisfaction. The quantitative approach was chosen because it allowed for objective data analysis, provided better generalizations, and facilitated the compilation of statistical findings that could be translated into an easily understandable form.

The selection of the survey design and quantitative approach is based on previous studies which found that the important of the uses of this approach provides valid and relevant results. For example, a study by Hamid & Zainuddin (2021) used a survey design and a quantitative approach to assess the impact of conflict management on teacher job

satisfaction in Malaysia showed that this approach can produce data that can be accurately analyzed to reflect the actual situation in the education system. Another study by Amin & Suhaimi (2023) found that quantitative survey design allows for a more comprehensive assessment of the relationship between management factors and teacher work performance. Therefore, a survey design and a quantitative approach are appropriate for this study because they allow the collection of large data and the analysis of clear relationships between variables.

The sample of this study was 162 teachers from several SJKCs in the Melaka Tengah district. The chosen of this sample is to ensure adequate representation of the teacher population in the district. The sampling technique used was stratified random sampling, where SJKC schools in Melaka Tengah were divided into strata based on school size and teachers were randomly selected from each strata to represent the entire population.

Research Instrument

The research instrument used was a questionnaire that contained three main sections:

- i) Demographic Section: Collected basic information about respondents such as age, gender, teaching experience, and educational background. Conflict Management Practices:
- ii) Measured administrators' conflict management practices using items that encompass conflict management styles (competitive, collaborative, compromising, avoiding, and yielding) based on the Thomas-Kilmann model.
- iii) Teacher Job Satisfaction: Measured the level of teacher job satisfaction based on factors such as recognition, development opportunities, interpersonal relationships, and work-life balance.

The questionnaire developed using a 5-point Likert scale, where respondents asked to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement. This instrument designed properly and systematically to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected. This questionnaire instrument was chosen because it allows for structured and consistent data collection. A study by Azman & Lee (2022) shows that questionnaires are one of the most effective methods in collecting data related to job satisfaction and conflict management. Therefore, this instrument is suitable for use in this study to obtain accurate and easily analyzed data.

The data collection method used was the distribution of questionnaires via Google Form. Google Form was chosen because it drives for easy, fast, and efficient online data collection. In addition, the use of this platform facilitates the distribution of questionnaires to teachers at various SJKCs in the Melaka Tengah district without any logistical obstacles. The data collection method using Google Form is effective and practical in studies involving large populations spread across various locations, as explained in a study by Raja & Liyana (2020) found that the use of Google Form increased the response rate and saved time in data collection.

The collected data will be analyzed using two main methods

- I) Descriptive Analysis: To describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents, the level of conflict management practices, and the level of teacher job

satisfaction. Descriptive analysis will provide a general overview of the data obtained.

- II) Correlation Analysis: To test the relationship between administrators' conflict management practices and teacher job satisfaction. Pearson's correlation test will be used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between these two variables.

Descriptive and correlation analysis used as analysis data to identify existing data patterns and the relationship between conflict management practices and teacher job satisfaction. A study by Jamil & Azzah (2019) using correlation analysis techniques found that the relationship between conflict management factors and teacher job satisfaction can be clearly analyzed using this approach.

Finding

Table 1.1

Administrator Conflict Management Practice Level

Konstruk	Mean score	SP	level
<i>Administrator Conflict Management Practice</i>	3.01	1.356	Medium

N = 162

Based on Table 1 which shows the conflict management practices of administrators, the study findings found that the mean score for conflict management style was 3.01 with a standard deviation of 1.356. This score shows that moderate level of conflict management practices among administrators. Although not reaching a very high level, this score indicates that administrators tend to use an appropriate conflict management style, with involvement in conflict resolution through different approaches.

Table 1.2

Teacher Job Satisfaction Level

Construct	Mean score	SD	Level
Effectiveness of Conflict Management	2.660	1.113	medium
Recognitions Effectiveness	2.520	1.082	Medium
Profesional Effectiveness on Professional Development	2.630	.971	medium
Effectiveness on the Work Environment	2.440	1.057	medium

N = 162

Based on Table 2, the level of teacher job satisfaction was measured through four main constructs, namely conflict management effectiveness, recognition effectiveness, professional development effectiveness, and work environment effectiveness. The findings showed that the highest mean score was recorded on the conflict management effectiveness construct, which was 2.660 with a standard deviation of 1.113. This was followed by professional development effectiveness with a mean score of 2.630 and a standard deviation of 0.971. The recognition effectiveness construct recorded a mean score of 2.520 with a standard deviation of 1.082, while the lowest mean score was recorded on the work environment effectiveness construct, which was 2.440 with a standard deviation of 1.057.

Table 1.3

Relationship between Administrator Conflict Management Practices and Teacher Job Satisfaction

		Conflict practice	management	Teacher satisfactions	job
Conflict management practice	Pearson corellations	1		.045	
	Sig (2-)			.571	
Teacher satisfactions	Pearson correlations	.045		1	
	Sig (2-)	.571			

N = 162

Based on Table 3, the findings shows that the relationship between administrators' conflict management practices and teachers' job satisfaction is weak and not statistically significant. The Pearson correlation value for the relationship between conflict management styles and teachers' job satisfaction is 0.045 with a significant value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.571. Since this significant value exceeds the 0.05 level of reliability, this finding indicates that there is no significant relationship between the two variables.

Level of Administrator Conflict Management Practices

Table 1.1 shows the mean score and standard deviation for the Conflict Management Style practiced by administrators in this study. With a mean score of 3.01 and a standard deviation of 1.356, this can be intepreted the conflict management style used by administrators is at a moderate level. The low mean score suggests that the more dominant conflict management style among administrators is a more collaborative or compromising style, where administrators strive to reach a solution that benefits all parties, but does not necessarily rely on a very aggressive or very yielding style. The relatively high standard deviation (SD = 1.356) indicates that there is significant variation among school administrators in how they handle conflict, with some administrators likely to be more likely to use a more aggressive or more yielding approach, while others are more likely to be more evasive or adopt a more collaborative approach.

This result is consistent with previous studies that state that administrators' conflict management practices vary significantly depending on the organizational context and leadership style practiced. For example, a study by Othman, Hassan, and Zainuddin (2020) found that a collaborative conflict management style is more effective in increasing job satisfaction among teachers because it encourages solutions that prioritize cooperation and consensus, compared to a competitive or avoidant style that has the potential to damage professional relationships among staff. In addition, Ismail and Ibrahim (2022) in their study on conflict management in schools in Malaysia also confirmed that a more collaborative management style can reduce tension and increase employee morale, especially in the educational context.

Other than that, the finding from study by Yusof and Ibrahim (2021) also showed that the conflict management style used by administrators has a direct relationship with teacher job satisfaction. They found that a more open and inclusive management style (such as a

collaborative style) significantly increased job satisfaction because it gave teachers the space to voice their opinions and solve problems together. This is consistent with the findings of a broader study, which showed that a positive and open conflict management style can increase teacher job satisfaction, which in turn can have a positive impact on educational performance.

Overall, the mean scores and standard deviations obtained in this study assigned that although there is variation in administrators' conflict management practices, a more open and collaborative style may be more effective in creating a harmonious work environment and increasing teachers' job satisfaction. Therefore, it is important for administrators to be aware of the differences in their conflict management styles and choose an approach that suits their individual and organizational needs.

Level of Teacher Job Satisfaction

Based on Table 2 which shows the level of teacher job satisfaction in various constructs, the analysis of findings shows that the level of job satisfaction in the aspect of conflict management effectiveness (Mean = 2.660, Standard Deviation = 1.113) is the highest compared to other aspects. Effectiveness towards recognition recorded a lower mean score of 2.520 with a standard deviation of 1.082, followed by effectiveness towards professional development (Mean = 2.630, Standard Deviation = 0.971), and finally effectiveness towards the work environment (Mean = 2.440, Standard Deviation = 1.057) which recorded the lowest mean score.

This achievement shows that most teachers feel that conflict management in the workplace is one of the factor that most influences their job satisfaction. This finding supported by Nyirenda & Pienaar (2020) found that effective conflict management in educational organizations has a positive impact on teachers' job satisfaction. Recognition of teachers' efforts and achievements become important factor in increasing job satisfaction, however, a study by Mohamad, Rawi, and Muda (2021) shows that most teachers feel that the recognition given is insufficient, which could explain the lower scores in this construct.

In terms of professional development, a study by Ling & Zubairi (2020) showed that opportunities for teachers to improve their professionalism, through training and skills development, as a factor in increasing motivation and job satisfaction. However, slightly low scores on this construct indicate that there may be a lack of training opportunities or support for career advancement among teachers. Finally, low effectiveness of the work environment indicates that the physical and emotional factors of the work environment may not provide sufficient support to increase job satisfaction. A study by Chelliah et al. (2022) also stated that a supportive work environment, such as a comfortable space and positive relationships with colleagues, are important factors in improving teacher well-being. Overall, these findings suggest that conflict management and recognition are two main factors that need attention in an effort to increase teacher job satisfaction, followed by aspects of professional development and the work environment that need improvement.

Relationship between Administrator Conflict Management Practices and Teachers' Job Satisfaction Level

Based on Table 3, the findings show that there is a very weak relationship between administrator conflict management practices and teachers' job satisfaction, with a Pearson

correlation value of 0.045. However, this relationship was found to be statistically insignificant because the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) was 0.571, which exceeded the 0.05 reliability level. This emphasizes that administrator conflict management style is not the main factor influencing teachers' job satisfaction in the context of this study.

This finding supported by Chelliah et al. (2022), which found that although conflict management plays a role in creating a harmonious work environment, other factors such as recognition, professional development opportunities, and teachers' emotional stability have a greater influence on job satisfaction levels. A study by Mohamad et al. (2021) also stated that recognition of teachers' efforts and achievements has a stronger correlation with job satisfaction than conflict management. In addition, a study by Ling and Zubairi (2020) emphasized that adequate professional development and a conducive work environment are among the main factors that increase teachers' motivation and well-being. However, these findings also highlight the need for administrators to review their approach to conflict management. Rahim (2017) emphasized that the effectiveness of conflict management depends on the extent to which the approach is tailored to the needs of the individual and the culture of the organization. Therefore, a more proactive and strategic approach to conflict management may help in improving the relationship between administrators and employees, although the direct influence on job satisfaction is not significant.

Overall, the results of this study found that in order to improve teachers' overall job satisfaction, attention should be paid to various other more relevant factors, such as recognition, development opportunities, and emotional support in the work environment. The study on the relationship between administrators' conflict management practices and teachers' job satisfaction in SJKCs in the Melaka Tengah district has provided several important implications. For the practice of principals or head teachers, the findings of this study emphasize the need for them to adopt a conflict management approach that is proactive, fair, and sensitive to teachers' emotional needs. For example, principals or head teachers can encourage open dialogue and provide space for teachers to voice their opinions and resolve issues in a constructive manner. In addition, they need to show appreciation for teachers' efforts through recognition and moral support, which has been proven to be important in increasing work motivation.

In terms of training, its necessary to strengthen professional development programs for school administrators, with an emphasis on conflict management skills. Specific courses and workshops need to be organized to train administrators in managing conflicts more effectively, including negotiation techniques, mediation, and empathy development. This training will not only help administrators, but can also benefit teachers in understanding how to handle conflicts that may arise in the workplace

Conclusions

Future research suggestions could be investigated factors that influence the effectiveness of conflict management practices, such as the cultural and organizational background of SJKCs, as well as teachers' needs and expectations of their work environment. In conclusion, the study on the relationship between administrators' conflict management practices and teachers' job satisfaction in SJKCs in the Melaka Tengah district has provided important insights into the dynamics of this relationship. The findings in this research shows that the

relationship between administrators' conflict management styles and teachers' job satisfaction is very weak and not statistically significant. This suggests that conflict management styles are not the main factor influencing the level of teachers' job satisfaction in this context. Nevertheless, effective conflict management practices are still relevant in creating a harmonious work environment and supporting good relationships between administrators and teachers.

The study also highlights the needs to focus on other factors that have a greater impact on teacher job satisfaction, such as recognition, professional development, and work environment. School administrators must be proactive to make a steps to improve these elements through a more inclusive leadership approach that is sensitive to teachers' needs by improving these important elements in the work environment, the education system can be further strengthened, thereby contributing to the achievement of higher quality education.

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