

# Conflict Management and Decision-Making Styles of Faculty Members of a Higher Education Institution in Laguna Province, Philippines

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## Abstract

Conflicts in higher education institutions (HEIs) are common due to the interaction of diverse groups of people; therefore, conflict management is an essential activity to ensure that various HEI functions are performed effectively. Using a mixed-methods research design, the study showed that the most common source of conflicts in the HEI is task-related conflicts. In dealing with conflicts with subordinates, the majority of faculty members applied Integrating and Obliging conflict management styles, and fewer used Dominating or Compromising styles. In terms of decision-making, the majority of faculty members were rational and independent decision-makers. Guided by the Dual Concern Theory and Choice Theory, it can be concluded that respondents tend to have a higher concern for their subordinates than for themselves when dealing with conflicts. Moreover, the infrequent occurrence of relationship-related conflicts in the HEI indicated that the respondents had a higher need for love and belongingness than for power, as they placed importance on relationships. It is further concluded that conflict management and decision-making styles are not zero-sum; each person can choose and control their responses depending on what the situation requires. Activities that foster relationship-building among faculty members in the HEI, as well as capacity-building initiatives to enhance problem-solving skills, are hereby recommended.

**Keywords:** conflict management, choice theory, decision-making, dual concern model, GDMS, ROCI

## Introduction

Conflicts are natural, especially among interactive groups of people (Sulich, Soloduch-Pelc, & Ferasso, 2021; Adham, 2023; Anuddin, 2025). These disagreements are brought about by several factors, including incompatibilities, dissatisfaction, and dissonance (Barbuto & Xu, 2006;

Karadakal, Goud, & Thomas, 2015). Conflicts are not always detrimental to the organization, but may improve decision-making, leadership, work performances, job satisfaction, and motivation, among others, when appropriately handled (Tabassi et al., 2024; Mejia & Arpon, 2021; Barbuto & Xu, 2006; Anastasiou, 2020; Abuzaid, Al-Haraisa & Alateeq, 2022; Adham, 2023). Therefore, conflict management is a strategy used to minimize conflicts, if they cannot be totally resolved, to ensure and sustain organizational functions (Barbuto & Xu, 2006). Conflict management may involve a combination of procedures, equipment, expertise, policies, or information that leads to resolution (Bang-i, Rulloda Jr., & Ticangen, 2024). These are reflections of one's behaviors, ethics, perception, values, personal interests, and intellectual perspectives (Karadakal et al., 2015; Barbuto & Xu, 2006; Yin et al., 2022). Leaders' conflict management or conflict resolution styles vary from one another (Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020; Anastasiou, 2020); thus, their effectiveness is also dependent on context and various contributing factors (de Heredia, Arocena & Garate, 2004; Hamayun et al., 2014; Lukman, 2021; Anastasiou, 2020).

Conflict management significantly influences decision-making in organizational settings. In the study by Kuhn & Poole (2000), it was elaborated that conflict management can effectively improve decision-making among American organizations, particularly through close evaluation of alternatives and decision options, proper risk assessment, and increased group cohesiveness. Moreover, conflict management and decision-making were said to require the same set of operational skills and may affect interpersonal relationships among group members (Kuhn & Poole, 2000). On the other hand, as part of organizational culture (along with decision-making and incentive strategies), Asfahani (2017) emphasized how conflict management styles affect ethical group decision-making in Saudi Arabia. They concluded that conflicts may impede a leader's abilities to make sound decisions, therefore requiring a reliable conflict management style to improve the decision-making process (Asfahani, 2017). Leadership styles have also become more flexible when it comes to conflict resolution among entrepreneurs in India (Karadakal et al., 2015). While entrepreneurs tend to be more cooperative in dealing with disputes, the study by Karadakal et al. (2015) emphasized that a leader's behavior, perception, and overall organizational vision influence conflict resolution, and ultimately the decisions they make. Significant relationships between maladaptive decision-making patterns and conflict management styles were also observed in the study by de Heredia et al. (2004), with an emphasis on the role of self-esteem as a mediating factor. Generally, these studies have indicated that conflict

management has a positive and significant relationship with decision-making (Kuhn & Poole, 2000; de Heredia et al., 2004; Nadia, Mohsin, & Adnan, 2014).

The relationship between conflict management and decision-making was not only evident in work organizations but also in educational institutions (Hamayun et al., 2014; Shanka & Thuo, 2017; Siraji, 2019; Chandalia & Anastasiou, 2020). School leaders, according to Shanka & Thuo (2017) and Chandolia & Anastasiou (2020), are expected to possess the ability to manage and resolve conflicts at all levels, emphasizing that schools are bureaucratic in nature and that conflicts may occur in almost every process (Shanka & Thuo, 2017). In their respective studies, they pointed out that leadership styles influence conflict management of school leaders in Greece (Chandalia & Anastasiou, 2020); effective communication facilitates dispute resolution among teachers and school leaders in primary schools in Ethiopia (Shanka & Thuo, 2017); and demography (age, designation, experience, etc.) significantly influences conflict management strategies of higher education institution (HEI) faculty members in Pakistan (Hamayun et al., 2014).

In the Philippines, on the other hand, Mejia & Arpon (2021), Mangulabnan et al. (2022), and Bang-i et al. (2024) discussed the various conflict management strategies employed by school leaders in the basic education sector. In their studies, Mangulabnan et al. (2022) and Bang-i et al. (2024) concluded that the presence of the Department of Education's policies about conflict management in schools made Dominating the most preferred strategy among school principals in Central Luzon. Meanwhile, Collaborative conflict management was recommended by Mejia & Arpon (2021) in their study as the most effective approach for improving job satisfaction and work performance among teachers in Biliran province. Similarly, Quinal & Dupa (2024) found that educational attainment significantly influences the decision-making and leadership effectiveness of public elementary school administrators in the Tarragona District, Davao Oriental. Effective leadership and decision-making among school administrators was said to have improved the work performance of teachers in Eastern Samar (Capacite, 2022). However, it is worth noting that the organizational setup in the basic education sector differs significantly from that in the higher education sector.

In performing their primary mandate of providing high-quality tertiary education, HEIs face numerous challenges, including internal and organizational conflicts (Khoury & McNally, 2016; Siraji, 2019; Anuddin, 2025). Conflicts exist in HEIs as it is a place where people from different

backgrounds come together and interact (Hamayun et al., 2014; Shanka & Thuo, 2017; Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020; Tabassi et al., 2024; Anuddin, 2025). In addition, while the complex functions of HEIs (instruction, research and extension, production, innovation, among others) enable their faculty members to become well-rounded, it also makes them vulnerable to disputes as they all serve as leaders in their own respective groups and fields of expertise (Siraji, 2019; Anuddin, 2025). These were reflected in the studies of Siraji (2019) and Anuddin (2025) in the Sulu region, where they concluded that conflicts among faculty members are more complex and require a wide range of strategies to manage, if not resolved.

With complex roles of faculty members in HEIs, effective leadership has become a challenge. Undoubtedly, appropriate conflict management and decision-making approaches contribute to enhanced leadership (Sulich et al., 2021; Anuddin, 2025). On the other hand, unmanaged and unresolved conflicts lead to low morale, reduced output, and teacher retention, and in the worst cases, organizational malfunction (Sulich et al., 2021; Bang-i et al., 2024). Unresolved disputes further hinder communication, lead to inefficient and one-sided decisions, and foster unhealthy workplace relationships among teaching staff and students. Therefore, studies on conflict management and decision-making in educational institutions are significant for crafting appropriate support mechanisms for school leaders and administrators (Siraji, 2019; Sulich et al., 2021; Bang-i et al., 2024; Anuddin, 2025). However, studies on conflict management and decision-making in HEIs in the Philippines are mostly localized and still limited. To date, no study has been conducted on the conflict management and decision-making styles of faculty members at the HEI-of-study in Laguna. Furthermore, conflict management studies typically employ the Thomas-Kilmann Instrument (1976) to determine conflict management styles. Combining the use of ROCI-II (Rahim, 1983) with the General Decision-making Instrument (Scott & Bruce, 1995) is very limited, particularly in the Philippine context. Thus, this study aimed to investigate and sought to answer the following research questions:

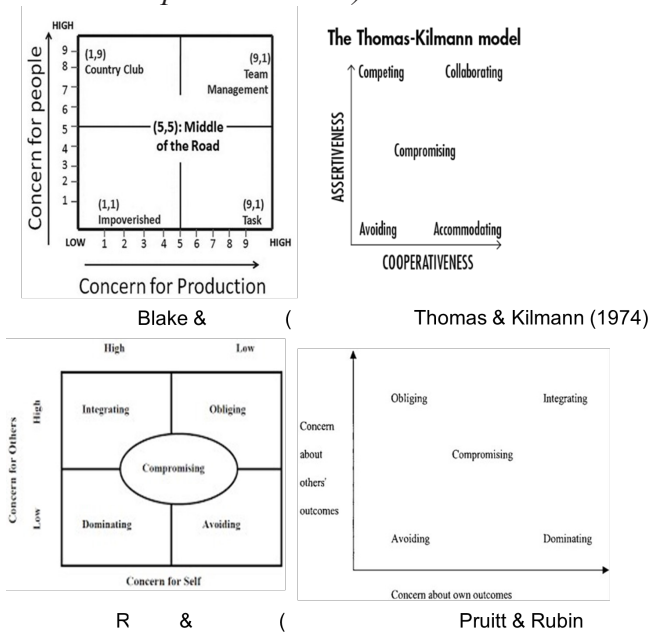
1. What are the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants?
2. What are the sources of conflict among faculty members in the HEI?
3. What are the conflict management styles and decision-making styles of the faculty members in the HEI?
4. How does conflict management style relate to the decision-making style of the faculty members in the HEI?

Theoretical Framework

To understand the conflict management styles of the participants, the Dual Concern Theory was applied. The Dual Concern Theory is widely used in conflict management studies, examining personal motivation and behavior that manifest as concern for others and concern for self (Barbuto & Xu, 2006; Tabassi et al., 2024). The Dual Concern Model serves as the basis for determining the conflict management styles of individuals, particularly in organizational conflicts at the workplace (Lukman, 2021).

Historically, the Dual Concern Theory was developed by Blake and Mouton (1964) and is also known as the Managerial Leadership Grid (Cai, Fink, & Walker, 2021). From this model, several subsequent models emerged, including those developed by Thomas-Kilmann in 1974, Rahim & Bonoma in 1979, with revisions in 2005, and Pruitt and Rubin in 1986 (Karadakil et al., 2015; Cai et al., 2021). Currently, the Dual Concern Model, patterned after Blake & Mouton’s (1964) work, remains widely used in conflict management research (Tabassi et al., 2024). Figure 1 illustrates the dual concern models proposed by various authors.

**Figure 1**  
*The Different Dual Concern Models Developed by Various Researchers in Various Years (Sources: images were obtained from Google database for comparison, credits to respective owners)*



From the Dual Concern Model in 1979, the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI) I and II were developed by Rahim in 1983 (revised 2005) (Barbuto & Xu, 2006). The ROCI-II determines one's conflict management style depending on their respective level of concern for themselves and for others (Barbuto & Xu, 2006; Karadakil et al., 2015). For this study, Rahim's (1983) Dual Concern Model of the Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict was used.

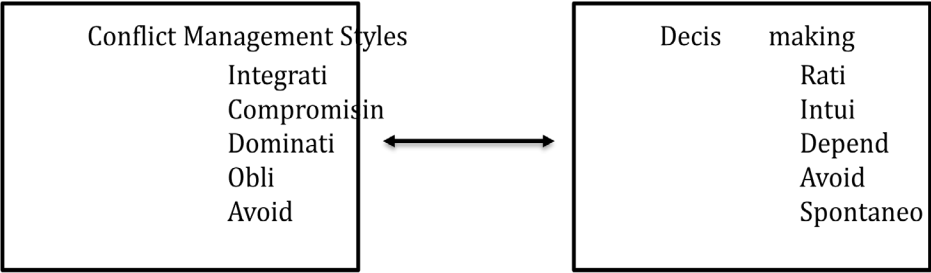
In terms of decision-making, the study was guided by Glasser's Choice Theory. The Choice Theory, developed by Dr. William Glasser in the 1950s, states that an individual has two primary motivations for making choices: to empower themselves and to improve relationships (Glasser Institute for Choice Theory, n.d.). The Choice Theory emphasizes a person's ability to control their thoughts and actions, which ultimately result in a desired response behavior in a given situation. This ability enhances one's control over one's own life by making one accountable for one's respective choices (Glasser Institute for Choice Theory, n.d.; ABA Program Guide, n.d.). Dr. Glasser mentioned that all behavior is driven from the inside (intrinsic), particularly to satisfy the need to be loved and accepted, powerful, free, to have fun, and to survive. These needs vary from person to person, relevant to their respective "quality world" or the ideal world they aspire to have. Conflict arises when a person tries to make another person satisfy their "quality world" (ABA Program Guide, n.d.).

In the workplace, the application of Choice Theory can be observed through conscious recognition of individual differences, needs, and motivations, which would foster mutual respect and collaboration; provision of opportunities for growth, autonomy, and decision-making to subordinates; and creation of a work environment that promotes employee engagement, satisfaction, and productivity (ABA Program Guide, n.d.). Studies involving Choice Theory showed that having the control to one's behavior made the students more responsible for their actions (Sharifkani, Zomorodi & Ghodrati, 2020); having alternatives increased the chances of selecting the correct choice (Stibel, Dror & Ben-zeev, 2009); and delegating decision-making to subordinates empowers them while giving leaders more time to focus on strategic issues (Freschi, 2023).

## **Conceptual Framework**

The study involved the concepts concerning conflict management styles and their relationship with decision-making styles (Figure 2):

**Figure 2**  
*Conceptual Framework for the Study (source: Developed by the Author)*



Following the Dual Concern Model of Rahim & Bonoma (1975), the study examined how the different conflict management styles (Avoiding, Obliging, Dominating, Integrating, and Compromising) relate to how faculty members as temporary group leaders make decisions (Rational, Intuitive, Dependent, Avoidant, Spontaneous) based on the General Decision-Making Style of Scott & Bruce (1995). The operational definitions of these terms were referenced in relation to those of Barbuto & Xu (2006) and Chandolia & Anastasiou (2020) for conflict management styles, and Berisha, Pula, & Krasniqi (2018) for decision-making styles. Furthermore, the socio-demographic profiles of the participants and the sources of conflict were gathered to establish context and support the findings of the study. While these variables may have significant impacts in other research, this study focused on the dynamics between conflict management and decision-making.

**Methodology**

**Place and Duration of the Study**

The study was conducted in an HEI in Laguna, Philippines, in May 2024. The HEI for this study started as a provincial national high school in 1952. Through Republic Act 1807, it was converted into a National Agricultural Vocational School in 1957, which later became a college in 1971 under the mandate of Republic Act 6327. In 1983, Batas Pambansa 482 converted it into a state college, and later expanded into four satellite campuses under Republic Act 8745 and Republic Act 8292. The state college then formally became a state university in 2007, as a result of Republic Act 9402. The HEI rests on a 33.5-hectare land area bounded by the Laguna de Bay on the west and Sierra Madre on the East. Of the 33.5 hectares, 14

hectares were devoted to infrastructure, while the remaining 19.5 hectares are for research and income-generating projects. Aside from these, the HEI also manages a 100-hectare Land Grant located in a nearby municipality in the province of Laguna, where ruminants are pastured and planted with forest, fruit, and other crops for the university's future development (HEI's official document retrieved in May 2024).

The conversion of this HEI from a college to a state university signified its commitment to providing quality education that transforms lives and communities. Currently, the HEI is primarily mandated to educate its students in the fields of Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, Science, Engineering, and other related disciplines. They also undertake research and extension services, providing progressive leadership in their areas of specialization (HEI's official document retrieved in May 2024). The HEI offers nine (9) curricular programs with 95 regular faculty members across programs.

Currently, no studies have been conducted that explore the relationship between conflict management and decision-making styles among faculty members in the HEI or the province. The HEI was chosen as the study site due to its notable transformation, its operational size, and the functions the faculty members perform therein.

The study was conducted from May 2, 2024, to May 28, 2024. The key informant interview (KII) was conducted on May 2, 2024. Meanwhile, the survey instruments were disseminated to faculty members from May 2, 2024, to May 22, 2024, in print and via Google Forms. The data was encoded from May 22, 2024, to May 28, 2024. Secondary data were also collected during the same timeframe, while initial coordination was conducted prior to the actual visit and data-gathering activities.

## **The Respondents of the Study**

The respondents of the study were faculty members of an HEI in Laguna Province. Faculty members are mandated to perform instruction, research, extension, and production functions, as well as administration when necessary, as they are considered for management positions in the HEI. These functions were deemed essential for the institution's continuous accreditation as a learning institution. Therefore, they are anticipated to serve as program leaders, project leaders, and administrators in their respective colleges and units, where they will manage several subordinates. On the other hand, the administrative staff were excluded from the study.

For the KII, there were three respondents representing top and

middle management positions. For the survey, a total of 95 faculty members in the HEI were given the survey instrument; however, only 75 responses were returned (a response rate of 78%).

## Research Instruments

In terms of sources of conflict, the study adapted the identified sources of organizational conflict from the study of Siraji (2019) in HEIs in Sulu, Philippines. These include a list of task-related and relationship-related conflicts, which the respondents were asked to rank from 1 to 10 according to the frequency of occurrence, where 10 represents the most common and 1 represents the least common.

To determine the conflict management styles, the study used the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory II (ROCI-II). The ROCI II was developed to measure conflict handling styles by rating statements on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The styles were then determined by computing the weighted average of corresponding items, where each respondent had a score for all the conflict management styles, and the highest weighted average represented the most frequently used style. The ROCI II is classified into three forms (A, B, and C), each with varying reference to a conflict with a boss, subordinate, or peer, respectively. Conflict management styles can be Integrating, Obliging, Dominating, Avoiding, and Compromising (Rahim, 1983). For this study, the respondents were given the ROCI-II Form B, on which they answered by assuming a hypothetical scenario of a superior-subordinate conflict. For the decision-making styles of the faculty members, the General Decision-making style (GDMS) of Scott and Bruce (1995) was given. It consists of 20 statements, which the respondents rated using a three-point scale. The scores were summed, and the highest score represented the greatest usage of that particular decision-making style, including Rational, Intuitive, Dependent, Avoidant, and Spontaneous. Respondents were also asked about their age range, gender identity, employment status, monthly income, and years of service for participant characterization.

While the instruments used were developed decades ago, their application remains relevant and is still widely used across disciplines. According to the Center for Advanced Studies in Management (n.d.), ROCI II remains the gold standard in studying conflict management in education and organizational research. While ROCI-III was developed in the early 2000s, its primary application is in determining the types of conflict rather than managing interpersonal conflicts (Chiarelli, Parrish, Cantrell, & Bengé,

2024). Similarly, Olcum & Titrek (2015) stated that while other measuring instruments for determining decision-making styles are available, the GDMS of Scott & Bruce (1995) is a well-validated instrument in the fields of educational and organizational research, and is often used in conjunction with studies on conflict resolution and team dynamics. Thus, they were deemed applicable for this study.

## **Data Gathering and Analysis**

The study employed an exploratory case study research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The data was collected through key informant interviews (KII), surveys, secondary data collection, and ocular inspection. Narratives from the key informants were obtained through interviews, while descriptive and correlational analyses were applied to the survey data. The relationships among the variables of conflict management and decision-making were determined. The KII was conducted face-to-face, lasting for 1.5 to 2.0 hours per respondent. Among the guide questions were:

1. As an administrator, what are the common complaints you have received?
2. What are the strategies you apply to address the complaints? What strategies are employed by the HEI?
3. Do you think your strategies are effective in resolving or managing the conflicts? How about the strategies of the HEI?
4. What do you think are the impacts of managing conflicts in your unit?
5. How do you feel every time you address a certain conflict in your unit, or among your subordinates?

For the survey, a total of 95 faculty members were given a questionnaire. Faculty members who were physically reporting for work were given a print copy of the survey questionnaire, while those working from home were provided with a Google Form link to respond. Furthermore, the official documents from the HEI were thoroughly reviewed for relevant information.

To characterize the research participants, the data collected were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis. The participants were also asked to rank the common sources of organizational conflict as identified by Siraji (2019); their average scores were computed to determine the final rank.

Further, the weighted mean were computed to determine the dominant conflict management style. In contrast, the sum was computed to determine the dominant decision-making style based on the ROCI-II Form B and GDMS, respectively. Finally, the relationship between conflict management and decision-making styles was computed using Pearson correlational analysis.

In compliance with the ethical considerations for research involving human participants, an informed consent statement was attached to every questionnaire, both in print and online. The informed consent statement included the rights and level of participation needed from the participants, as well as the objectives and rationale of the study. A section certifying the voluntary participation and consent of the participants was also included, where they affixed their signature. For online surveys, however, their consent was manifested by thoroughly completing and submitting the Google Forms. The freedom to withdraw from the study at any time, without any implications, was explicitly presented.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **The Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Participants**

The majority of the participants are middle-aged (41 to 55 years old), female, highly educated, and relatively ‘new’ in the HEI, with one to 10 years of service. They earn a net income between 20,000 and 35,000 pesos per month (approximately 900 to 1,500 pesos per working day), which can be considered higher than the minimum wage (610 pesos per day) in the Philippines. Table 1 summarizes the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants.

**Table 1***The Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Participants (n=75).*

Variables	f	%
Age range (in years)		
18 to 28	7	7
29 to 40	28	28
41-55	31	31
56-65	8	8
No Answer	1	1
Gender orientation		
Male	27	27
Female	43	43
No Answer	5	5
Net Income (in Pesos)		
Below 20,000	4	4
20,000-35,000	29	29
35,000-50,000	27	27
More than 50,000	9	9
No answer	6	6
Years in Service		
Less than a year	2	2.7
1 to 10	28	37.3
11 to 20	23	30.6
21 to 30	5	6.7
More than 30 years	4	5.3
No answer	13	17.3
Educational Attainment		
Bachelor's degree	7	9.33
Master's degree	25	33.3
Doctorate degree	27	36.0
No Answer	16	21.3

(Source: Developed by the Author)

According to HEI policy, the minimum educational attainment required for academic positions in state universities and colleges is a Master’s degree, as mandated by the Civil Service Commission Memorandum Circular 22 series of 2016. Thus, more than half of the participants held Master’s degrees and doctoral degrees. Considering their degrees, a high level of competence in their respective fields, as well as professionalism, was expected by their students, peers, and superiors.

Sources of Organizational Conflict

Organizational conflicts, such as task-related or relationship-related conflicts, may arise at any level of the organization (Karadakal et al., 2015; Mikkelsen & Clegg, 2019). Task-related conflicts (such as structural factors, work design, etc.) pertain to incompatibilities or disagreements in relation to the task being performed (Karadakal et al., 2015; Khoury & McNally, 2016; Mikkelsen & Clegg, 2019). Relationship-related conflicts, on the other hand, are individual or personal issues or differences that are irrelevant to the task at hand but cause disagreements among individuals (Karadakal et al., 2015; Khoury & McNally, 2016; Mikkelsen & Clegg, 2019).

In 2019, Siraji conducted a study on the sources of conflict among HEIs in the Sulu Region involving four private and public universities and colleges. From the study, they identified the common sources of organizational conflict from these HEIs in Sulu. The list was adapted for this study and followed the same ranking procedure. Table 2 summarizes the most common and least common sources of conflict in HEI in Laguna province.

**Table 2**  
*Most Common and Least Common Sources of Organizational Conflict in an HEI in Laguna Province (n=75)*

Sources of Organizational Conflict	Mean Score (n=75)	Rank
Differences in goals and objectives	6.05	1st
Personality differences	5.61	2nd
Differences over procedures or measures to be used	5.20	3rd
Frustration with people and/or resources	5.07	4th
Problems related to areas of authority	5.04	5th
Substandard job performance	5.01	6th

Lack of clearly defined areas of responsibility	4.96	7th
Communication misunderstanding	4.93	8th
Non-compliance with rules and policies	4.88	9th
Lack of employee cooperation	4.77	10th

(Source: Developed by the Author)

Based on the survey, the top three common sources of conflict in HEI in Laguna are:

Differences in goals and objectives, personality differences, and differences over procedures and methods. Two of them are task-related conflicts (1st and 3rd), while the second most is differences in personality, which is a relationship-related conflict. As mentioned earlier, the faculty members have five mandates to fulfill (instruction, research, extension, production, and administration), and in doing so, temporary groups are expected to be formed. Temporary groups, according to Tabassi et al. (2024), are temporary organizations, typically small in size, formed to achieve specific organizational goals. These include projects, programs, task forces, committees, etc., which will dissolve once the goals have been achieved (Tabassi et al., 2024). In the case of the faculty members, they become part of temporary groups in compliance with their mandate. Based on the KII, the goals and objectives of one temporary group may sometimes coincide with, overlap with, or conflict with those of another temporary group. Thus, these differences in goals and objectives are the most common source of conflict in their organization. This was also evident in the study by Shanka and Thuo (2017), who mentioned that goal incompatibilities are one of the common sources of conflict among school leaders in Wolaita Zone, Ethiopia.

*“Kami dito sa college namin, dahil maliit lang kami na college, magkakasundo naman kami pero minsan sa trabaho, magkakaiba kami ng gusto at paraan na naiisip so minsan may mga simple misunderstandings... naaayos naman ito agad kasi nag-uusap usap naman kami.”* [Here in our college, since we are a small college, we generally get along well, but sometimes we get into simple misunderstandings due to differences in preferences and strategies... those were easily cleared up because we communicate with each other] (Respondent 2, 38, 9 years in service).

*“Required kami Ma’am magkaroon ng mga projects, part yan ng mandate namin dito sa college. Pero syempre minsan, lalo pag*

*madaming project involvements yung mga tao, minsan patong-patong at nag o-overlap yung mga trabaho. Kaya nagkakaroon minsan ng confusion kasi, sino ba ang dapat gagawa nito ganyan...*” [We are required to have projects; those are part of our mandate here in the college. Well, sometimes, especially when we have so many project involvements, our tasks overlap with the other projects. Sometimes we get confused as to whose tasks they should be.] (Respondent 3, 36, 3 years in service)

Personality differences come second, which is reasonably expected as the faculty members came from different provinces and have different academic and professional backgrounds (KII, May 2024). During the interviews, the KII participants mentioned that their HEI is a diverse community, with faculty members mostly coming from neighboring provinces in regions 4A, 4B, and 5. Due to these differences, their interaction may, in one way or another, ignite conflicts among them as mentioned earlier (Hamayun et al., 2014; Shanka & Thuo, 2017; Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020; Tabassi et al., 2024).

*“Ako po from [redacted]. Napapunta lang po ako dito sa Laguna para magturo dito sa school. Siyempre, iba yung ginagawa noon sa pinanggalingan ko at tsaka dito. Iba din yung expectations sa akin ng mga kasama ko. Iba din yung ginagawa nila kase galing din sila sa ibang lugar.”* [I am from [redacted]. I relocated here specifically to teach at this school. Of course, what I was doing in [redacted] is different from what I am doing here. The expectations of my colleagues from where I came from and here are also different. Their strategies are also different because they came from a different place (Respondent 2, 38, 9 years in service)

*“Galing ako sa ibang posisyon bago ako maging [redacted, current position] Syempre sa una, hindi madali kasi nangangapa ako sa mga tao dito. Pero as an administrator, kailangan balanse na nakikisama ka at the same time na-a-achieve yung goals ng school.”* [I came from a different position before I became [redacted, current position]. At first, it was difficult because I am getting to know the school community. But as an administrator, there should be a balance between getting along with them and achieving the school’s objectives at the same time.] (Respondent 1, 51, 16 years in service)

The personality differences of these anticipated leaders may also cause differences in leadership styles and conflict management styles (Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020; Tabassi et al., 2024). It was mentioned during the KII that the middle management (i.e., college deans) were given the liberty to manage their unit. Top management fully trusts the capabilities of its deans in executing policies and strategies in line with their respective thrusts. While this freedom is beneficial for the deans, they may have differences in procedures and measures in their respective units. For instance, the deans employ different strategies in dealing with student-to-student conflict and student-teacher conflict, where one is more lenient and the other strictly enforces the protocol as stated in their Committee on Decorum and Investigation (CODI) manual (KII, May 2024).

“Iba yung conflict management namin when it comes to our colleagues and our students. May kasabihan nga kami dito: ibigay ang hilig para walang ligalig. Yung maliliit na bagay, hayaan mo na ‘yan. Kung doon sila masaya, OK na ‘yun. Pero sa mga students kasi, lalo sa amin sa Criminology, may rules and regulations kami na pinapatupad strictly. Hindi kami pwedeng mag give in kasi discipline ang importante sa course na ito”. [Our conflict management is different when we are dealing with a colleague and when we are dealing with a student. We have a saying here, give in to their wishes so there will be no complaints. We can give in to simple whims if they will be happy with it; it is fine. But it is different when it comes to our students, especially here in Criminology, we have rules and regulations that we strictly impose because discipline is important in this course. (Respondent 2, 38, 9 years in service)]

“Wala naman kaming problema sa conflict management kasi may CODI kami na sinusunod, lalo sa students. Kung may problema sa estudyante, may tamang proseso sa CODI na susundin. Sa staff naman, kami na mismong mga [redacted, current position] ang umaayos...tama ‘yon ibigay ang hilig para walang ligalig. ‘Pag di pinagbigyan, sasama ang loob. Pero minsan talagang hindi pwede at lalabag din naman sa university policies. So depende sa issues, pag kaya na sa amin, sa level namin, kami na ang umaayos. So far, wala pa naman kaming issues na hindi nasolusyunan sa level ko palang, wala pa naman umaakyat sa higher level.” [We do not have problems when it comes to conflict management because we are guided by CODI, especially with students. If there are issues with them, there

is a right process to follow as specified in the CODI. When it comes to staff issues, we as [redacted, current position] are in-charge of managing them. That's right, give in to their whims so there would be no complaints; if we do not give in, they might get offended. But, sometimes, we cannot do so easily especially if giving in would violate certain university policies. So, it really depends on the issues, if we can deal with it on our level, we manage it. So far, there have been no issues that we were not able to manage at our level; they did not escalate to higher authorities] (Respondent 3, 36, 3 years in service)

On the other hand, the least common source of conflict is lack of employee cooperation. (10th), non-compliance with the rules and policies (9th), and communication misunderstanding (8th). Two of these are relationship-related conflicts (8th and 10th), while the 9th is a task-related conflict.

*"We have an open communication here.... Sa totoo lang, ang mga kapareho kong administrador dito sa campus at ngayon ang ibang nasa kabilang campus na ay mga dati kong teachers. Ganyan kasi, dati kong mentors at nung naging administrator ako ay naging friends ko na. I learned from them."* [We have an open communication here. In fact, my fellow administrators here and the others who are now assigned to another campus are my former teachers. Before, they were my mentors, and when I became an administrator, I became friends with them. I learned from them.] (Respondent 1, 51, 16 years in service)

*"Ang function naming administrators kasi, having a friendly atmosphere among us administrators, ay isang factor that influences our relationships with our fellow teachers. Ako, I believe that keeping a friendly atmosphere among us administrators would also lead to a friendly atmosphere with my fellow teachers as subordinates namin in the college... Napaka importante din ng role ng communication to the kind of job that we have here in campus."* [Our function as administrators, having a friendly atmosphere among us administrators, is a factor that influences our relationships with our fellow teachers. I believe that keeping a friendly atmosphere among us administrators would also lead to a friendly atmosphere with my fellow teachers as subordinates in the college... Communication

plays an important role to the kind of job that we have here on campus (Respondent 2, 38, 9 years in service)

Following the results of the survey, it can be observed that faculty members are highly cooperative, despite having personality differences; they comply with rules and policies, and communicate openly with one another. It was also mentioned during the KII that faculty members are amenable to conflict resolution and deal with it proactively. In fact, top management and the deans meet monthly to discuss their progress, share experiences and lessons learned, and address any conflicts informally. This was also done to improve communication and build trust and rapport, as they believe that working smoothly, hand-in-hand, would advance institutional development (KII, May 2024).

“Meron kaming informal gatherings, isang hapon na parang magkakape lang kami kasama yung mga ibang officials. We discuss matters informally. Nag-she-share kami ng mga experiences namin, kung ano yung effective strategies at best practices, para magaya din ng ibang colleges. Masaya sya, informal yet educational.” [We have informal gatherings, like one afternoon, we sit with other officials and discuss matters informally over a cup of coffee. We also share our experiences, best practices, and strategies so that other colleges can adopt. It was fun, informal yet educational.] (Respondent 1, 51, 16 years in service)

The results of the survey differed from those of Siraji (2019), who found that the most common source of organizational conflict in HEIs in Sulu was a lack of employee cooperation, while the least common source was personality differences. Shanka & Thuo (2017) also identified scarcity of resources, task interdependence, and bad political interference as the most common sources of conflict among school leaders in Ethiopia. Miscommunication or poor communication was also observed as a common source of conflict among public HEIs in Pakistan (Hamayun et al., 2014) and among school leaders in Greece (Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020). Khoury and McNally (2016) therefore suggested that effective communication is crucial in conflict management and resolution, a notion also observed in the HEI in Laguna province. Despite varying sources, conflict management is necessary to enhance work stability, foster self-efficacy, and promote the long-term growth of companies (Tabassi et al., 2024), which is particularly

relevant in the context of an HEI.

## **Respondents' Conflict Management and Decision-making Styles**

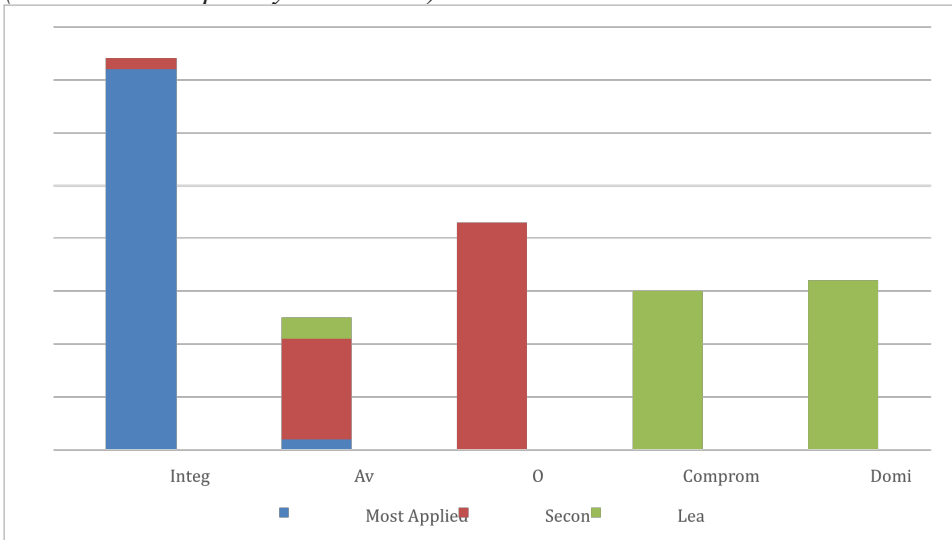
As mentioned by Tabassi et al. (2024), the Dual Concern Model remains widely used in conflict management research. Under the Dual Concern Model, there are five conflict management styles regardless of whether the model was developed by Thomas & Kilmann (1974), Rahim & Bonoma (1979), or Pruitt & Rubin (1986) (Figure 1). However, in some studies, these styles are grouped into three categories: cooperative, competitive, and avoidant (Karadakal et al., 2015; Yin et al., 2022; Tabassi et al., 2024). In their respective studies, they defined cooperative conflict management as a positive style that involves integration of suggestions to formulate solutions that satisfies or benefits all parties; competitive conflict management as a positive style which involves domination of another party by advancing one's own interest; and avoidant conflict management as a negative style which involves evasion, sidestepping, disengagement by showing no concern for the outcome (Yin et al., 2022; Tabassi et al., 2024).

This study, on the other hand, applied the Dual Concern Model of Rahim & Bonoma (1979) to determine the conflict management styles of faculty members at an HEI in Laguna province. Similar in other conflict management researches, this study classified the conflict management styles into five composed of: Integrating (high concern for self and others), Dominating (high concern for self and low concern for others), Obliging (low concern for self and high concern for others), Avoiding (low concern for self and for others), and Compromising (medium level of concern for self and others).

Based on the survey, 72 faculty members mostly apply the Integrating conflict management style. To elaborate further, the second most frequently applied conflict management styles among faculty members were also determined by obtaining the second-highest weighted mean from all the conflict management style scores of the respondents. Interestingly, 43 faculty members apply Obliging, and 19 apply Avoiding as their second conflict management style (Figure 3).

### Figure 3

*Conflict Management Styles (CMS) of Respondents in the HEI (n=75)*  
(Source: developed by the author)



Moreover, the least applied was determined by identifying the least weighted mean among the respondents' scores per conflict management style. Based on the survey, 32 faculty members least apply the Dominating strategy, and 30 faculty members least apply the Compromising strategy (Figure 3). It can be observed, however, that the number of respondents does not equal the total of 75. That is because some faculty members appeared to have been practicing two conflict management styles, including Integrating and Avoiding (most applied, by one respondent); Obliging and Avoiding (second most applied, by 11 respondents); and Dominating and Compromising (least applied, by 9 respondents).

According to Barbuto and Xu (2006), individuals' conflict management styles vary depending on their motivation. Whether motivated by external or internal factors, leaders tend to practice Obliging, Integrating, and Compromising conflict management styles to maintain harmonious relationships with others (Barbuto & Xu, 2006). Dominating was effective but was seen as inappropriate, as it may escalate conflict, while Avoiding was observed as the least effective approach (Barbuto & Xu, 2006). Further, Obliging was observed to be effective in increasing job performance, job satisfaction, and leadership effectiveness (Barbuto & Xu, 2006), while Integrating was found to be more suitable for managing conflict (Lukman, 2021).

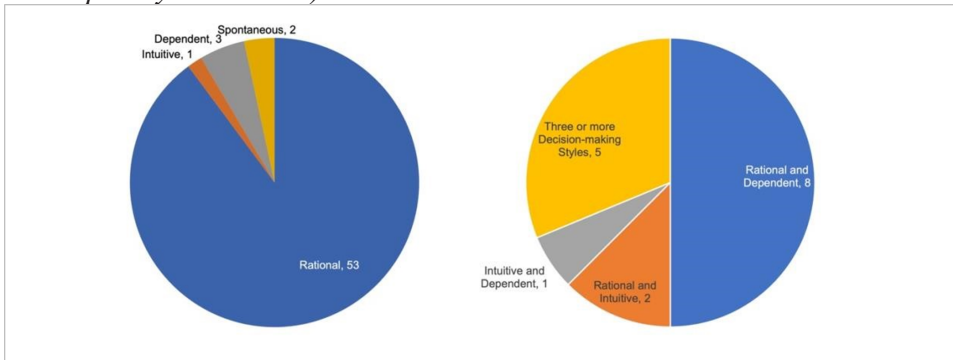
Following the results of the survey, both the most applied and the second most applied conflict management styles (Integrating and Obliging) showed a high concern for others. In contrast, the least applied styles (Dominating and Compromising) showed a medium to high concern for oneself. According to the key informants, for simple requests from subordinates, it is a common culture in the HEI to accommodate the wishes of others to avoid conflict. However, when important decisions have to be made, especially when the decision is crucial to their colleges and the HEI, the key informants mentioned that consultations with the right people were made beforehand. Moreover, while Compromising style is ideal in some cases, the respondents chose to either completely give in (Obliging) or seek to collaborate to reach a conflict resolution that is amenable to all parties. The results of the survey also highlighted the importance of maintaining healthy workplace relationships in the HEI, as its faculty recognize and care for the needs of their colleagues. This was consistent with the study by Yin et al. (2022), which stated that the culture of harmony was deemed precious; thus, the Dominating style of conflict management was least, if not, practiced.

The presence of multiple styles of conflict management suggests that leaders adapt their conflict management styles according to the situation, as observed in the studies by Karadakil et al. (2015) and Anuddin (2025). According to Siraji (2019), Integrating and Compromising were the most effective in addressing the differences in goals and objectives, personality differences, and disagreements over procedures and measures. Lukman (2021) also noted that conflicts are complex and may therefore require a combination of approaches to resolve. Nevertheless, the ability to reduce conflict is a reflection of leadership effectiveness (Barbuto & Xu, 2006; Sulich et al., 2021).

In terms of decision-making styles using GDMS, the majority of respondents are Rational and Dependent decision-makers, while some respondents practice two or more decision-making styles (Figure 4). According to Olcum & Titrek's (2015) study, school administrators employ various decision-making styles, considering factors such as each person's values, ethics, and events, among others, when making logical decisions. In contrast, public corporate workers were found to Be Avoidant and Spontaneous decision-makers (Olcum & Titrek, 2015). Rational decision-making also increases job satisfaction, while Spontaneous decision-making decreases it (Sari, 2022).

## Figure 4

*Decision-Making Styles of the Respondents in the HEI (n=75) (source: developed by the author)*



The application of a Dependent decision-making style was also evident among heads of public elementary schools in Eastern Samar (Capacite, 2022). Dependent decision-making, according to Berisha et al. (2018), involves searching for advice, direction, and support from other people as the person is uncomfortable making decisions by themselves. As mentioned earlier, the policies in the basic education sector provide structured guidance to the school administrators, which aids them in decision-making. Nevertheless, this type of decision-making was found to have a significant positive relationship with teachers' work performance, especially when compliance with rules and regulations is taken into account (Capacite, 2022). On the contrary, these findings may not apply in the context of HEIs. While university rules and regulations are being implemented, faculty members are given academic freedom in performing their multiple functions. Thus, rigid policies may restrict instead of guide them. Hence, the Rational decision-making style was observed to be the most preferred by faculty members in this HEI. According to Berisha et al. (2018), this type of decision-making involves thorough research for information and logical evaluation of alternatives prior to making decisions—a common practice for faculty members in HEIs, especially those who also serve as program and project leaders (temporary groups).

Moreover, with the theoretical guidance of Glasser's Choice Theory, decisions are made based on one's needs, leading to choices that will "feel beneficial" to oneself. Since one is in control of their thoughts and actions, choosing alternatives that were perceived as aligned with their 'Quality World' would result in satisfaction of one's needs (ABA Programs Guide, n.d.). In this context, therefore, most respondents felt the need to examine alternatives and consult others before making decisions (need for love and

belongingness), rather than making decisions based on hunches or impulse. It is worth noting that the majority of respondents hold advanced degrees, and therefore are expected to be critical thinkers and problem solvers. In addition, the multiple decision-making styles exhibited by some respondents reflected flexibility and adaptability in making decisions across various situations (Olcum & Titrek, 2015). Nevertheless, having options and the ability to make good choices or decisions is empowering (ABA Programs Guide, n.d.; Sulich et al., 2022; Quinal & Dupa, 2024).

## **Relationship of Conflict Management Style and Decision-making Style**

The relationship between conflict management style and decision-making style has been studied by previous researchers in various fields. De Heredia et al. (2004) stated that there is a negative relationship between Collaborative (or Integrating) conflict management and maladaptive decision-making (Avoidant and Dependent). The negative relationship showed that the more Collaborative a leader is in terms of conflict management, the less likely they are to become Avoidant and Dependent decision-makers. This further suggests that when a person avoids conflict management, they also tend to avoid decision-making or delegate it to others (de Heredia et al., 2004). On the contrary, the Avoidance conflict management did not show any significant relationship with any of the decision-making styles in terms of group decision-making (Kuhn & Poole, 2000). Instead, integrating conflict management showed a significant relationship with Rational decision-making (Kuhn & Poole, 2000). This proved that the more a person collaborates to address conflict, the more they get to know alternatives, closely examine them, and eventually make rational decisions (Kuhn & Poole, 2000). In this study, the relationship between conflict management and decision-making styles of faculty members was determined using Pearson correlational analysis in MS Excel. Table 3 summarizes the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ), indicating significance at the 90% confidence level ( $\alpha = 0.10$ ).

**Table 3**  
*Correlation Coefficient (r) of Conflict Management Styles and Decision-Making Styles*

CMS/GDMS	Rational	Intuitive	Dependent	Avoidant	Spontaneous
Integrating	0.16	- 0.05	0.17	- 0.18	0.09
Obliging	0.02	0.00	0.02	- 0.02	0.32*
Dominating	0.11	0.49*	0.25*	0.12	0.44*
Avoiding	0.23*	0.17	0.25*	0.03	0.10
Compromising	0.05	0.09	- 0.02	- 0.11	0.26*

(Source: developed by the author)

Strength of relationship:  
    > 0.70 = *very strong*  
    0.40 to 0.69 = *strong*  
    0.30 to 0.39 = *moderate*  
    0.20 to 0.29 = *weak*  
    0.01 to 0.19 = *very weak*  
    0.00 = *no relationship*  
\* *p-value* < 0.10

Based on the survey, most relationships are positive (direct), which means that as the frequency of applying a particular conflict management style increases, the frequency of using a particular decision-making style also increases. On the other hand, the negative (indirect) relationship indicated that when the frequency of applying a particular conflict management style increases, the frequency of using a particular decision-making style decreases. However, it can be noted that the strength of the relationships is mostly “very weak” to “weak”; one had no relationship at all (Table 3).

The most applied conflict management approach, Integrating, as shown by the respondents (Figure 3), did not exhibit a significant relationship with the decision-making styles; the relationship was generally weak (Table 3). On the other hand, Obliging conflict management, as the second most applied (Figure 3), showed a moderately strong and significant relationship with Spontaneous decision-making (Table 3). This means that the more a person prioritizes the concerns of others over their own in an effort to reduce conflict, the quicker the decision-making process becomes, and decisions are made based on feelings and impulse. It is worth noting that, as part of their organizational culture, HEI faculty members who also serve as administrators typically accommodate the simple requests of their subordinates to avoid conflict and stress (KII, May 2024). This type of organizational culture is prevalent among all faculty members at the HEI.

Moreover, the Dominating conflict management showed a positively strong and significant relationship with Intuitive and Spontaneous

decision-making, and a positively weak yet significant relationship with Dependent decision-making (Table 3). Since Dominating is the least used conflict management style of the respondents (Figure 3), and guided by the direct relationship it showed (Table 3), it can be stated that the less frequent the Dominating conflict management is applied, so does the Intuitive or Spontaneous decision-making. Inversely, the more a person prioritizes themselves in managing conflicts, the more they make decisions based on what “feels right” at the moment. Similarly, a higher concern for self during conflict management would mean a higher need for support from others during decision-making. This finding applies to all faculty members of the HEI.

The Avoiding conflict management showed a positively weak but significant relationship with Rational and Dependent decision-making (Table 3). From the survey, it can be observed that avoiding or delaying conflict resolution, or sidestepping to avoid getting involved in a dispute, is more logical than dealing with it head-on. It was mentioned earlier that while the key informants accommodate the concerns of their colleagues over their own to avoid conflict, they ensure that whenever important decisions need to be made, they consult their colleagues and school management (KII, May 2024). Further, as mentioned earlier, part of their organizational culture is the belief that avoidance (of disputes) is better than resolution. Therefore, culture is a factor in how a person chooses to respond to conflicting situations and make ethical decisions based on their principles and beliefs (Asfahani, 2017). It was also mentioned by Holt and DeVore (2005) that avoiding conflicts is a characteristic of Asians, as they demonstrate respect for others by refraining from arguing or imposing their views.

On the other hand, the positive relationship between Avoidant conflict management and Dependent decision-making (as a maladaptive decision-making pattern) is consistent with the study by de Heredia et al. (2004). This further supported the claims made during the KII (May 2024) that superiors or management delayed conflict resolution to allow their subordinates to deal with it on their own first – an application of Choice Theory in the workplace (ABA Program Guide, n.d.). This applies to all the faculty members of the HEI.

Finally, the Compromising conflict management showed a positively weak yet significant relationship with Spontaneous decision-making (Table 3). Similar to Dominating conflict management, Compromising is the least preferred by the respondents (Figure 3). Therefore, based on the survey, it can be observed that the less frequent a person gives in to minimize conflict, the less frequent they make decisions spontaneously. In other words, the

more a person gives in to others to avoid conflict, the more they make decisions based on what “feels right” at the moment.

Generally, some relationships, while significant, were found to be ‘weak’ to ‘very weak’. Moreover, some relationships apply only to the set of respondents and cannot be assumed to be representative of all faculty members in the HEI. Furthermore, Pearson correlation values highlight the relationships between conflict management and decision-making, but do not indicate causality. The socio-demographic data collected were used to describe participants; their relationship with conflict management and decision-making was not a part of the study. Nevertheless, consistent with other studies, a significant relationship exists between conflict management and the decision-making styles of faculty members in the HEI.

### **Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

Faculty members were mandated to perform five official functions, and are considered for leadership positions mainly in temporary groups (programs, projects, offices). As leaders, they would be involved in conflict management and decision-making to ensure smooth organizational operations while achieving their respective objectives. Several studies have been conducted on conflict management and decision-making in both organizational and educational institutions. However, these kinds of scientific endeavour are still limited in the Philippines setting, especially among HEIs. Thus, the study was conducted in an HEI in Laguna province to discuss the sources of organizational conflicts; determine the conflict management and decision-making styles of the faculty members; and determine how conflict management relates to decision-making. A total of 75 responses were returned, with the majority of respondents being females, highly educated, aged 41 to 55 years old, and having been with the HEI for one to 10 years. Results showed that the most common source of conflicts in the HEI was task conflicts; relational conflicts were also present, but were the least common. Assuming a superior-subordinate relationship, the majority of faculty members apply Integrating and Obliging conflict management styles, and less often Dominating or Compromising. In terms of decision-making, the majority of the faculty members are rational and dependent decision-makers. On the other hand, some of the faculty members possess two or more conflict management and decision-making styles. Significant positive relationships were observed between: 1) Obliging conflict management and Spontaneous decision-making; 2) Dominating conflict management and Intuitive, Dependent, and Spontaneous decision-

making; 3) Avoiding conflict management and Rational and Dependent decision-making; and 4) Compromising conflict management and Spontaneous decision-making.

Based on these results, and following the Dual Concern Theory, it can be concluded that majority of the faculty members of the HEI, have higher concern for their subordinates than for themselves by applying collaborative problem-solving (Integrating) and giving in to the wishes of their subordinates while neglecting their own interests (Obliging) when dealing with conflicts most of the time rather than trying to win at all cost (Dominating) or bargaining (Compromising). Moreover, with reference to Glasser's Choice Theory, it can be concluded that the respondents have a higher need for love and belongingness than for power, as they prioritize relationships, as shown by the infrequent occurrence of relationship-related conflicts in the HEI and the least application of the Dominating conflict management style. The respondents also choose to be rational in making decisions, including avoiding conflict altogether (as an alternative option) rather than having to solve it later on, and giving opportunities to their subordinates to resolve conflicts on their own first. While a Dependent decision-making style was seen as a maladaptive pattern of decision-making (Fischer, Soye, & Gurtner, 2015), it was highly applied in this HEI, considering their respect for colleagues, especially superiors, whom they consult during critical decision-making times. In general, the respondents are collaborative conflict managers and rational decision-makers. On the other hand, faculty members are less dominant conflict managers and tend to be less intuitive, dependent, and spontaneous decision-makers.

The significant relationships established between various combinations of conflict management and decision-making styles, as well as the presence of multiple-style respondents confirms to the study of Asfahani (2017) which stated that there are no right or wrong styles, but there is a critical time that a particular style is more appropriate than the other, thus a person can change their styles depending on situation (Asfahani, 2017). Furthermore, other variables, such as culture (Holt & DeVore, 2005; Asfahani, 2017) and self-esteem (de Heredia et al., 2004), also influence preferences for conflict management and decision-making styles. Nevertheless, it is further concluded that conflict management styles and decision-making styles are not zero-sum; each person has the ability to choose and control their responses, depending on the situation's requirements. Regardless of one's preference, conflict management and decision-making are a reflection of one's values system and leadership capabilities (de Heredia et al., 2004; Barbuto & Xu, 2006; Hamayun et al., 2014; Karadakil et al., 2015; Anastasiou,

2020; Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020; Lukman, 2021; Yin et al., 2022).

Based on the study, it is recommended that grievance committees be updated and regularly monitored for compliance, as they are already in place. Activities to foster camaraderie and rapport among faculty members are also recommended to further strengthen their relationships as colleagues and as superior-subordinate, such as making the monthly meeting of university administrators and faculty leaders a regular activity. Further, as conflict management and decision-making are “skills” that can be developed (Quinal & Dupa, 2024; Sulich et al., 2021), capacity-building activities are also recommended to equip faculty members with effective leadership qualities. Having skilled leaders who are reliable in managing disputes and making the right decisions would future-proof the academic community. For theoretical recommendations, similar studies using the Dual Concern Models of Thomas-Kilmann and Pruitt & Rubin may be employed to confirm the results, either within the same HEI or in another one.

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