



## Assessing Student Leaders' Leadership Styles and Conflict Management

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### ABSTRACT

Student leadership gives students the training they need to engage themselves in school-related tasks or concepts, objectives, and aspirations beneficially and constructively. It teaches them how and when to plan an event, manage their schedule, improve their speaking abilities, and lead students. To achieve a target, leadership is a flexible process that calls for collaboration with others in both academic and professional lives. For individuals who are expanding their professional competencies, gaining leadership skills is essential. To enable students to learn their attributes and better prepare them for their careers, leadership qualities and skills should be measured. This study examined the profile in terms of age and sex, leadership styles, and conflict management of student leaders in a state university. A descriptive-correlation research design was employed in the study with undergraduate student leaders of their respective department organizations who enrolled in different courses. (N=70). Results show that majority of student leaders age is between 18- 21 and are dominated by male student leaders. It can also be gleaned that the majority of student leaders possess a democratic leadership style. Democratic leadership approaches have provided leaders the capability of making wise decisions, collaborating with others, and asking pertinent questions to people to handle certain issues. In terms of conflict management, the number one conflict management strategy used by the leaders is accommodating strategy. Moreover, there is no significant relationship between the leadership style of student leaders and conflict management. Regardless of the leadership style of student leaders, it is up to them how they will handle conflict management effectively. Student leaders set the tone for conflict management through their leadership styles.

### RESUME

A liderança estudantil dá aos alunos o treinamento necessário para se envolverem em tarefas ou conceitos, objetivos e aspirações relacionados à escola de forma benéfica e construtiva. Ele os ensina como e quando planejar um evento, gerenciar sua agenda, melhorar suas habilidades orais e liderar os alunos. Para atingir uma meta, a liderança é um processo flexível que exige a colaboração com outras pessoas, tanto na vida acadêmica quanto na profissional. Para indivíduos que estão expandindo suas competências profissionais, adquirir habilidades de liderança é essencial. Para permitir que os alunos aprendam os seus atributos e os preparem melhor para as suas carreiras, as qualidades e competências de liderança devem ser medidas. Este estudo examinou o perfil em termos de idade e sexo, estilos de liderança e gestão de conflitos de líderes estudantis em uma universidade estadual. Um desenho de pesquisa de correlação descritiva foi empregado no estudo com líderes de estudantes de graduação de suas respectivas organizações departamentais que se matricularam em diferentes cursos. (N=70). Os resultados mostram que a maioria dos líderes estudantis tem entre 18 e 21 anos e é dominada por líderes estudantis do sexo masculino. Também pode ser constatado que a maioria dos líderes estudantis possui um estilo de liderança democrático. As abordagens de liderança democrática proporcionaram aos líderes a capacidade de tomar decisões sábias, colaborar com outros e fazer perguntas pertinentes às pessoas para lidar com determinadas questões. Em termos de gestão de conflitos, a estratégia de gestão de conflitos número um utilizada pelos líderes é a estratégia de acomodação. Além disso, não existe uma relação significativa entre o estilo de liderança dos líderes estudantis e a gestão de conflitos. Independentemente do estilo de liderança dos líderes estudantis, cabe a eles como irão lidar eficazmente com a gestão de conflitos. Os líderes estudantis dão o tom para a gestão de conflitos através dos seus estilos de liderança.

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## **Introduction**

The most important factor in raising academic success and school performance is school leadership. Effective leaders create school climates and cultures that inspire and support both students and teachers, resulting in improved instruction and supportive learning environments that boost student achievement levels. The environment in which students grow and learn has a significant impact on how well they perform, thus it is crucial to support student leadership. Although leaders come naturally, this is not always the case. Every youth leader must have the ability to make decisions that benefit other learners. Improving good communication between members and demonstrating strong social skills are also important in leadership. Leadership is crucial for student leaders to carry out their responsibilities as leaders while also being responsible students in the class. It is critical to strike a balance between being a leader and a student to attain academic achievement. Kurt Lewin's (1939), as described by Leadership and Performance partners (2022), described three (3) leadership styles: authoritarian, democratic, and Laizzes-Faire. The Authoritarian Style is very assertive, with the leader visibly in command through issuing orders and making decisions. The work is done in this manner continuously, neglecting changes and innovation. Members with this type of leadership style frequently act like a robot, with no participation allowed. However, there are times when being authoritative is necessary and effective, such as in an emergency scenario where choices must be made promptly and with authority. Furthermore, this leadership style works well when the person is familiar with the system or is perhaps the most informed and experienced member of the group. Democratic leadership is often referred to as proactive or participatory leadership. Rather than providing orders, the leader engages in collaborative decision-making as a source of ideas. In this manner, the leader generally leads and assists its members. Most decisions in a democratic leadership style are made by the rule of the majority rather than by the leader solely. This approach could be seen as a way to generate more notions and original ideas. Decisions made under this leadership style may, in most situations, be effective because the members are acknowledged. The participants in this approach are allowed to express themselves without worrying about being rejected or humiliated. As a result, they are more motivated to complete a task, which influences the entire group's mood positively. But it takes a long time for this committee to make choices. Particularly when the group's members lack talent or motivation. The French term for laissez-faire leadership is "let to do." This leadership style, often known as the "do nothing" method, adopted a hands-off strategy in which decisions are being made without advice or support from the leaders. Others refer to this design as a mode of delegation. If the people are highly talented and motivated, this technique is extremely effective. If provided sufficient guidance and resources available from the start can accomplish the job with minimum input from the leader. Moreover, aside

from the leadership style of students, it is also essential to know how the student leaders deal with the conflict in the organization as well as in dealing with the problem of student stakeholders. According to Asano (2011), conflict management is an as essential approach to managing differences and disagreements in an organization. Conflict cannot be eradicated in any organization, especially one as volatile as a student organization, yet students can be prepared to effectively manage conflict while gaining essential life skills. Relaxation, reconciliation, arbitration, problem-solving workshops, and other forms of intervention are in high demand and use, according to conflict principles, training, and research. Assessing the leadership style of student leaders will allow the Office of Student Affairs and Services to offer training to help them further enhance their style of leadership and conflict resolution skills. It may finally yield positive results for the benefit of the entire group as well as all student parties. Generally, the study aimed to determine the profile in terms of age and sex, leadership style, and the level of conflict management strategy of the student leaders as well as the relationship between leadership style and conflict management.

## **Methodology**

This study used a descriptive-correlation research design. Participants of the study are student leaders from the different recognized academic organizations of Cavite State University - Silang Campus. This study used a purposive sampling technique. Wherein the researcher chooses participants based on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest. The survey questionnaire on leadership styles and conflict management is adopted with permission from the authors. The questionnaire which is composed of three parts was used to gather data. The first part is the profile of the respondents while the second part contained the questions to assess the leadership style of the respondents. In terms of profile, the instrument asked for the respondent's age, sex, the department they belonged to, and Organization. Respondents need to put a checkmark that best describes their leadership characteristics. The second part of the instrument is the Leadership Style Questionnaire. The leadership style scale has 18 items and has three subscales which is the democratic leadership, authoritarian, and laissez-faire. Items 1,2,6,10,15 and 16 measures authoritarian leadership. Items 4,5,8,11,14 and 18 measures democratic leadership and items 3,7,9,12,13 and 17 measures laissez-faire leadership. It is scaled into 1(Strongly agree), 2(Agree), 3(Neutral), 2(Disagree), and 1(strongly disagree). The mean value of 26-30 is a very high range, 21-25 is a high range, 16- 20 is a neutral range, 11- is the low range, and 16-10 is a very low range. By comparing the score, one can determine which style is most dominant and least dominant. The third part of the instrument is conflict management. The conflict management scale has 13

items and has five subscales which include: competing, accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, and compromising. Items 1, 3,4,5, and 10 measure competing, items 2, 6, 9, and 12 measure accommodating, items 8 and 11 measure avoiding, and items 7 and 13 measure collaboration. Through the computation of Cronbach’s Alpha, it was found that there is a good interval validity and reliability of 0.836. The researchers asked permission from the Office of Student Affairs and Services for approval before conducting the survey and sought consent from the Dean of the Campus. The questionnaire was distributed to the student leaders from different organizations on campus. The researcher made sure that all data gathered were handled with the highest confidentiality. The researcher also gathered data from internet sources, articles, and books. The questionnaire was assumed to answer honestly and truthfully. Mean and standard deviation are used to determine the leadership style. For the level of conflict management, mean, standard deviation, and rank were used. Pearson r will be used to get the relationship between leadership style and level of conflict management of the participants.

**Results and Discussion**

**Table 1.**  
Profile of Student Leaders as to Age and Sex

	<b>Male</b>		<b>Female</b>		<b>Total</b>	
<b>Age</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
18-21	21	30	15	21.43	36	51.43
22-25	14	20	16	22.86	30	42.86
26 & Above	4	5.71			4	5.71
Total	39	56.71	31	44.29	70	100

Table 1 shows the distribution of Student Leaders in terms of age and sex. It can be noted from the table that the majority of student leaders’ age is between 18- 21 with 51.43% followed by an age range of 22-25 with 42.86%. In terms of sex, Male student leaders are dominant with 56.71%.

**Table 2.**  
Leadership style of the participants

<i>INDICATORS</i>	<i>MEAN</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>REMARKS</i>
Democratic	22.833	2.041	HIGH
Authoritarian	19	2	MODERATE
Laissez-Faire	17.5	0.548	MODERATE

Legends:

Mean Value	Verbal Interpretation
26-30	Very high range
21-25	High Range
16-20	Moderate
11-15	Low Range
6-10	Very Low Range

As indicated in the table, the Democratic style has a mean of 22.833 with remarks of high. The authoritarian style has a mean of 19 with remarks of moderate. Laissez-Faire has a mean of 17.5 and remarks as moderate. Based on the result, the majority of student leaders possess a democratic leadership style. According to student leaders, if the ideas and opinions of members are heard, it is easy to decide what would be better for the organization especially when they planned different projects for the benefit of all. Democratic leadership approaches have provided leaders the capability of making wise decisions, collaborating with others, and asking pertinent questions to people to handle certain issues. Moreover, democratic leaders are completely capable of carrying out tasks on their own, according to Northouse, (2009) as cited by Constantino et.al, (2021). They cooperate with other group members and make a sincere effort to treat everyone equitably. They primarily aim to assist group members in achieving their objectives. Interactional communication between the leader and the members. Furthermore, studies believe that an effective democratic leadership style can facilitate well when organizations encounter difficulties (Dike & Madubueze,2019)

**Table 3.**

Conflict Management

<i><b>INDICATORS</b></i>	<i><b>MEAN</b></i>	<i><b>SD</b></i>	<i><b>REMARKS</b></i>	<i><b>RANK</b></i>
Competing	3.71	0.831	HIGH	5
Accommodating	4.071	0.878	HIGH	1
Avoiding	3.89	0.781	HIGH	3
Collaboration	3.93	0.747	HIGH	2
Compromising	3.829	0.724	HIGH	4
<b>Overall Mean</b>	3.886	0.792	HIGH	

As exhibited in the table, the number 1 conflict management strategy used by the leaders is accommodating with a mean of 4.071. Accommodating strategy indicates cooperating to a high degree where student leaders may have to give in to maintain relationships and minimizes injury in resolving problems. As supported by Kaimenyi (2014) this kind of leader shows a low concern for self and tends to satisfy the needs of others. Second is a collaboration which means that problems are solved in a way the involvement of all members to get what they want and negative feelings are minimized. It also creates mutual

trust, maintains positive relationships, and builds commitments. Third is avoiding on the other hand is the non-confrontational approach used by the student leaders. It does not escalate conflict thus, postpones difficulty. According to Kaimenya (2014), this involves setting aside, ignoring, and refusing to address the issues in question. Ranked 4<sup>th</sup> is compromising which indicates that it uses assertiveness and cooperation. The approach is to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties. Competing in the last approach used by the student leaders. It is also called an authoritative strategy that pursues and decides on his/her judgment. Moreover, all the indicators of conflict management have a remark of High which indicates that student leaders have a high level of conflict management. Student leaders' perception of conflict management suggests that they refrain from making rush decisions and allow time to obtain more information or support to resolve conflict. Conflict resolution is a strategy that recognizes conflict could not always be avoided or addressed. Skills that help a person to anticipate possible conflict beforehand and effectively manage those situations lessen the chance of conflict adversely influencing productivity or worsening communication further. (Ayoko et.al, 2002)

**Table 4.**

Relationship between conflict management and leadership style of participant

<b>Indicators: Leadership Style and Conflict Management</b>		
<b>Correlation Coefficient</b>	<b>P-Value</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
0.052	0.669	Accept Ho

Legend: Reject Ho if p-value is <0.05

The table shows the relationship between the leadership style and conflict management of student leaders. It has a correlation coefficient of 0.052 and a P-value of 0.669. It indicates that there is no significant relationship between the leadership style of student leaders and conflict management. This implied that regardless of the leadership style of student leaders it is up to them how they will handle conflict management effectively. Student leaders set the tone for conflict management through their leadership styles. As stated by Tabassi, Bryde, Abdullah, & Argyopoulou (2017) conflict should be managed thoroughly rather than avoided to get the best results. Each leader has a core base since it influences the behavior and attitudes of each individual (Kaimenyi, 2014)

## **Conclusions**

The study focused on describing the profile in terms of age and sex, leadership styles, and conflict management of student leaders. Based on the analysis and results of data, the

majority of student leaders age is between 18- 21 and are dominated by male student leaders. Democratic style has a mean of 22.833 with remarks of high. The authoritarian style has a mean of 19 with remarks of moderate. Laissez-Faire has a mean of 17.5 and remarks as moderate. Based on the result, the majority of student leaders possess a democratic leadership style. According to student leaders, if the ideas and opinions of members are heard, it is easy to decide what would be better for the organization especially when they planned different projects for the benefit of all. Democratic leadership approaches have provided leaders the capability of making wise decisions, collaborating with others, and asking pertinent questions to people to handle certain issues. In terms of conflict management, the number 1 conflict management strategy used by the leaders is accommodating with a mean of 4.071. Accommodating strategy indicates cooperating to a high degree where student leaders may have to give in to maintain relationships and minimizes injury in resolving problems. Moreover, there is no significant relationship between the leadership style of student leaders and conflict management. Regardless of the leadership style of student leaders it ,is up to them how they will handle conflict management effectively. Student leaders set the tone for conflict management through their leadership styles.

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