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Causes of conflicts between teachers and school administrators in schools according to the teachers' perspective

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Abstract. Conflict is a condition that defines a social life. Conflicts and disagreements can arise as a result of differences in values, beliefs, personalities, goals and perceptions of individuals. In an educational organization it is common to have conflicts between teachers and administrators for various reasons. However, it is essential for both parties to cooperate, interact and work together in order to prevent or resolve conflict situations that have arisen.

The purpose of the study is to try to determine the causes of conflicts between teachers and school administrators according to the teachers' perceptions. The participants of the research consisted of 30 schools from the city of Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kazakhstan, including Kazakh, Russian and Kazakh-Russian mixed schools all over the city, and 432 teachers who worked in these schools during the academic year 2019-2020. The data were collected using "Personal Information Form" and the "Reasons of Conflict Questionnaire". The arithmetic means and standard deviation of the organizational conflict questionnaire determined the results of the study. The results of the study revealed, according to the teachers' perspective the items that "mostly" causes conflicts in schools are the following: "Too much paperwork", "The administrator keeps teachers under constant and tight control", "The administrator interferences in teacher's private life", "The administrator punishes failure rather than rewarding success", "Differences in perception", "The administrator is too distant from teachers", "The administrator pretends to consult teachers when he/she makes the decision", "The administrator looks down on teachers", "The administrator neglects his/her responsibilities due to professional incompetence", "The administrator's favoritism policy", "The parties have different views on the management methods", "The administrator trusts only close people to him/her at school", "The administrator always uses only written communication type". As a result, it was concluded that Ust-Kamenogorsk has an unsatisfactory school environment which must be eliminated.

Keywords: conflicts at schools, causes of conflicts, conflicts between teachers and administrators.

Introduction

Currently, one of the most common topics in the field of educational administration is conflict and causes of conflict in educational organizations. Based on this fact, it is seen that many studies have been carried out on this topic [1], [2], [3], [4]. The concept of conflict is studied in a diverse ways because of its confusion with those conditions that lead to situations of different conflicts [5]. If we look at the references on conflict, we see that there is no a precise definition of it. In one of its definitions conflict is defined as an incompatibility of goals or values between two or more parties in a relationship and hostile feelings of these parties towards each other [6]. Another term identifies conflict as a tension between two or more social entities (individuals, groups or large organizations) resulting from a mismatch between actual and desired responses [7]. Tesfay [8] defines conflict as a disagreement between two or more organizational members or groups due to unshared scarce resources, working conditions, or because of differences in status, goals, values or perceptions. Conflict can also be described as the divergence of views and lack of agreement in the exchange of ideas between the parties [9]. According to these definitions, Conflict can be understood as the clash of opposing views or efforts to overcome one another. Conflict arises when there are incompatible goals, views and opinions.

Conflicts are often viewed as negative phenomena due to their association with disadvantage or trouble. However, according to R. Darendorf and L. Kozer founders of conflictology as a science, the presence of conflicts in society is natural and their absence is abnormal [10]. Therefore it is possible to say that conflict is neither positive nor negative. It can be a sign of danger or an opportunity for growth. Whether the outcomes of a conflict are positive or negative depends on how the conflict is understood and managed.

Schools are part of society and , as organization with diverse individuals, they can often become centers of conflict due to differences in structure, function, teachers expertise, and expectations. Conflicts in schools are therefore inevitable. It is common for schools to experince conflicts in the modern world [11].

Schools are in a top position among the organizations where conflict is experienced intensively. These include conflicts between students, conflict between teachers and school administrators and conflict between other social parties associated with the school, such as local authorities, parents and family members etc. The majority of the studies carried out within the scope of educational organizations are conflicts between teachers and administrators. Results have shown that 70% of conflicts in schools are the fault of administrators and 30% of conflicts are the fault of teachers [12]. However teachers and school administrators should be aware of how to turn destructive conflict into constructive conflict. Constructive conflict management plays a significant role in achieving educational, administrative and organizational goals. Administrators and teachers have a huge responsibility in this process. They should help each other to crat a positive, cooperative and peaceful environment in schools by acquiring conflict management skills and applying them to the educational process [13].

Conflicts can arise in schools due to various reasons such as poor communication, school environment, differences in values, beliefs, attitudes, personality, inadequate tools and equipment, allocation of limited resources, favoritism by the principal, reward systems, personal

performance evaluations of teachers etc. [14]. Another causes of conflict in schools are disruption of academic programs, insufficient staff, hostility among staff. In addition, insufficient financial resources and lack of facilities have shown as causes of conflict in schools [15]. Similar study has revealed the following causes of conflict in schools: lack of facilities and funding, conflicts between staff members, personality factors and role conflicts, etc. [16]. Conflict may arise in school bureaucracy when leadership roles are shared, such as between department heads and the vice principal, or when resources like money, books and computers are shared on an adaily basis. [17]. Finally, as stated in another source, we can list the following as causes of conflict related to leadership: negative leadership style, poor communication, unfair decisions, misuse of financial resources, favoritism [18].

Due to the potential devastating effects of conflict on both teacher and administrators, it is crucial to handle such situation carefully. Because strong hostility arising from conflicts may have a devastating effect on both of parties. Mhehe [17] mentioned that various psychological disorders resulting from this hostility between the teachers and school administrators, including behaviors such as apathy and indifference towards their work are common symptoms that badly affects the functioning of a school.

Effective conflict management can minimize negative consequences and even contribute to the development of the school by turning conflicts into positive outcomes. It is important to note that conflicts can range from small disagreements to major crises that can disrupt the school's operations. However, when conflicts are not managed well, they can lead to feelings of fear, insecurity, and restlessness [19]. Therefore, it is important for school administrators to be able to recognize the causes of conflicts, resolve them correctly and in an appropriate manner. To achieve this, a clear and logical conflict management plan should be in place. Conflicts are inevitable in schools, as in many other organizations. School administrators are responsible for identifying and resolving conflicts, and even transforming them into opportunities.

Although conflict in schools has been studied extensively around the world, including in Europe, the USA, Africa and Türkiye, there has been a lack of research on this topic in Kazakhstan. However, in recent years, the phenomenon of conflict in schools has started to attract the attention of Kazakhstani researchers. This study and its results are expected to serve as a starting point for further research in Kazakhstan. The purpose of this work is to try to determine the causes of conflicts between teachers and school administrators based on teachers' perceptions. To achieve this, we sought answers to the following question: What are the main causes of conflicts between teachers and school administrators in Ust-Kamenogorsk schools?

Research methods

This research aims to determine the main causes of conflicts between teachers and school administrators from the teachers' perspective using a quantitative research method. Quantitative research method is defined as the collection, analysis, interpretation, and use of numerical data [20]. The research participant were 432 teachers from 30 schools in Ust-Kamenogorsk city, including Kazakh, Russian and Kazakh-Russian mixed schools. The study included 11 Kazakh

schools, 12 Russian schools, and 7 Kazakh-Russian mixed schools during the 2019-2020 academic year.

The research utilized two data collection tools: the "Personal Information Form" and the "Reasons of Conflict Questionnaire". The "Personal Information Form" includes information about the participants' gender, level of education and work experience. "Reasons of Conflict Questionnaire" includes 33 statements that may lead to conflicts in educational organizations. The scale is a five-point Likert scale. Teachers express their opinions using the following options: (1) never causes conflict, (2) hardly ever causes conflict, (3) sometimes causes conflict, (4) mostly causes conflict and (5) always causes conflict.

Table 1

Distribution of participants by gender

Gender		Teachers
Male	f	46
%		10,7
Female	f	386
%		89,3
Total	f	432
%		100

Out of 432 respondents, only 46 were male teachers, which is 4% of the total number. This indicates that the teaching profession in schools across Kazakhstan, within the scope of this study, is predominantly female.

Table 2

Distribution of Participants According to Education Level

Education Level		Teachers
College	f	24
%		6
Bachelor	f	246
%		57
Expert (those who have studied 5 years)	f	103
%		24
Master	f	56
%		13
PhD	f	0
%		0
Total	f	432
%		100

Only 6% of teachers are at the college level, while the majority (57%) hold a bachelor's degree and 13% hold a master's degree.

Table 3

Distribution of Participants According to Work Experience (in Years)

Work Experience (in Years)		Teachers
1-5 years	f	121
	%	28
6-10 years	f	79
	%	18,3
11-16 years	f	81
	%	18,7
16-20 years	f	49
	%	11,4
20 years and more	f	102
	%	23,6
Total	f	432
	%	100

Upon analyzing the distribution of the teachers in the table, it is evident that 28% of them have been working at the school for 1-5 years, 18,3% for 6-10 years, 18,7% for 11-16 years, 11,4% for 16-20 years and 23,6% for 20 years or more. Based on this distribution, one could argue that younger generation gives more importance to the teaching profession.

Results

The descriptive statistics of the means and standard deviations of the questionnaire statements aimed at determining the level of conflict causes in schools from the teachers perspective are presented below:

Table 4

The descriptive statistics of the means and standard deviations of the questionnaire

	N	Mean	SD
Statement 1	432	2.9630	.78768
Statement 2	432	3.6690	.86390
Statement 3	432	3.5995	.81420
Statement 4	432	3.7500	.84946
Statement 5	432	3.0926	.84025
Statement 6	432	3.6319	.86499

Statement 7	432	4.0718	.95219
Statement 8	432	3.5741	.90067
Statement 9	432	3.4769	.84503
Statement 10	432	2.5069	.85894
Statement 11	432	3.5069	.88291
Statement 12	432	3.5741	.80835
Statement 13	432	3.5810	.95023
Statement 14	432	2.9676	.73296
Statement 15	432	3.1481	1.19795
Statement 16	432	3.6088	.83553
Statement 17	432	2.9815	.70440
Statement 18	432	2.9745	.78371
Statement 19	432	2.8657	.70828
Statement 20	432	2.7500	.83569
Statement 21	432	2.6389	.86390
Statement 22	432	3.5394	.98401
Statement 23	432	1.8611	.87192
Statement 24	432	1.9954	.64263
Statement 25	432	1.4792	.77939
Statement 26	432	1.6852	.71960
Statement 27	432	2.0532	.58555
Statement 28	432	1.7731	.74896
Statement 29	432	2.6644	.79197
Statement 30	432	3.6273	.73840
Statement 31	432	1.9375	.64140
Statement 32	432	1.3935	.68646
Statement 33	432	1.7454	.77068

After analyzing the responses of participating teachers, statements with a mean between 3.41 and 5.00 were identified as situations that may cause conflict in schools according to teacher perceptions. The top situation identified by teachers was doing excessive paperwork. The results of another research study indicate that the amount of paperwork required is burdensome. "If this issue could be addressed, it would save a significant amount of time for teachers and principals. Reduction and streamlining of this work could occur either at the school level (for example by ensuring all data is used for more than one purpose, or by using time-saving templates) or at Ministry level (with, for example, fewer accountability and recording requirements)" [21]. On one hand, it is true that teachers have to deal with a significant amount of paperwork every day. On the other hand, it has been duty of teachers to complete paperwork since ancient times. However, from the author's point of view, the amount of paperwork should

not be excessive. The primary responsibility of teachers is to teach, not to spend their entire time filling out the documents.

According to the teachers' opinion, the statement that may “mostly” cause conflict between teachers and administrators is the situation when the administrator keeps teachers under constant and tight control. While responding to the same questionnaire administrators stated that “keeping teachers under constant and tight control” is sometimes might be even beneficial and that this situation may “hardly ever” cause conflict between two parties.

Based on the feedback received from the teachers during the field studies, the questionnaire was updated to include the item “administrator interference in teacher's private life”. The findings showed that this item ranked third among conflict-causing situations in schools from the perspective of teachers. The fact that this situation is unique to Kazakhstan and was chosen “mostly” as a cause of conflict shows that it would be appropriate to examine the situation deeper in future studies.

The statement “the administrator punishes failure rather than rewarding success” is among the other situations that can cause conflict with a mean of $\bar{x}=3.63$. According to teachers' opinions, this situation can “mostly” cause conflict between them and administrators.

Among the various reasons that may cause conflict, differences in perception have been identified. It is natural for individuals to have varying perceptions, and as a result, these differences may lead to conflicts between them. According to Karcioğulları and Alioğulları [2], the fact that an individual or any group perceives a situation or incident differently can be a reason of conflict among these people.

According to teachers' perspectives, one of the issues that may cause conflict in schools is the situation that “the administrator is too distant from teachers”. It is known that such relationships are an obstacle in creating a healthy organisation. According to the findings, it is seen that there are some problems based on bilateral relations between administrators and teachers in Ust-Kamenogorsk schools. In Akgöz and Cemaloğlu's [22] identified the absence of appropriate subordinate-superior relations as a significant cause of conflict.

One conflict-causing situation, according to teachers' responses, is when the administrator pretends to consult with them but ultimately makes the decision alone. However, the administrators' respond to the same situation was smooth and as for them the situation “hardly ever” can be a reason of conflict. In Demirbolat's [23] study, this situation was selected among the situations that cause conflict “mostly” with a mean of $\bar{x}=3.70$. It is seen that it is perceived as an important problem by teachers in both educational institutions as well as in Kazakhstan and Türkiye.

The statement that “the administrator looks down on teachers” was selected one of the other reasons that causes conflict in schools. Based on the teachers' feedback, conflicts between administrators and teachers often arise when the administrator displays an assertive attitude and looks down on teachers. In another study, the same statement was selected as primary cause of conflict, with a mean of $\bar{x}=4.27$. “When an administrator is rude and looks down on a teacher, it is an indication that the administrator does not care about the element of respect in this relationship” [23]. It is obvious that wherever in the world, conflict is inevitable in an environment where employees feel that they are looked down.

“The administrator neglects his/her duties and responsibilities due to professional incompetence” is one of the statements with a high mean ($\bar{x}=3.57$) among the rankings. Teachers believe that this situation mostly causes conflict. In another study, “administrator's ignorance and lack of training” emerged as the first ranked cause of conflict between administrators and employees [24]. The absence or lack of pedagogical creativity makes it difficult to perceive and understand many problems. Professional incompetence or lack of experience of some managers and lack of practical experience in managerial activity” is considered as a subject of conflict between teachers and managers in schools [25]. With the same mean ($\bar{x}=3.57$), another statement that causes conflict is selected as “the administrator's favoritism policies”. In other words, the administrator's "discrimination" among teachers was always characterized as a cause of conflict in schools [22].

The statement that “the administrator always uses only written communication type of communication” was evaluated as a situation that causes conflict "mostly" among the participating teachers responses. Another study that supports the findings of this work was conducted by Yurdunkulu and Oktay [26]. According to teachers' opinions, conflicts caused by communication inadequacy and disorder are among the primary causes of conflict.

The issue that “the administrator trusts only close people to him/her at school” was shown as another conflict-causing situation. Other studies on this subject reveal that conflicts may arise due to mistrust between the administrator and employees, as well as a lack of transparency and honesty in their interactions. Demirbolat [23] revealed that the statement “the administrator trusts only close people to him/her at school” was an important cause of conflict among parties with a mean ($\bar{x}=4.02$).

The last statement which pointed out as conflict-causing case according to the teachers' perspective was that the parties have different views on the management methods. In order to prevent management problems between the parties, the administrator should arrange a meeting and clearly explain the subject, the rules of the organization, and methods used [25]. Sometimes teachers may misunderstand these methods and rules used by administrators in the workplace and this can lead to conflict.

Discussion

The study revealed that teachers in schools in Kazakhstan identified many situations that could provoke conflict between teachers and administrators. When the literature was examined some findings were supporting the findings of this paper. A research conducted in Russia found that the reason for conflict between administrators and teachers was “too much paperwork” in educational institutions [25]. Therefore, it can be concluded that this situation only concerns Kazakhstan or the countries of the former Soviet geography. This is because the effects of the Soviet-era practice of presenting everything on paper, which continues in a present day, are still effective in these areas. The findings of the study revealed that this issue ranks first among the reasons that disturb teachers in Kazakhstan. According to teachers' view, teachers spend most of their time on paperwork rather than teaching. In Demirbolat's [23] study, the administrator's constant and tight control was ranked as a situation that “mostly” causes conflict. The fact that

the same result was found both in studies conducted in Kazakhstan and Türkiye shows the relevance of the issue which needs to pay attention to and needs a solution. Demirbolat's [23] findings stated that "the administrator punishing failure rather than rewarding success" was one of the most important causes of conflict between the parties. The same study identified, 88.6% of the teachers who responded the questionnaire found this situation as a cause of conflict in their schools. According to the findings in both papers, it is possible to say that the administrator's use of methods of punishing failure rather than rewarding success emerges as the problems that are considered to prevent conflict in both Kazakh and Turkish society. As can be seen, educational administrators or administrators in general need to do some work to deal with this issue. When the related literature was examined the situation of "the administrator's excessive distance from teachers" has been identified as a cause of conflict between teachers and administrators in Türkiye as well [27]. Administrators stated that they perceive themselves not as colleagues or friends of teachers, but as a person in charge of teachers. When this is reflected in behavior, it was mentioned that this kind of situations may create distance between teachers and administrators [27]. Among the statements the statement about the administrator's favoritism policies was selected as one of the conflict-causing condition. As a matter of fact, the manager's favoritism towards some members of the staff might develop negative attitudes towards him/her [28]. In another study on conflict, the issue of the administrator's biased treatment of teachers was stated as a cause of conflict as well [26]. According to teachers perspective in schools of Ust-Kamenogorsk it was also concluded that the administrators' favoritism may cause conflict between the two parties. The studies concerning the statement that "the administrator always uses only written communication type of communication" showed the following findings and results: the study states that regular communication between the manager and the employee would lead to useful ideas or suggestions [29]. According to the answers given in this study, it is obvious that teachers are uncomfortable with the fact that the administrator always uses written communication. Yurdunkulu and Oktay [26] also emphasized the breakdowns in communication and inadequate communication as important findings of their study. Although official relations are carried out in writing, it is seen that written communication should not get in the way of bilateral and verbal relations and attention should be paid to the balance.

Conclusion

As identified in the study, according to the teachers' perspective, the statements that cause conflict "mostly" are categorized under 13 headings. Those are followings: "Too much paperwork", "The administrator keeps teachers under constant and tight control", "The administrator interferences in teacher's private life", "The administrator punishes failure rather than rewarding success", "Differences in perception", "The administrator is too distant from teachers", "The administrator pretends to consult teachers when he/she makes the decision", "The administrator looks down on teachers", "The administrator neglects his/her responsibilities due to professional incompetence", "The administrator's favoritism policy", "The parties have different views on the management methods", "The administrator trusts only close people to him/her at school", "The administrator always uses only written communication type".

As it's seen, it can be said that teachers mostly blame administrators for the causes of conflict. The statements with the term "administrator" is mentioned in the majority of the items selected as the subject of conflict in school. Therefore, school administrators should be good observers and make sure that communication is ensured within the school in order to minimize conflicts. They should also work to solve any conflict situations that may arise. Organizing events and activities involving stakeholders can promote unity and solidarity. Additionally, conducting a similar study in schools at different levels across other cities in Kazakhstan, using qualitative or mixed research methods, could be beneficial.

Authors` Contributions

The preparation of this paper encompasses the same level of contribution by both of the authors from the determination of the study subject to the reporting of the data.

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Мұғалімдердің көзқарасы бойынша мұғалім мен мектеп басшысы арасындағы қақтығыс себептері

Аңдатпа. Конфликт – әлеуметтік өмірді құрайтын жағдай. Конфликт пен келіспеушіліктер жеке тұлғалардың құндылықтары, наным-сенімдері, жеке қасиеттері, мақсаттары мен қабылдауындағы айырмашылықтар нәтижесінде туындауы мүмкін. Білім беру ұйымында мұғалімдер мен басшылар арасында әртүрлі себептерден пайда болған конфликт жиі кездеседі. Дегенмен, екі тарап үшін де туындаған қақтығыстарды болдырмау немесе шешу үшін ынтымақтастық, өзара әрекеттесу және бірлесіп жұмыс істеу өте маңызды.

Зерттеудің мақсаты – мұғалімдердің көзқарасы бойынша мұғалім мен мектеп басшысы арасындағы қақтығыстың себептерін анықтау. Зерттеуге Өскемен қаласының 30 мектебі, оның ішінде қала бойынша қазақ, орыс және қазақ-орыс аралас мектептері және 2019-2020 оқу жылында сол мектептерде жұмыс істеген 432 мұғалім қатысты. Деректер зерттеуге қатысқан мұғалімдер жайында «Жеке ақпарат» анкетасын және «Конфликт себебін анықтауға арналған» сауалнама қолдану арқылы жиналды. Сауалнаманың нәтижесі орташа арифметикалық және стандартты ауытқу көрсеткіштері арқылы анықталды. Зерттеудің нәтижесі мұғалімдердің пікірлері бойынша мектептердегі конфликт «көбінесе» келесі жайттардан туындайтынын көрсетті: «Қағазбастылық», «Мектеп басшыларының мұғалімдерді үздіксіз және қатаң бақылауда ұстауы», «Мектеп басшысының мұғалімнің жеке өміріне араласуы», «Мектеп басшысының жетістікті марапаттаудан гөрі сәтсіздіктерді жазалауды көбірек қолдануы», «Бір нәрсені қабылдаудағы айырмашылық», «Мектеп басшысының мұғалімдермен қарым-қатынаста шамадан тыс субординация ұстануы», «Мектеп басшысының шешімді өзі қабылдағанымен мұғалімдермен кеңескендей күй танытуы», «Мектеп басшысының мұғалімдерге жоғарыдан қарауы», «Мектеп басшысының кәсіби біліктілігінің төмен болуына байланысты өз міндеттеріне немқұрайлы қарауы», «Мектеп басшысының мұғалімдер арасынан «өз фоворитін» таңдау саясаты», «Басқару әдістеріне қатысты тараптардың әртүрлі көзқараста болуы», «Мектеп басшысының өзіне жақын адамдарға ғана сенуі», «Мектеп басшысының мұғалімдермен қарым-қатынаста тек жазбаша байланыс түрін пайдалануы». Қорытындылай айтқанда, Өскемен қаласы мектептеріндегі ахуал қанағаттанарлықсыз және бұл жайтты жою қажет деген нәтиже жасалды.

Түйін сөздер: мектептердегі конфликт, конфликт себептері, мұғалімдер мен мектеп әкімшілігі арасындағы қақтығыстар.

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Причины конфликтов между учителями и руководителями в школах с точки зрения учителей

Аннотация. Конфликт – это явление, составляющее социальную жизнь. Конфликты и разногласия могут возникать в результате различий в ценностях, убеждениях, личностных качествах, целях и восприятии людей. В образовательной организации часто возникают конфликты между учителями и руководителями по разным причинам. Однако обеим сторонам

крайне важно сотрудничать, взаимодействовать и работать вместе, чтобы предотвратить или разрешить возникшие конфликтные ситуации.

Цель исследования - попытаться определить причины конфликтов между учителями и руководителями школ с точки зрения учителей. Участниками исследования стали 30 школ города Усть-Каменогорска (Казахстан), среди них казахские, русские и казахско-русские смешанные школы включительно по всему городу, и 432 учителя, работавшие в этих школах в 2019-2020 учебном году. Сбор данных осуществлялся с помощью "Анкеты о личной информации" и "Опросника, определяющего причины конфликтов". Результаты исследования определили показания средне-арифметического и стандартного отклонения опросника. По итогам исследования выявили, что, с точки зрения учителей, к причинам, которые "в основном" вызывают конфликты в школах, относятся следующие пункты: "Бесконечная бумажная работа", "Постоянный и строгий контроль над учителем со стороны руководителя", "Вмешательство руководителя в личную жизнь учителя", "Использование руководителем больше методов наказания за неудачи, чем поощрения за успехи", "Разница в восприятии", "Равнодушное отношение руководителя", "Принятие руководителем решения без учета мнения учителя", "Высокомерное отношение руководителя", "Пренебрежение руководителем своими обязанностями из-за его профессиональной некомпетентности", "Предвзятое отношение руководителя к учителю", "Различные взгляды сторон касательно методов управления", "Доверие руководителя только близким ему/ей людям", "Использование руководителем только письменного общения". В результате был сделан вывод, что в Усть-Каменогорске сложилась неудовлетворительная школьная среда, которая требует вмешательства и коррекции.

Ключевые слова: конфликты в школах, причины конфликтов, конфликты между учителями и школьной администрацией.

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