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ASSESSMENT OF PRINCIPALS' CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ON TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OYO METROPOLIS OF OYO STATE

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Abstract
This study examined the assessment of principals' conflict management strategies on teaching and learning in senior secondary schools in Oyo Metropolis of Oyo State. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Purposive sampling technique was used to select fifty principals for the study. Questionnaire was designed to elicit information. Simple percentages and frequency counts were used to analyze three research questions. The Findings revealed that poor physical working conditions, unreasonable demands by school administration, unrealistic academic targets for students by teachers, unethical teaching practices and gap in communication are some of the common causes of conflict in secondary schools. Also, it was found that collaborating, compromising, negotiation, reinforcement and mediation are some of the strategies principals used in settling conflicts in secondary schools. The findings of this study also revealed that the effect of principal conflict management skills on teaching and learning improves teaching and learning, enhances the tone of discipline in secondary schools, it closes the gap of communication between the teachers and the principals and it enhances effective utilization of school resources. Based on the findings, the study recommended that there was the need for school principals to employ the most optimal approach in handling students' conflicts m order to forestall occurrences and that seminar or conferences should also be organized for school principals on conflict management.

Keywords: *Assessment, Principals, Conflict, Management and Skills, Strategies*

Introduction

Conflict is part and parcel of the individual, group or organization a life and the membership of any organization have to adhere to the set rules and regulations in order to overcome the tendencies to conflicts and conflict may result when two or more people possess divergent beliefs in the organization and are strongly striving to attain (Wainaina, Magoma & Mange, 2020).The causes of school conflicts are due to the existence of structural factors in the school context. Since the school set up involves the interaction of different parties ranging from the parents, learners and teachers, conflict is inevitable and is bound to interfere with the smooth operations of these institutions (Wainaina et al, 2020).Conflicts have enormous negative consequences in the lives of individuals, groups and organizations and hence the need for mitigation. Several techniques of conflict management used by organizational leadership exist. They include; avoidance style, compromise style, accommodation style, collaboration and competition leadership (Wainaina et al, 2020).

Conflict management techniques may be categorized into two groupings: intervention and non-intervention categories. In the first category of non-intervention strategies, the school principals give room for the parties involved in the conflict to resolve the conflict naturally. Such non-intervention strategies may range from bargaining, avoidance, compromising, politics, bribing, collaborative as well as the integrative problem solving strategy. In the intervention category, the school principals may intervene in looking for a solution to the conflict since they have interest in the conflict through use of force, smoothing, obedience, deterrence among many others (Wainaina et al, 2020).

Meanwhile, in the secondary school system in Nigeria today, conflict occurs from time to time. It is the art of coming into collision, clash or be in opposition with one another. It is the tension that is experienced when a group of people feel that their needs or desires are likely to be denied which may result to the state of disharmony that could be brought about by differences of impulses, desires or tendencies (Adeyemi, 2009). It is a form of disagreement between two or more parties which could also mean strife, controversy, discord of action, antagonism of interest (Adeyemi, 2009). Conflict occurs whenever incompatible activities occur. It could result from an argument with a co-worker. Researchers have distinguished two types

of conflict based on either task or affect (Adeyemi, 2009). The first type of conflict, often called cognitive conflict or task focused conflict tends to be issue-related disagreements among team members that focus on common objectives (Adeyemi, 2009). The other type of conflict known as the affect conflict or interpersonal conflict tends to be related to disagreements that come from personality clashes or emotional interactions among team members. Adeyemi (2009) described other types of conflict based on structural configuration. These include: an individual team member experiencing a conflict that results in the person's inability to perform optimally; two team members in conflict with each other, a team member experiences conflict with all of the other team members, several team members in conflict with several other team members; the entire team experiencing conflict with another team and the entire team experiencing conflict with an individual outside of the team.

According to Ugwuoke (2019), conflict occurs in public secondary schools as a result of various reasons between persons or groups which may be deliberately planned acts to prevent success in achieving secondary school goals. He also stressed that conflict is a negative situation and a process in public secondary schools. It is a negative situation in the sense that disagreements and inconveniences during interpersonal interactions are experienced in the public secondary schools. It has also been established that conflict exists when it is impossible for the interest of workers to tally with the goals of the school, or when a group of people perceives that their needs are likely to be denied (Ugwuoke, 2019). Conflict can also arise when the interest of teachers and students are denied. Conflicts that arise in public secondary schools can be intra-personal (within an individual), inter-personal (between principal and teachers, teachers and teachers, etc), inter-group (between work units or departments and so on).Conflicts are not desired and they generate failure simply because they are not managed well and therefore generate negative results (Ugwuoke, 2019).

Meanwhile, conflict is inevitable, and although it has an undertone of malice, it can be greatly beneficial if properly controlled. It may be avoided in some cases or minimized, but cannot be fully eradicated. Education is the key that unlocks potentials, the tool for development and the heart of a society. In Nigeria, secondary school

education is next school level that one secures after the completion of primary school. It is the education that ultimately leads students into special area of development, gives them maturity and prepares them for the world of work, and secondary schools. Secondary education is the ultimate and most important level for the all-inclusive achievement of educational goals in every society. The programme of secondary schools are comprehensive, and participants are awarded certificates (Kinika & Ohahuru, 2022).

Peaceful coexistence, team spirit and joint focus are basic requirements for the achievement of organizational objectives and continuous maintenance of conducive working atmosphere of the various groups of staff and management team are common characteristics of formal organizations. Schools are not exempted from the need to maintain peaceful working environment. However, just like other social and formal organizations are facing challenges of various conflicts. This is because schools comprise numerous levels of students, teachers, administrative and ad hoc staff, entrepreneurs and various service providers who have emerged from various backgrounds to work together, and each contributing to the holistic attainment of institutional goals but scholars have reported that it is the complex nature of these human beings that induces conflicts in the various institutions (Kinika & Ohahuru, 2022). It has been noted also that the complex nature of a school is such that it hosts people of diverse attitudes, temperaments, emotions, values, religions, ethnicities, sexes, socioeconomic backgrounds, family upbringings and so on. This without doubt would breed conflicts. Some of the attitudes of the students that may lead to conflicts among the students body on one hand and with the management on the other are behaviour like as examination malpractices, truancy, cultism, arrogance, violent protests and various delinquencies (Kinika & Ohahuru, 2022).

Principals, host community, government agencies, and international community, students and staff are not just born and grown in the schools, they are products of various homes, which are based in the communities that constitute the society, but are later relocated into the school community for further growth and development. Invariably, the cultures and characters they were borne and grown with usually follow them into the school system which has its own inherent problems. Besides the challenges of organizing

activities that are needful in performing her emerging roles as a model of change and innovation, it has been observed that issues like inadequate funding, examination malpractices and violent extremisms within the last two to three decades alone make it very difficult for the school to achieve her goals of quality education and meet with the global standard of contributing immensely to societal development. Low productivity is the cumulative effect of constant conflicts among the people in school community (Kinika & Ohahuru, 2022). In spite of these conflicts however, the Nigerian society still largely depends on the products of the school to proffer solutions to societal problems as well as make the most laudable contributions to its progress (Kinika & Ohahuru, 2022).

A school principal is a primary leader in a school building (Okoro, 2018). He is saddled with the responsibility of school management (Ibokwe, 2018), organization of workshops for teaching and non-teaching staff (Asuquo, 2019) and procurement of school facilities (Nwajuba, 2019). The school principals appoint a replacement for a teacher that is sick, those on leave of absence as well as teachers that did not come to school without obvious reasons (Yusuf, 2020). In the same vein, the principals take care of the school community relation with emphasis on security networking (Ikenga, 2020). Principals with good interpersonal skills are more likely to improve their ability to determine appropriate self-behaviour, cope with undesirable behaviour, absorb stress, deal with ambiguity, structure social interaction, share responsibility positively, and interact more easily with others towards the achievement of stated school goals and objectives (Nleremchi, 2018).

Wainaina, Magoma and Mange (2020) pointed that the school principal has the responsibility of constituting a positive strategy of dealing with conflicts in the school environment. For success and effectiveness of this endeavour, efforts should be taken in realizing the need of being open and assertive in order to maximize the chances of resolving the conflict in amicable parties. Wainaina et al. (2020) also identified five ideal techniques that school principals can employ in resolving the school related conflicts. They include use of force, avoidance of the conflict, compromising when conflict arises, accommodating the conflicting parties and attempting at solving the problem in the conflict.

Clifford and Ejike (2022) investigated the conflict management strategies of principals in resolving students' conflict in secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis. The descriptive survey design was employed in the study. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A population of five hundred and sixteen (516) principals in public secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis were used for the study. The sampling techniques that were used were the fluid survey sample size method, simple random and stratified random sample techniques. The sample size of three hundred and twenty principals were drawn from the population of the study. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled: Principal Conflict Management Strategies (PCMS). The statistical mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the independent t-test at 0.05 level of significance was used to test the hypotheses. The result showed that conflict management strategies of principals in resolving students' conflict did not matter as most of the handling strategies of students' conflict hinged on contingencies and nature of conflict. Educational qualification of the principals in handling students' conflicts did not play a major role since most of the respondents did not matter as most of the handling students' conflict. The researcher recommended that principals should adopt the most optimal approach in handling students' conflicts in order to forestall occurrences. Also, principals should from time to time be given a forum to share their experiences of how they handle conflicts of their teenagers or how such experiences bear in their handling of conflicts in their various schools.

Oguejiofor, Igbokwe and Amaeze (2022) also investigated the relationship between management of principals' social skills and effective school organization in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were tested and answered and tested. The study adopted a correlation research with a population of 295 principals from 295 public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. The sample size of the study is 236 principals representing 80% of the population drawn from 236 schools. The simple random sampling technique was used to arrive at the sample. Two instruments titled Management of Principals' Social Skills Scale (MPSSS) and Effective School Organization Scale (ESOS) were used for data collection. The instruments were validated using confirmatory

factor analysis. Internal consistency reliability coefficients of 0.76 and 0.71 were computed for MPSSS and ESOS respectively through Cronbach alpha. Simple regression was used to answer the research questions while t-test associated with simple regression was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. It was found that principals' conflict resolution, and interpersonal skills management are significant predictors of effective school administration. The researchers recommended that principals should develop self-control in relating with other staff. Principals' should develop positive self-relationship through the understanding their relationship strength and weakness. Finally, the principals' should have a positive interpersonal relationship with members of staff giving room for social activities one's in a week. The current study examined the assessment of principals' conflict management skills in senior secondary schools in Oyo Metropolis of Oyo State.

Ugwuoke (2019) examined the impact of principals' conflict management skills on school effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Three research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised of forty-eight principals in public secondary schools in Aguata Education Zone. Forty respondents were sampled using purposive sampling technique. Questionnaire was used for data collection. The validation of the instrument was established by two experts. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which yielded the overall coefficient value of 0.80 was considered high enough for the instrument usability. The data collected were analyzed using mean. The findings of this study showed that inadequate resources at disposal of teachers, favouritism in allocation of duties to teachers, differences in perception of goals, autocratic leadership style of principals and breakdown in communication are some of the factors responsible for generating conflict in the secondary schools. The findings of this study also showed that the principals' display of boldness and assertiveness, dialogue and discussion method, spirit of accommodation and mediation, use of negotiation and compromise, adoption of neutral stand in settling conflict are some of the conflict management skills adopted by the principals of secondary schools. The paper also discovered that improved teaching and learning, enhancement in the tone of discipline, bridging of the

communication gap, and effective utilization of school resources among others are some of the effects of the principals' conflict management skills. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the principals should evenly allocate teaching resources to the teachers, give fair and equal treatment to every staff and create room for interactive session with staff and students.

Adeyemi (2009) conducted a study on principals' management of conflicts in public secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was adopted. Also, the study population comprised all the 281 public secondary schools in the State. Out of this population, a sample of 80 schools were drawn, while 340 respondents (80 principals and 260 teachers) were selected through the stratified random sampling technique. A questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The data collected were analyzed using percentages. The findings showed that conflicts have not been effectively managed by principals of schools because of their inability to effectively utilize the strategies for resolving conflicts. Based on the findings, it was recommended that principals should inculcate the idea of setting up of committees to resolve conflicts. Principals should allow free flow of information, while communication gap should be prevented. Principals should endeavour to make use of dialogue strategy in managing conflicts in schools. They should be sensitive to students' grievances before the grievances get out of hand. This could be done by having discussions with students on pressing issues in the schools and by allowing students to participate in decision-making.

Thus, the current study examined the assessment of principals' conflict management strategies on teaching and learning in senior secondary schools in Oyo Metropolis of Oyo State.

Expectancy Theory

This study is based on Expectancy theory developed by Vroom (1964). Expectancy theory is developed on the concepts: Valence, Instrumental, and Expectancy. It explains why people such as teachers work and behave in the way they do in terms of efforts and direction they take. It also describes what organizations do to encourage people/teachers to apply their efforts and abilities to achieve desired goals as well as satisfying individual needs. Expectancy theory indicates that people constantly predict the likely future leading to expectations

about future events. It is a monetary belief concerning the likelihood that a particular act will be followed by a particular outcome (Vroom, 1964). Thus, a belief that hard work leads to quick promotion is an expectancy, which an individual can pursue to satisfy his needs.

Essence of Expectancy Theory to the Study

This theory was adopted as the framework to guide school principals' on conflict strategies in managing both human and non-human resources inthe school foreffective administration. According to Vroom, perception that effort will lead to effective performance (expectancy), that performance will lead to rewards available combined to create a strong motivation for an individual to put in effort to achieve a level of performance and obtain rewards at the end.The theory assumes that teachers will be motivated to produce only if they expect that productivity will lead to the goal they value. Increased effort by the school manager/ administrators will lead to increased performance of the teachers. This means that satisfaction from the initial effort must be efficiently great or equitable to make the effort worthwhile toward achieving school educational objectives.

Here, the principals confident in an individual and group of teachers apply to achieve a giving task, while task value implies the rate of importance the individual attaches to the task so carried out. The degree of the effect or outcome of the said action or behaviour will produce, which also affects the school organizational activities in term of teachers' job performance and eventually students' academic performance.

Statement of the Problem

There seems to be a frequent occurrence of conflicts in secondary schools in Oyo Metropolis which might: be due to the absent of no clear policy on conflict management skills used by school principals in resolving conflicts. Despite the absence of such a policy, school principals are expected to manage emerging school conflicts amicably. Observations in the school system show that issues on which conflicts occur include frequent hike in school fees, religious matters, bad mode of dressing, poor classroom space and poor services. It is against this background that this study examined the assessment of principals'

conflict management strategies on teaching and learning in senior secondary schools in Oyo Metropolis of Oyo State.

Research Questions
The study was guided by the following research questions:
I.   What are the common causes of conflict in secondary schools?
II.   What are the conflict management strategies adopted by the principals in settling conflicts?
III.   What effect does the principal management skills have on teaching and learning?

Methodology
The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Purposive sampling technique was used to select fifty respondents. This is because principals were purposely used for the study. Instrument titled "Principals' Conflict Management Skills Questionnaire, (PCMSQ)" was used for data collection. It consisted fifteen items designed to elicit information on the influence of principals' conflict management strategies on teaching and learning. The instrument was validated by two experts, one from the Department of Educational Management at University of Ibadan and the Department of Measurement and Evaluation at Lead University, Ibadan. The essence was to ensure the content and face validity of the questionnaire items. The reliability of the research instrument was determined through a measure of internal consistency of 0.76. This measure was high for the instrument to be considered reliable. Simple percentages and frequency counts were used in analyzing the data for the research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the common causes of conflict in secondary schools?
Results:
Table 1: The Common Causes of Conflict in Secondary School

S/n	Items	N	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1.	Poor physical working conditions	50	46	92.0	04	08.0
2.	Unreasonable demands by school administration	50	42	84.0	08	16.0
3.	Unrealistic academic	50	40	80.0	10	20.0

	targets for students by teachers					
4.	Breakdown in communication.	50	39	78.0	11	2.0
5.	Gap in communication	50	41	82.0	09	18.0

Results in table 1 shows that (92.0%) of the respondents agreed that poor physical working conditions are among the common causes of conflict in secondary schools while (8.0%) disagree. (80.0%) of the respondents agreed that unrealistic academic targets for students by teachers are among the common causes of conflict in secondary schools while (20.0%) disagree.

Research Question 2: What are the conflict management strategies adopted by the principals in settling conflicts?

Table 2: Conflict Management Strategies Adopted by the Principals

S/n	Items	N	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1.	Collaborating	50	39	78.0	11	22.0
2.	Compromising	50	40	80.0	10,0	20.0
3.	Reinforcement	50	42	84.0	08.0	16.0
4.	Negotiation	50	45	90.0	05.0	10.0
5	Mediation	50	36	72.0	14	28.0

Results in table 2 shows that the respondents agreed that principals adopted the following conflict management strategies such as collaborating (78.0%), compromising (80.0%), negotiation (90.0%) and mediation in settling conflicts in secondary schools.

Research Question 3: What effect does the principal conflict management skills have on teaching and learning?

Table 3: Effect of Principal Conflict Management Skills on Teaching and Learning

S/n	Items	N	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1.	Improves teaching and learning	50	45	90.0	05	10.0
2.	Enhances the tone of discipline in secondary schools	50	47	80.0	03	20.0
3.	It closes the gap of communication between the teachers and the principals	50	35	70.0	15	30.0
4.	Effective utilization of school resources	50	41	82.0	09	18.0

Results in table 3 shows that (90.0%) of the respondents agreed that principal management skills improve teaching and learning while (10.0%) disagreed. (70.0%) of the respondents agreed that principal management skills closes the gap of communication between the teachers and the principals while (30.0%) disagreed.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from research questions shows that poor physical working conditions, unreasonable demands by school administration, unrealistic academic targets for students by teachers, unethical teaching practices and gap in communication are some of the common causes of conflict in secondary schools. The findings are in line with the findings of Ugwuoke (2019) who noted that gap in communication, autocratic leadership, favouritism are some of the factors that generate conflicts in our secondary schools.

The findings of this study also revealed that collaborating, compromising, negotiation, reinforcement and mediation are some of the strategies principals used in settling conflicts in secondary schools. This finding was also in line with the findings of Adeyemi (2009) who reported that the management of conflicts in the schools was a function of the principals' level of effectiveness. The findings of this study also revealed that the effect of principal conflict management skills on teaching and learning improved teaching and learning,

enhanced the tone of discipline in secondary schools, it closed the gap of communication between the teachers and the principals and it enhanced effective utilization of school resources. Findings of Adeyemi (2009) also indicated that conflicts occurred as a result of a communication gap between management and students. This then implied that a principal with adequate conflict management skills would encourage peaceful coexistence, team spirit and joint focus in his schools.

School principals are faced with conflicts emanating from their administrative style, policy implementation, supervision of instruction, examination malpractice, illegal levies, staff posting and transfer, Parent Teachers Association (PTA) and other school based committees as well as school related issues. It is therefore necessary that school managers or administrators should be knowledgeable in the conflict management strategies. This findings is in line with Wainaina, Magoma and Mange (2020) that poor physical working conditions, unreasonable demands by school administration, unrealistic academic targets for students by teachers, unethical teaching practices and gap in communication are some of the common causes of conflict in secondary schools.

More so, findings of this study revealed that collaborating, compromising, negotiation, reinforcement and mediation were some of the strategies principals used in settling conflicts in secondary schools. The findings of this study also revealed that the effect of principal conflict management skills on teaching and learning improves teaching and learning, enhances the tone of discipline in secondary schools, it closes the gap of communication between the teachers and the principals and it enhances effective utilization of school resources. This is in line with Clifford and Ejike (2022) who recommended that principals should adopt the most optimal approach in handling students' conflicts in order to allow peaceful learning environment and forestall occurrences.

Conclusion
It has been established that the process of managing conflict involves the encouragement by the organization management the explicit interaction of knowledge types, attitude and skills that aims at effectiveness in organization operations and managing conflicts

requires negotiations among the competing groups with divergent views in attempting to find solutions to the problems affecting organizations. Basically, conflict management techniques involve the process of ensuring that total prevention of the escalation of harmful or destructive related conflict is prevented or eliminated at all costs. For this to be undertaken effectively, competent and effective conflict resolution mechanisms must be articulated through a social process that accommodates all the parties.

Recommendations
Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:
1. There is need for school principals to employ the most optimal approach in handling students' conflicts in order to forestall occurrences.
2. Seminar or conferences should be organized for school principals to enhance better understanding of conflict.
3. Principals should from time to time be given a forum to share their experiences of how they handle conflicts of their teenagers or how such experiences bear in their handling of conflicts in their various schools.
4. Principals should also inculcate the idea of setting up of committees to resolve conflicts. Such committees should be representative of all teachers and students.
5. Principals should allow free flow of information from management to students while communication gap should be prevented.

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