



Conflict resolution strategies of principals in effective management of secondary schools in Enugu urban

Hyacinth Osondu Eze¹, Odo Victor²

¹ Department of Education Foundation, Enugu State Collage of Education Technical, Enugu, Nigeria

² Department of Educational Management, Charisma University, Turks and Caicos Island

Abstract

The emphasis of this study was on principals' conflict resolution tactics for effective secondary school management in Enugu Urban. The study was led by two objectives, research questions, and hypotheses. There were 866 principals and instructors in the group. Using a basic random sampling procedure, the sample size was reduced to 471 respondents. A questionnaire devised by the researchers was utilized to collect data, and it was evaluated by two educational management experts and one expert in business education. Cronbach Alpha was used to assess the instrument's dependability, yielding a co-efficient of 0.78. The study questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using the z-test. According to the findings of the study, principals' conflict resolution tactics for effective secondary school management include avoidance and accommodation approaches. According to the study's findings, school administrators and managers should first determine the true causes and nature of the conflict among the school's full personnel before employing the conflict techniques, strategies, and approaches at their disposal. Furthermore, management should always use the best practice of a win-win plan so that no one in the conflict arena judges favoritism.

Keywords: conflict, conflict resolution strategies, and school management

Introduction

An organization is a group of people who share common beliefs, cultural origins, and traditions and work together to achieve common goals. A school is one of these organizations that is constrained by certain rules and regulations in order to maintain peace and achieve a specific set of aims and objectives. The efficiency of principals and teachers in facilitating teaching and learning processes helps the school achieve its objectives. The ability of principals and teachers to organize their job processes and professionalism in a way that allows them to perform more work and adequately produce expected results in terms of classroom teaching, classroom discipline, and supervision of students' academic activities is referred to as job effectiveness (Eric, 2015). Conflict, which is clearly associated with human relationships in any organization, may arise in the midst of these activities.

Kulo and Ambrose (2014) ^[9] defined conflict as any divergence of interests, aims, or priorities between individuals, groups, or organizations, based on the foregoing. Kulo and Ambrose went on to say that conflict is the result of opposing needs being met. This could be due to the obvious demands of instructors in a school as well as the needs of the school system. As members strive to achieve the goals and objectives of education, conflict arises between members (students, staff, management, and the community) and across the organization, resulting in student/student conflict, student/staff conflict, staff/staff conflict, principal/staff conflict, and school/community conflict. Conflicts are triggered by a variety of factors that cause interpersonal tensions.

Conflict, according to Corvette (2007) ^[3], exists anywhere and whenever cognitions or emotions are incompatible within or between humans. Furthermore, conflict occurs in personal relationships, companies, groups, and nations. Conflict, according to Asiegbu and Egboka (2013) ^[1], is a mutual animosity in inter-human relationships. Insults, name-calling, putting oneself in another's shoes, sarcasm, false accusations, withdrawal of affection and support, unpaid salary, abrupt transfer, termination, demotion, boycott of classes, open violence, and distrust are all examples of mutual animosity. These appear to be quite common in secondary schools. As a result, when improperly handled, it has an impact on the school's goals by causing tension, hostility, and other unwanted factors. Sompa (2015) ^[16] stated that some secondary school conflicts arise as a result of a lack of effective diagnosis, resulting in a crisis that is not understood or addressed properly. As a result, it must be well-managed in order to foster a healthy organizational climate, which is critical for successful learning and performance of responsibilities.

As a result, conflict resolution is the process or method of facilitating interpersonal dialogue in order for conflicting parties to lessen their differences in ideas and viewpoints through arbitration, bargaining, and negotiation (Bannon & Paul, 2003) ^[2]. All forms and types of disputes are reduced, eliminated, or terminated as part of the resolution process. As a result, phrases like negotiation, bargaining, mediation, and arbitration are

commonly used in conflict resolution. In other words, it's a strategy for achieving a favorable or at least acceptable result. Principals and teachers play a role in dispute resolution and management in the school system, particularly when it comes to concerns of student discipline and control. The extent to which a conflict is resolved is determined by how the parties to the conflict perceive their negotiated wins and losses throughout the projected generally equitable bargaining process (Odigwe, 2014) ^[12]. As a result, when conflict arises in the classroom, it necessitates conflict resolution, which can be accomplished tastefully through conciliation, competitiveness, conceding, cooperation, avoidance, and forcing techniques.

The administrator withdraws or waits and sees as a dispute resolution approach in the hopes that it will not be disruptive or that the matter will resolve itself in due time. It is characterized by inactivity and inaction, and it permits things to spiral out of control (Ike, 2012) ^[7]. In this strategy, the parties' interests are usually not addressed, and the interpersonal relationship is usually not maintained. According to Ogonda (2011), this technique could include tactfully sidetracking an issue, deferring an issue, or just departing from a potentially dangerous scenario. This is a leave-lose/win strategy in which one party takes a leave-lose posture toward dispute resolution, allowing the other parties to win. Avoiding or withdrawing from a confrontation, according to Ogonda, takes no guts or consideration for the other party. You are effectively pretending that the disagreement never happened or does not exist by ignoring it. This avoidance style can be a very useful, constructive resolution tool in the effective management of school between the principal and teacher when words may become so heated that avoiding one another for a period of time could lead to a reduction in the intensity of the conflict; and by avoiding one another, the individuals involved could think more clearly and possibly come together in a more friendly way after their feelings have settled down. If managed appropriately by school administrators, embracing avoidance as a technique of dispute resolution can be an active method of team building, providing a common identity and a sense of togetherness amongst staff, according to Lorna (2014) ^[10].

Accommodation is a yield-lose/win dispute resolution approach in which one party yields to the other party (or parties) in order to safeguard and sustain the relationship. The accommodating approach to conflict entails preserving interpersonal relationships at all costs, with little or no regard for the parties' interests. Giving in, accommodating, and avoiding disagreement are all seen as measures to keep partnerships safe. It refers to a managerial style in which executives put others' needs ahead of their own. The administrators aim to absorb conflict by minimizing differences with other parties in an accommodating way. The administrator is reticent to convey his thoughts, feelings, and opinions. It emphasizes shared interests while also bringing frank acknowledgement of actual or imagined disagreements to its nadir. However, this is a temporary type of conflict resolution in which an administrator tries to buy time while seeking cooperation in the school (Crossfield & Bourne, 2018) ^[4]. According to Kembukem (2014) ^[8], an accommodation technique can be utilized when someone is prepared to make a compromise in exchange for something. This style is related with a desire to minimize differences while promoting harmony in order to alleviate the other party's concern. This style has a sense of self-sacrifice to it. When relationships are more important than issues and staff encouragement is needed, the accommodating or accommodating style is adopted. Making excuses, being silent, gentle language, a hesitant tone of speech, and following the views of the other party are all methods utilized by obliging styles. As a result, because schools operate in a competitive environment marked by competing interests among principals and teachers, as well as between teachers and students, having a good understanding of when to use an accommodation strategy in a conflict situation in the school environment to avoid an impending disruption can help to promote effective school management. According to Gankar (2012) ^[6], this method is critical in the effective management of organizations, particularly schools, since it leads to the discovery of the root of conflict, which allows for the development of a solution that is acceptable to all parties involved (administrators and teachers, teachers and students, etc).

According to the experts, studies concentrating on disputes reveal that working with people in an organization entails dealing with a wide range of issues. The results of disagreement between teachers and school leaders have been regretful, just as they have been for corporations. The involvement of school leaders in conflict management and resolution, on the other hand, is critical to effective and efficient school management (Ramani & Zhimin, 2010) ^[14]. Because conflict is inevitable in each company, management must deal with it intelligently in order to maximize its benefits while minimizing its negative implications. Understanding the core causes of conflicts is therefore essential for developing an effective approach to conflict management.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to look into principals' conflict resolution tactics for effective secondary school management in Enugu State. The study's objectives were to:

1. Determine the contribution of avoidance as a conflict resolution approach to effective secondary school management in Enugu State.
2. Determine the contribution of accommodation as a dispute resolution method to effective secondary school management in Enugu State.

Research Questions

The following questions were posed for the study during the course of the research:

1. How does avoidance as a dispute resolution approach affect effective secondary school management in Enugu State?

2. How does accommodation as a conflict resolution method affect effective secondary school management in Enugu State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were developed and evaluated at a significance level of 0.05:

1. There is no significant difference in principals' and teachers' responses to how avoidance as a dispute resolution approach affects effective secondary school management in Enugu State.
2. There is no significant difference in principals' and teachers' responses to how accommodation as a dispute resolution method affects effective secondary school management in Enugu State.

Method

This study used a correlational research approach and was conducted in Enugu State. The study's population consists of 733 respondents, 47 of whom are principals and 686 of whom are teachers from Enugu's 29 senior secondary schools in the Enugu North, Enugu South and Enugu East Local Government Areas. The researcher used a simple random sampling procedure to select 482 respondents (47 principals and 435 instructors), which represents 55 percent of the entire population. A 10-item structured questionnaire served as the data gathering tool. The survey was divided into four sections: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) (SD). Two specialists, one in Business Education and the other in Educational Management, validated the instrument. The instrument's dependability was determined using Cronbach Alpha, which yielded a co-efficient of 0.78. The researchers circulated and collected copies of the questionnaire. The data was analyzed using the mean and standard deviation, and the hypotheses were tested using the z-test at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: *How does avoidance as a dispute resolution approach affect effective secondary school management in Enugu State?*

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Extent Avoidance as Conflict Resolution Strategy Influences Effective Management of Schools.

s/n	Item	Principals (N=47)			Teachers (N=435)		
		X	SD	RMKS	X	SD	RMKS
1.	Conflicting staff matters were set-aside due to pressing administrative and Academic issues.	3.76	0.80	Agree	3.46	0.84	Agree
2.	Students are afraid of pursuing a matter against the school authority but instead Seek for leniency.	3.40	0.87	Agree	3.50	0.85	Agree
3.	Staff and students are encouraged to ignore the conflicting issues for peace to be in the school.	3.66	0.64	Agree	3.64	0.66	Agree
4.	Students do not forgo their conflicts to avoid immediate sanctions by the school authority.	1.59	0.71	Disagree	1.91	0.77	Disagree
5.	Employed by principals and teachers when words may become so heated.	3.47	0.80	Agree	3.39	0.88	Agree
Grand Mean and SD		2.95	0.68		2.96	0.74	
Source: Field Survey (2021)				Agree			Agree

The data presented in table 1 showed the responses of Principals with a mean score of 3.75, 3.40, 3.57, 1.49 and 3.42, while Teachers' responses revealed the mean score of 3.44, 3.53, 3.55, 1.92 and 3.34 respectively. The table also revealed average grand mean of 2.95 and standard deviation of 0.68 for Principals and 2.96 with standard deviation of 0.74 for teachers which indicated that the respondents accepted to majority of the items as how avoidance as conflict resolution strategy contributes to effective management of secondary schools.

Research Question 2: *How does accommodation as a conflict resolution method affect effective secondary school management in Enugu State?*

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Extent Accommodation as Conflict Resolution Strategy Influences Effective Management of Schools.

sn	Item	Principals (N=47)			Teachers (N=435)		
		X	SD	RMKS	X	SD	RMKS
6.	Employed when staff and students are willing to make a concession	3.44	0.84	Agree	3.45	0.97	Agree

	with the hope of getting something in return.							
7.	Leads to the identification of the source of the conflict between staff and students.	3.69	0.74	Agree	3.63	0.89	Agree	
8.	This style is associated with an endeavor to play down the differences and emphasizing harmony to satisfy the concern of the other party.	3.63	0.87	Agree	3.47	0.90	Agree	
9.	Creates better results and higher commitment between staff and students.	3.53	0.78	Agree	3.45	0.86	Agree	
10	Administrators ignore self-interest by satisfying others' concerns.	3.61	0.78	Agree	3.51	0.84	Agree	
	Grand Mean and SD	3.30	0.70	Agree	3.22	0.77	Agree	

Source: Field Survey (2021)

The data presented in table 2 the Principals responses demonstrated the mean score of 3.44, 3.57, 3.60, 3.54 and 3.60 while Teachers' responses showed a mean score of 3.42, 3.59, 3.41, 3.44 and 3.53. The table indicated an average grand mean of 3.30 and standard deviation of 0.70 for Principals and 3.22 and standard deviation of 0.77 for Teachers' which indicated that the respondents accepted of the items as how accommodation as conflict resolution strategy contributes to effective management of secondary schools.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in principals' and teachers' responses to how avoidance as a dispute resolution approach affects effective secondary school management in Enugu State.

Table 3: z-test Analysis of the Mean Responses of Principals and Teachers' on how Avoidance as a Conflict Resolution Strategy Influences Effective Management of Secondary Schools.

Respondents	N	X	SD	Alpha	DF	Z-cal	Z-crit	Decision
Principals	47	2.87	0.63					
				0.05	469	0.98	1.96	Not Rejected
Teachers	435	2.82	0.75					

Z-cal (z-calculated), z-crit (z-critical).

The result of table 3 indicated that the z-calculated value of 0.98 was less than the z-critical value of 1.96 at 469 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in principals' and teachers' responses to how avoidance as a dispute resolution approach affects effective secondary school management in Enugu State was accepted.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in principals' and teachers' responses to how accommodation as a dispute resolution method affects effective secondary school management in Enugu State.

Table 4: z-test Analysis of the Mean Responses of Principals and Teachers' on how Accommodation as a Conflict Resolution Strategy Influences Effective Management of Secondary Schools.

Respondents	N	X	SD	Alpha	DF	Z-cal	Z-crit	Decision
Principals	47	3.34	0.70					
				0.05	469	0.19	1.96	Not Rejected
Teachers	435	3.37	0.77					

Z-cal (z-calculated), z-crit (z-critical).

The result on table 4 indicated that the z-calculated value (0.19) was less than the z-critical (1.96) at the degree of freedom 469 and 0.05 significant levels. Hence, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in principals' and teachers' responses to how accommodation as a dispute resolution method affects effective secondary school management in Enugu State was accepted.

Discussion of Findings

According to the findings of this study, secondary school principals and teachers agree that the avoidance method adds to effective school management. Avoidance style, according to Ogonda (2011), is a very useful and constructive resolution tool in the effective management of school between the principal and teacher when words may become so heated that a period of avoiding one another could lead to reducing the intensity of the conflict; and by avoiding one another, the individuals involved could think more clearly and possibly come together in a more friendly way after their feelings have settled down. In this scenario, the avoidance process is beneficial to team building. It was a shared denominator that helped employees be more successful, improve their relationships with management, and provide support for individual members during times of unrest. If managed appropriately by school administrators, embracing avoidance as a technique of dispute resolution can be an active method of team building, providing a common identity and a sense of togetherness amongst staff,

according to Lorna (2014). Moriarty (2013) asserts that the purpose of utilizing avoidance is to postpone, which is in line with the preceding assertion. When there are concerns of low importance, to alleviate tensions, or to purchase time, this technique is ideal.

Avoidance is also suitable when you are in a low-power position and have little control over the situation, when you need to delegate conflict resolution to others, or when the problem is a symptom of a larger problem that needs attention. Overuse of the avoidance approach in school administration, according to Moriarty, can result in a lack of involvement, decision-making, and allowing issues to fester, resulting in a breakdown in communication between administrators and teachers. Schuler (2014) outlined techniques for transforming dysfunctional conflict into functional conflict. According to Schuler, too many businesses have a win-lose, competitive approach to dispute or, at the very least, avoid it entirely. A negative attitude toward conflict ensures that a group will be unproductive and that its activities will be detrimental. Schuler went on to say that the avoidance strategy is used in conflict resolution when the issue is minor in comparison to other more pressing concerns, when there is no way of settling or resolving the issue, when one party has less power than the other, and when the risk of confrontation outweighs the benefits of resolution.

The findings of this survey also demonstrated that secondary school principals and teachers think that an accommodating attitude leads to effective school management. According to Vigil-King (2000), teams who use an accommodation technique to manage conflict are more likely to achieve better results and have more commitment than teams that use a non-integrative approach. As a result, because schools operate in a competitive environment marked by competing interests among principals and teachers, as well as between teachers and students, having a good understanding of when to use an accommodation strategy in a conflict situation in the school environment to avoid an impending disruption can help to promote effective school management. According to Gankar (2012) [6], this method is critical in the effective management of organizations, particularly schools, since it leads to the discovery of the root of conflict, which allows for the development of a solution that is acceptable to all parties involved (administrators and teachers, teachers and students, etc). In addition, according to Gankar, the accommodation approach has evolved into a method for resolving conflict that prioritizes the absorption of competing parties' views about the conflict in order to facilitate the respect of conflicting parties' interests while resolving the conflict. The accommodating approach to conflict involves preserving interpersonal relationships at all costs, with little or no regard for the interests of the parties involved; however, it is a temporary style of conflict management in which a principal attempts to buy time while seeking cooperation in the school (Crossfield & Bourne, 2018) [4]. This style is marked by mutual disagreements, yet conflict is sometimes seen as normal and healthy, and accommodation as a conflict resolution method necessitates open confrontation combined with a goal-oriented search for a consensual solution to the problem.

Conclusion

The researchers concluded that principals and teachers use avoidance and accommodation techniques for effective conflict management in secondary schools, and that these strategies have consequences for internal school management, based on the study's findings and discussion. As a result, the resolution is based on the use of an appropriate conflict resolution technique based on the nature of the conflicts and the conditions surrounding the conflict scenario.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made based on the results obtained:

1. Before using the various conflict approaches, strategies, and methods at their disposal, school managers/administrators should identify the actual causes and nature of the conflict among the entire school staff.
2. Management should constantly use the best practice of a win-win approach so that no one in the conflict arena can accuse them of favoritism.
3. Regardless of the nature of the study's findings, the Schools Board should hold monthly workshops, seminars, conferences, and orientation programs for principals and teachers on kids' conflict resolution techniques. This is necessary to strengthen these educators' knowledge, particularly in regards to new concepts and innovations in the management of student conflicts in schools.

References

1. Asiegbu R, Egboka M. Assessment of conflict management and resolution in public secondary schools in Kenya: A case study of Nyakach District. *Educational Research*,2013;2(4):1074-1088
2. Bannon I, Paul C. (Eds.). *Natural Resources and Violent Conflict: Options and Actions*. Washington, D.C: Rebok Press, 2003.
3. Corvete BC. *An investigation of conflict resolution in educational organizations*. New York: Tuxedo, 2007.
4. Crossfield D, Bourne PA. Management of interpersonal conflict between principals and teachers in selected secondary schools in Bermuda. *Insights Anthropol*,2018;2(1):90-104.
5. Eric S. Understanding the Integrative Approach to Conflict Management. *Conflict Management*,2015;(1):1-3.
6. Gankar S. *Personnel management*. Mumbai: Himalaya Publishers, 2012.

7. Ike MN. Conflict Resolution: A way Forward for Peace in the Society. Onitsha: West and Solomon Publishing Coy. Ltd,2012:631-639.
8. Kembukem E. The changing trends in workers demographics: A review of X, Y, and Z generations in the corporate world. Global Scientific Journal,2014:6(10):424-446
9. Kulo N, Ambrose DJ. Teaching conflict management skills in schools: Prerequisite for peace and achievement of millennium development goals in Kenya. Nairobi: Government printer. Laurence Enbaum, Associate Publishers Mahwah, 2014.
10. Lorna A. Organizational behaviour. New York: McGraw-Hill/Irwin, 2014.
11. Moriarty A. Reducing marketing's conflict with other functions: The differential effects of integrating mechanisms. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,2013:28(4):42-52.
12. Odigwe CO. Administrators' conflict resolution practices and secondary school teachers' attitude to work in Biase Local Government Area of Cross River State. Unpublished B.Ed. Research Project Submitted to the Department of Educational Administration and Planning, University of Calabar, 2014.
13. Ogonda GN. Principles of personnel management. Lagos: Fadec Publishers, 2011.
14. Ramani V, Zhimin BA. Conflict Resolution Strategies of Nigerian Secondary Schools' Administrators for Peace and Economic Development. African Education Indices,2010:7(1):1-6.
15. Schuler G. Management and organizational behavior (10th ed.). UK: Pearson, 2014.
16. Sompa M. Conflict in Schools: Its Causes & Management Strategies. London: Harrp, 2015.
17. Vigil-King A. Interpersonal relationships: Conflict resolution and management. Pretoria: University of South Africa.