

Effectiveness of interpersonal conflict management strategies in senior secondary schools of Bauchi state, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examines the effectiveness of conflict management strategies in senior secondary schools in Bauchi state. Descriptive research design was used to study Bauchi education zone. The population of the study was 89 principals from which the sample of 30 principals were selected. Questionnaire was the adapted to collect the opinion of the respondents. Mean and standard deviation were used in the analysis of the data. The result of the study revealed that principals often used domination, avoidance, collaboration and compromise conflict management strategies, but principals do not frequently use accommodation conflict management strategy. The study also revealed that the entire conflict management strategies are effective but accommodation conflict management strategy is the most effective. The study concluded that conflict is inevitable in schools, and the selection of appropriate conflict management strategy is prerequisite to effectiveness of these conflict management strategies because each of the conflict management strategy has advantages and disadvantages therefore principals need to have knowledge and experience of conflict management. Therefore, the study recommends that principal should use appropriate conflict management strategy in conflict management and principal should adopt accommodation conflict management strategy in conflict management because it very effective among others.

Keywords: Accommodation, avoidance, collaboration, conflict management strategies, domination,

1. Introduction

Education system is an organisation made up of people with diverse views attributes and opinions brought together with the intention to provide the educational needs of the society. One of the ultimate aims of education is to strengthen the individuals and the society's problem-solving capacity and ability so that people can solve different problems using education. Education lies at the heart of social and economic

development. It has the power to reduce poverty, improve health, and promote democracy. Secondary education is the education which children receive after primary or basic education and before the tertiary level. Its broad goals include the preparation of the child for useful living within the society and for tertiary education (Mbah, Oluka, & Alio, 2021). In order to gain these benefits from education the role of principals' is highly significant in

managing conflict generating practices in education (schools) (Steyn et al, 2003). Principals are the educational leaders and managers of secondary schools.

Interpersonal conflict is an inevitable consequence of human interaction. Schools are not immune to this and it can have deleterious impacts on the environment and on school success (Sompa, 2015; Kalagbor and Nnokam, 2015). Devon Paul (2018) argued that out of all the conflicts that might exist in a school, those between principals and teachers can be the most debilitating. Interpersonal conflict between principals and teachers, can severely damage school climate, erode a good school culture, and eventually affect student achievement (Devon & Paul, 2018).

Conflict management can be considered as the process of removing barriers to something for agreement. According to Rahim (2018), conflict management is a process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing its positive aspects. The aim of conflict management in school is to enhance learning and group outcomes, including effectiveness or performance in an organizational setting (Rahim, 2018).

Ignace (2014) and Olaleye & Arogundade (2013) argued that different management strategies may lead to either desirable or undesirable outcomes depending on their effectiveness or ineffectiveness, respectively. Effective management strategy may result in desirable outcome such as smooth management, enhanced discipline, and effective management of time, team spirit, and effective use of resources, achievement of goals, good relationships and great value by stakeholders. However, when ineffective management strategy is used, undesirable outcomes such as strikes, demonstrations, destruction of property, poor performance, emotional stress, and misallocation of resources, absence and frustration may occur.

Teachers shoulder the responsibility of shaping the future of the nation, by providing quality and relevant skill and education, thus the future of the nation depends upon the skills and efficiency of the teachers. A committed teacher is focused and more involved in her/his profession. At times, it is presumed that teachers are committed and devoted to their profession. Due to high demand for quality education, society needs such teachers who can make education vibrant and productive. However, schools are characterized by social conflicts which include interpersonal conflict among teachers. Teachers interpersonal conflict in school, can severely damage school climate, erode a good school culture, and eventually affect student achievement. Meanwhile, School principals are judged with the responsibility of maintaining stability in order to achieve educational goals, they are the key cornerstone in the arch of school management and have the steering wheel in their hands. Therefore, principals employ different conflict management strategies in managing interpersonal conflict among teachers. Furthermore, it has been observed that, most of the schools in Bauchi State are characterized by teachers' interpersonal conflicts especially between teachers and principals. Therefore, in view of this, the study committed to investigate the effectiveness of principals' different interpersonal conflict management strategies in senior secondary schools in Bauchi education zone, Bauchi State, Nigeria. The purpose of the study is to determine how often Principals use interpersonal conflict management strategies and the its effectiveness in Senior Secondary School in Bauchi state.

2. Literature Review

Dual Concern Theory

Conflict theory seeks to scientifically explain the general contours of conflict in society: how conflict starts and varies, and the effects it brings. Conflict theory is used

in this study as a guide on how conflicts should be settled, resolved, transformed or managed and also how the primary goal of reaching an agreement, restoring harmony to an organization or relationship and improving the parties' ability to face challenges together in the future. (Peterson, 2015; Rahim 2018).

The main alternatives conflict management approaches are two-dimensional in nature (Rahim,2018). Argues that dual concern theory is appropriate for understanding and handling conflict management strategies. Therefore, dual concern theory is used in this study, according to Osabiya, (2015) dual concern theory was developed by Pruitt and Rubin in 1986. The theory states that, conflict management is function of high or low concern for self, combine with high or low concern for others. According to the theory, high concern for self and low concern for others, preference for forcing (domination), focused on imposing one's will on others. Forcing involves threats and bluffs persuasive argument and positional commitments. Low concern for self and high concern for others results in a preference for accommodation, which is oriented towards accepting and incorporating others' will and involves unilateral concessions, unconditional promises, and offering help. Low concern for self and others, result a preference for avoidance. Which involve reducing the importance of the issues, and attempts to suppress thinking about the issues. High concern for self and others produces preference for collaboration, which oriented towards agreement that satisfies both own and others, aspirations as much as possible. Both concern for self and concern for others contributes a small amount of variance to the choice compromise.

3. Methodology

Research Design: Descriptive survey design was used for the purpose of this study, in which the researchers collected data from school principals with the

intention of explaining effectiveness of conflict management strategies in senior secondary schools.

Area of the Study: The area of the study is Bauchi Education Zone which is located in Bauchi State, North –Eastern Nigeria.

Population and Sample of the Study: the population of the study is 89 principals while total number of 30 principals were sampled by using Simple random sampling technique.

Instrument for Data Collection: The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled: Principal' Interpersonal Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (PICMS) adapted from Muindi (2016). The research instrument was also trial tested in Darazo education zone which is out of area of the research. This was done by the researchers where teachers were asked to explain their opinion in their schools and submit in the moment. Cronbach's Alpha, was used as reliability estimator of internal consistency of research instrument. The result reliability of the instruments revealed that the instrument has the requirement for being acceptable for research assessment as it obtained the average of 0.81 Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value which is good reliability. Mean and Standard Deviation were used in data analysis are used in data analysis, the decision rule of 3.0 was used therefore an item with mean score of 3.0 and above are considered as agree while items with mean score below 3.0 are considered as disagree.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Descriptive Results – How often conflict management strategies are used

Items	Mean	S.D	Remark
Domination Conflict Management Strategy.	4.31	1.55	Often
Accommodation Conflict Management Strategy	2.90	.882	Rarely
Avoidance Conflict Management Strategy	4.06	.935	Often
Collaboration Conflict Management Strategy	3.17	.897	Often
Compromise Conflict Management Strategy	3.73	.928	Often

The result presented in Table 1 above reveals that domination, avoidance, collaboration and compromise conflict management strategies are commonly used by principals while accommodation conflict management strategy is rarely used.

Table 2: Descriptive Results – Effectiveness of conflict management strategies

Items	Mean	S.D	Remark
Domination Conflict Management Strategy.	3.01	.558	Effective
Accommodation Conflict Management Strategy	4.55	.582	Effective
Avoidance Conflict Management Strategy	3.16	.435	Effective
Collaboration Conflict Management Strategy	3.97	.538	Effective

Compromise Conflict Management Strategy 3.53 .428 Effective

Source: Field work 2022

The result presented in Table 2 above reveals that the entire conflict management strategies are effective as accommodation conflict management strategy is the most effective. The mean score ranges from 3.16 to 4.55.

4. Discussion of Findings

The result presented of this study reveals that principals often use domination, avoidance, collaboration and compromise conflict management strategies, but the rarely use accommodation conflict management strategy. Furthermore, the study revealed that the entire conflict management strategies are effective but accommodation conflict management strategy is the most effective.

These findings are supported by scholars like Rahim, (2012) who explain that accommodating management strategy is an appealing strategy of emphasizing on areas of agreement while avoiding points of disagreement, it is implemented in an organization so as to keep harmony and avoid outwardly conflictive situations ensuring undisturbed performance, and it works when the issues are more important than the personal positions and aspirations of the parties involved. Robbins, (2015) also argues that Avoiding strategy is useful when a party fails to satisfy his or her own concern as well as the concern of the other party therefore. In addition, Ahmad and Marinah (2013), they stated that the Collaboration Conflict Management Strategy plays a major role in enhancing commitment towards the organization. Somech (2019) explains that in Collaboration Conflict Management Strategy is a cooperative team more often sees an issue as a common problem that needs to be `dealt with thus

minimizing conflict. Dobkin and Pace (2016) argue that compromising style can boost commitment among employees as it encourages the employees to work together to manage conflict among them.

However, these findings contradict finding of some scholars like Sammy, (2016) who argues that Avoiding conflict management strategy is effective in the short term, but it fails to provide a permanent long-term solution to the undying conflict and conflict reappears again in another form. Furthermore, these findings contradict that of Mwikali (2016), Fiore, (2019) and Duke, (2019) who argue that dominating conflict management strategy leaves hard feelings because people dislike having others' views imposed on them. Conflict resolved by force may develop again and haunt the enforcer at a later date. one party wins as superior skills and outright domination allows her desire to be forced on other. These findings of the study also contradict that of Montoya-Weiss, Massey & Song (2011) and Sammy (2016) who found that using avoiding conflict management style hurt relationship in a team. People usually let the conflict be lessened while time goes on. In fact, avoiding the problem does not make it go away, but make it worse.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conflict a necessary part of all the organizations especially educational institutions. There are different types of conflicts among which interpersonal conflict is the worst. On another hand there are five conflict management strategies each of them has advantages as well as disadvantages depending of people who are involved in the conflict and situation. Therefore, the study concludes that principals' knowledge and experience of conflict management help in selection of

appropriate conflict management strategies thus, improve effectiveness of the conflict management strategies.

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are made:

- i. principal should use appropriate conflict management strategy in conflict management because each conflict it has advantages and disadvantages depending on the current situation
- ii. principal should adopt accommodation conflict management strategy in conflict management because it very effective.
- iii. Government should organize regular workshops, seminars, conferences and orientation programmers for principals and teachers on students' conflict management strategies. This is appropriate to improve these educators' knowledge, particularly the emerging ideas and innovations concerning students' conflicts management in schools

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