

Conflict Management Strategies and Teachers' Job Effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the relationship between conflict management strategies and teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The ex-post facto research design was adopted for this study. The study adopted a sample size of 373 teachers, 152 males and 221 females, representing approximately 30% of the total population of 1,235 teachers in the study area. The study adopted a multi-stage sampling technique in selecting the sample from the target population to ensure adequate representation of male and female teachers. The researcher's structured instruments were used to collect data for the study. The instruments were titled "Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (CMSQ) and Teachers' Job Effectiveness Questionnaire" (TJEQ). The instruments consisted of 15 items structured on a 4-point modified Likert scale and was designed to measure principals' conflict management strategies and teachers' job effectiveness. To establish the content validity of the instruments, they were presented to three experts, one in the field of study and two in Test and Measurement their opinions were used. To ascertain the internal consistency of the instruments, the Cronbach Alpha was used to establish their reliability. The procedure produced coefficient from 0.74 to 0.84. Pearson's product-moment correlation statistics was used to analyse data at .05 level of significance. Findings show that arbitration, dialogue, effective communication strategies were all found to be significantly related to teachers' job effectiveness in Uyo LGA, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Based on these findings, it was recommended that, the State government should ensure that school principals are regularly retrained through school-based workshops, conferences, and seminars on effective conflict management strategies.

Keywords: Teachers' Effectiveness, Conflict Management, Job Performance, Public Secondary Schools, Uyo Local Government Area.

Introduction

The educational landscape in Nigeria, particularly in Akwa Ibom State, is faced with challenges that have seriously affected teachers' effectiveness and overall school performance negatively or positively. Therefore, conflicts in schools stands out as a critical factor influencing teachers' ability to perform their duties effectively. According to Grammatikopoulos (2022), conflict is part of everyday organisational life and cannot be eliminated in schools. Furthermore, conflict in school settings may stem from structural issues, leadership styles, communication breakdowns, and competition for limited resources, underscoring the idea that no school organisation can be entirely conflict-free (Sandoval Araujo, 2024). In Uyo Local Government Area, like many educational zones in Nigeria, the management of interpersonal and institutional disputes directly correlates with teachers' job satisfaction, motivation, and professional output. The school is a social organisation that is made up of people such as teachers, students, parents and the general public. Each of these individuals interacts with each other in the process of making decisions and implementing school programmes. Sometimes, in the process of

interacting with each other, disagreement may occur. Teachers play a pivotal role in the realization of educational objectives and implementation of academic programs, and occupying the central position in the implementation of education curriculum.

Within the school environment, conflict arises from the interactions among students, staff, management and the community. As members strive to achieve the goals and objectives of education, conflicts may arise, resulting in student-student conflict, student-staff conflict, staff-staff conflict, principal-staff conflict and school-community conflict. In secondary schools, like every other organization, variables such as principals' leadership styles, principals' staff management strategies and principals' conflict management strategies may be potential causes of conflict among stakeholders (Momoh & Marchie, 2023; Iqbal, Saleem & Mustafa, 2023). Bartol and Martine (as cited in Uchendu & Odigwe, 2024) maintain that poor recognition of teachers' autonomy, lack of objectivity, inadequate flow of information and differing perceptions of issues of interest are causative agents of school-based conflict. Teaching effectiveness is emphasized because the importance of teachers cannot be overemphasized. The National Policy on Education emphasizes teacher job effectiveness by stating that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Lack of appreciation for teachers may lead to increased student loitering, increased noise-making in classroom, poor evaluation of students and late submission of assessment scores to relevant authority. Different factors often lead to poor teachers' job effectiveness and these include ineffective principals' conflict management strategies. Notably, ineffective conflict management often escalates tensions and undermines school goals emphasizing the need for skilled leadership and strategic resolution approaches in educational settings (Iyaye et al., 2022).

However, if such conflicts are not resolved amicably, can disrupt the school system and may lead to poor teachers' job effectiveness. Only joyful and emotionally satisfied teachers show a positive attitude that helps improve students' academic success and the achievement of school goals. Conflict management, therefore, entails putting in place strategic plan in managing conflict through addressing the root causes of such conflict, with a clear resolution plan that is acceptable to conflicting parties. Conflict management focuses on identifying and addressing the root causes of dispute to foster effective resolution and improve organizational harmony (Idrisu, Abdulai, & Abdulai, 2024). Strategies for conflict management refers to the internal mechanisms that enable various authorities to identify the root of causes in order to resolve conflict in a way that is acceptable to all parties involved (Adeyemi and Ademilua, 2022). Thus, when conflicts are successfully resolved, it fosters a harmonious working environment that abhors disunity among teachers and other staff. This study therefore is concerned about principals' conflict management strategies as it relates to teachers' job effectiveness.

Research in Akwa Ibom State finds that when secondary school Principals apply effective conflict resolution strategies such as identifying causes and integrating conflicting parties' views, teachers' job effectiveness in areas like classroom instruction, discipline, and students' supervision improves significantly (Akwa Ibom State Secondary Education Board, 2015; Edet et al 2017). This study adopted and investigated arbitration, dialogue and effective communication as conflict management strategies in relation to teachers' job effectiveness. Arbitration, as a conflict resolution strategy, involves a neutral third party (the arbitrator) making a binding decision on a dispute after hearing arguments and evidence from all parties involved. Bekong & Agbor (2023) posits that Principals' use of arbitration as a conflict management strategy positively affects teachers' job effectiveness, suggesting that arbitration contributes to clearer identification and resolution of conflicts within school organizations. Dialogue strategy in conflict management is a communication-based strategy that involves parties actively listening to each other, understanding different perspectives, and working

towards a shared understanding to resolve disagreements. It focuses on building relationships, reducing misunderstandings, and finding common ground for a constructive outcome. Edo and Omunakwe (2021), drawing on the work of Ramani and Zhimin (2010), noted that effective conflict resolution by school Principals depends largely on appropriate strategies such as communication, mediation, and negotiation. Effective communication in conflict resolution involves actively listening, understanding different perspectives, and expressing oneself clearly and assertively. It also includes finding common ground, using "I" statements, and focusing on the problem rather than on person. Empathy, collaboration, in some cases, third-party facilitation can further enhance the conflict resolution progress.

Problems relating to teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State have become a matter of significant concern. Challenges such as weak discipline and ineffective school administration continue to affect secondary education in Akwa Ibom State (Umoetuk et al., 2023). Despite efforts by government to improve take-home pay of teachers and professional development of school principals, teachers' job effectiveness remains poor. Lack of effectiveness among teachers promotes loitering during classes and poor co-ordination of co-curricular activities (Mastrokoukou et al, 2022). It leads to poor academic performance noticeable in students' internal and external examinations. It is in the light of this background that this study attempts to investigate the relationship between Principals' conflict management strategies and teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Uyo, LGA, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

Conflict is imminent in organizations, and public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area is no exception. In educational settings, teachers often engage with students, colleagues, parents, and school administrators, thereby, creating avenues for disagreements. Research conducted in the area indicates that the administrative effectiveness of principals is significantly influenced by their personal conflict management strategies such as communication, mediation, dialogue, negotiation, and collaboration. When conflicts are addressed with inappropriate strategies, they may lead to an unhealthy school climate and students' poor academic performance. Indeed, teachers' job effectiveness, encompassing students' discipline, classroom instruction, and curriculum implementation which are fundamental to students' academic success. Nevertheless, ineffectual management of conflicts often pave the way for disruptive behaviour, creates chaotic school environment, and negatively impact the learning process. Although poorly managed conflicts have been shown to reduce teachers' morale, commitment, and content delivery in Nigerian schools (Owan, 2018; Umoetuk et al., 2023), there is little empirical evidence on how these dynamics play out in Uyo Local Government Area. Evidence from this study clarifies the specific ways conflict management practices affect teacher effectiveness in this context. Therefore, without understanding which strategies mostly influence effective teaching and learning activities, school administrators in Uyo Local Government Area may lack the evidence-based skills needed to transform conflict management from administrative task into a tool for promoting students' academic outcomes. The gaps in the enhancement of teachers' punctuality, commitment to duty, instructional effectiveness, and professional relationships have necessitate a systematic investigation into conflict management strategies and teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate conflict management strategies and teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Uyo LGA, Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Investigate the relationship between principals' use of arbitration strategy and teachers' job effectiveness
2. Examine the relationship between principals' use of dialogue and teachers' job effectiveness.
3. Determine the relationship between principals' use of effective communication and teachers' job effectiveness.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between principals' use of arbitration strategy and teachers' job effectiveness?
2. To what extent does principals' use of dialogue strategy relate to teachers' job effectiveness?
3. What is the relationship between principals' effective communication strategy relate to teachers' job effectiveness?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between principals' arbitration strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area.
2. There is no significant relationship between principals' dialogue strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area.
3. There is no significant relationship between principals' effective communication strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area.

Methodology

The study employed the ex-post facto research design, which investigates the relationships between the principals' conflicts management strategies and teachers' job effectiveness in Uyo Local Government Area in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of teachers in public secondary schools in Uyo LGA. The population comprised 1,245 teachers from 18 secondary schools within the study area. The sample of the study was made up of 30% of the total population of teachers in the area. The multi-staged sampling technique was used in selecting the sample for the study. A total of 373 teachers were selected as the study sample, 152 males and 221 females respectively. The researchers used structured instruments to collect data for the study. The instruments were titled Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (CMSQ) and Teachers' Job Effectiveness Questionnaire (TJEQ). The instruments were made up of a 4-point modified Likert scale comprising of 15 items which measured principals' conflict strategies variables and teachers' job effectiveness variables respectively. To ascertain the level of validity of the instruments, the instruments were presented to experts in the field of Test and Measurement for content validity. To ascertain the level of consistency of the instruments, the cronbach alpha procedure was used to establish the reliability of the instruments. The procedure produced coefficient from 0.74 to 0.84.

Data Analysis and Results

Hypothesis One:

There is no significant relationship between principal's arbitration strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State.

TABLE 1: Pearson Product Moment correlation of the relationship between the Principals' arbitration strategy and teachers' job effectiveness (N=373)

VARIABLES	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	r-
cal Sig.	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$		
Arbitration strategy	7042	146356	1399760.719	0.00
Teachers' job effectiveness	6802	143938		

*P> @0.05 level, r-crit=.094, df = 373

Table 1 shows the strength of the relationship between the Principals' arbitration strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in Uyo LGA, Akwa Ibom States. The result shows a calculated r-value of 0.719 (72%) which is in a very positive direction. This shows a strong positive relationship between principals' arbitration strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in Uyo LGA, Akwa Ibom States. The strong positive relationship occurs due to the views of respondents' that arbitration strategy is essential to conflict resolution in schools setting. This indicates that arbitration has a very strong relationship with teachers' job effectiveness.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between principal's dialogue strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in Uyo LGA, Akwa Ibom State

TABLE 2: Pearson Product Moment correlation of the relationship between principals' dialogue strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in Uyo LGA, Akwa Ibom States (N=373)

VARIABLES	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	r-cal	Sig.
	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$			
Dialogue strategy	6892	143460	139626	0.787	0.00
Teachers' job effectiveness	6802	143938			

*P> @0.05 level, r-crit=.094, df = 373

Table 2 reveals the strength of the relationship between principals' dialogue strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in Uyo LGA, Akwa Ibom States. The result shows a calculated r-value of 0.787 (79%) which is in a very positive direction. This shows that there is a positive relationship between principal's dialogue strategy and teachers' job effectiveness. The strong positive relationship occurs due to the opinions of respondents' that dialogue plays an important role in conflict management in secondary schools in Uyo LGA. This indicates that dialogue has a positive impact on the management of conflicts.

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant relationship between principal's effective communication strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in Uyo LGA, Akwa Ibom State

TABLE 3: Pearson product moment correlation of the relationship between principals’ effective communication strategy and teachers’ job effectiveness in Uyo LGA, Akwa Ibom States (N=373)

VARIABLES	$\sum X$	$\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r-cal
Effective communication	7174	148753	143307	0.851	0.00	
Teachers’ job effectiveness	6802		143938			

*P> @0.05 level, r-crit=.094, df =373

Table 3 shows the strength of the relationship between principals’s effective communication strategy and teachers’ job effectiveness in Uyo LGA, Akwa Ibom States. The result shows a calculated r-value of 0.851 (86%) which is in a very positive direction. This shows a very strong positive relationship between principal’s effective communication and teachers’ job effectiveness. The strong positive relationship is attributed to respondents’ opinions that effective communication plays a crucial role in conflict management.

Findings and Discussion

The result of hypothesis one revealed that arbitration strategy is an effective conflict management strategy which brings about increased teachers’ job effectiveness in terms of classroom teaching, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students’ academic activities. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis was retained while the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that increase in the use of arbitration strategy by principals to manage school conflict leads to increased teachers’ job effectiveness in schools. The result of this study has revealed that arbitration is an effective strategy for resolving school conflict. This result is consistent with findings of Huan and Yazdanifard (2012), who argued that conflict resolution involves identifying the underlying interests, needs and concerns revolving around any school conflict helps in gaining a lasting solution, as cited in Min et al. (2020).

Similarly, Bekong and Agbor (2023), maintained that principals’ use of arbitration as a conflict management strategy positively affects teachers’ job effectiveness, suggesting that arbitration contributes to clearer identification and resolution of conflicts within school organizations. If the causes of school-based conflicts are not identified, and appropriate strategies adopted in resolving it from the root, the conflict would not be resolved effectively. So, the higher the adoption and application of cause identification strategies in conflict resolution by school principals, the more effective teachers become in lessons delivery, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students’ academic activities. By extension, the findings of this study suggest that conflict management subsumes conflict analysis, since it begins with data collection. School principals attempting to resolve school conflict must first identify the main cause of the conflict possibly through data collection. The analysis of the data gathered would help Principals take action to find a lasting solution to the conflict; otherwise, the morale of the conflicting teachers would deteriorate thereby affecting their job effectiveness.

The result of hypothesis two reveal that dialogue strategy strongly increased teachers’ job effectiveness in classroom teaching, maintenance of discipline and supervision of students’ academic activities. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was retained, while the null hypothesis was rejected. As observed from the responses of the research instruments, teachers admitted that integration of conflicting parties’ ideas in resolving school-based conflict by school principals brings about effective conflict management, which improves and sustains their job effectiveness. This result is in agreement with Amito, Oriangi & Lamaro (2023), who found that giving priority to the views of conflicting parties when managing school conflict positively influences outcomes like students’ satisfaction with the school climate. According to Uzoigwe, Onabe, & Ishaku (2023), building on the work of Oboegbulem and Alfa (2013),

integrating the opinions of the conflicting parties into the resolution process encourages collaboration to achieve a lasting solution to the conflict.

The result of the third hypothesis showed that there was a significant relationship between effective communication and teachers' job effectiveness. The finding of this hypothesis was in line with the findings of Nwosu and Awudu (2025), who reported that Principals' open and transparent communication strategies significantly improve teachers' job effectiveness during conflict management. Therefore, it is apparent that unhindered communication enhances workflow and integrates the organizational workforce.

Conclusion

Within the scope of this study, the findings indicate that arbitration, dialogue, and effective communication are positively related to teachers' job effectiveness in terms of students' discipline, content delivery, classroom management, assessment practices and supervision of students' academic activities in public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State. Hence, Principals who are skilled in proactive and constructive conflict management strategies, particularly those that emphasize open communication, mediation, and dialogic problem-solving, are more likely to foster a school climate conducive for effective teaching-learning activities. However, effective conflict management strategy is a fundamental driver of educational quality, and peaceful co-existence among school teachers. This relationship is critical for stakeholders to recognise, as promoting conflict management competencies among school leaders represents a direct pathway to improving teachers' performance, and the overall functional educational system in Akwa Ibom State.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, it was therefore, recommended that:

1. State government should ensure that school principals are regularly retrained through school-based workshops, conferences, and seminars on effective conflict management strategies.
2. State Secondary Education Board should make funds available to secondary school principals to enable them organize in-service programmes for all members of the school community as a way of assisting them in improving their understanding of conflict and their reactions to it.
3. Principals of secondary schools should not allow their personal interests and inclinations, to negatively influence their choices of conflict management mechanisms, as these can impede the effective resolution of conflicts in schools.
4. Teachers should be adequately trained in conflict management in order to instil in them the appropriate approach to handling conflicts.

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