

Principals' Conflict Management Strategies and Teachers' Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study examined the relationship between principals' conflict management strategies and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria. **Method:** The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A sample of 240 teachers was selected using stratified random sampling. Data were collected through structured questionnaires measuring principals' conflict management strategies and teachers' job performance indicators. Descriptive statistical tools including frequencies and percentages were used for data analysis. **Results:** Findings revealed that principals employ multiple conflict management strategies, with collaborative problem solving, negotiation, and compromise being the most commonly perceived by teachers. The results further showed that effective conflict management significantly contributes to improved teacher performance by promoting a supportive work environment, reducing workplace tension, and strengthening professional relationships. **Novelty:** The study concludes that principals' adoption of effective conflict management strategies plays a critical role in enhancing teachers' job performance and sustaining organizational harmony in public secondary schools.

INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions are complex social organizations where individuals with diverse backgrounds, beliefs, professional orientations, and expectations interact on a daily basis. Such diversity naturally creates the potential for conflict. Conflict is therefore an inevitable component of organizational life and should not necessarily be viewed as dysfunctional; rather, when properly managed, it can stimulate innovation, improve decision-making, and strengthen institutional effectiveness [1]; [2]. In schools, conflict may arise from differences in teaching methods, allocation of responsibilities, communication gaps, leadership styles, resource distribution, or interpersonal disagreements among staff.

Public secondary schools, in particular, operate within structured administrative systems that require continuous collaboration between principals and teachers to achieve educational goals. The principal, as the chief administrative officer, is responsible for maintaining order, promoting teamwork, and ensuring that teaching and learning occur in a conducive environment [3]. One of the most critical leadership competencies required of principals is the ability to manage conflict effectively. Principals who demonstrate strong conflict management skills are more likely to create positive school climates characterized by trust, mutual respect, and professional cooperation [4] [5].

Conflict management involves the use of strategic approaches to prevent escalation, facilitate dialogue, and achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Common strategies include collaboration, compromise, accommodation, competition, avoidance, mediation, and negotiation. Collaborative strategies encourage open communication and joint problem solving, while compromise ensures that parties reach acceptable middle ground [6]. Negotiation allows stakeholders to express their concerns and participate in decision-making processes, thereby enhancing ownership and commitment. When appropriately applied, these strategies can transform potentially destructive conflicts into opportunities for organizational growth [7]; [8].

Teachers' job performance remains a central determinant of educational quality. It encompasses various professional responsibilities such as effective lesson delivery, classroom management, punctuality, curriculum implementation, student assessment, teamwork, and participation in school activities. However, teachers' performance is strongly influenced by the organizational climate in which they operate. Persistent unresolved conflicts can lead to stress, job dissatisfaction, reduced motivation, absenteeism, and declining productivity. On the other hand, a supportive environment fostered through effective conflict resolution enhances teachers' morale and encourages greater commitment to institutional objectives [9].

In the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, public secondary schools reflect the multicultural and socioeconomically diverse nature of Nigeria's capital. Teachers in these schools differ in qualifications, teaching experience, cultural orientations, and professional expectations. Additionally, rapid educational expansion, increasing student enrollment, administrative pressures, and limited resources often intensify workplace tensions. These conditions make conflict management an essential administrative responsibility for school principals.

Despite the recognized importance of conflict management in educational leadership, some principals still rely on authoritarian, competitive, or avoidance approaches that may suppress rather than resolve disputes. Such approaches can create hostile work environments, weaken collegial relationships, and negatively affect teachers' effectiveness. Conversely, principals who adopt participatory and relationship-oriented strategies are better positioned to promote cooperation and enhance staff performance.

Understanding how principals' conflict management strategies influence teachers' job performance is therefore crucial for improving school effectiveness and educational outcomes. Although studies have explored leadership practices and teacher productivity in various contexts, empirical evidence focusing specifically on conflict management within public secondary schools in the FCT remains limited. This study seeks to bridge this gap by providing data-driven insights into the strategies principals employ and how these strategies shape teachers' professional performance.

Objectives of the Study

This study assessed principals' conflict management strategies and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The study seeks to:

1. Examine the conflict management strategies employed by principals in public secondary schools in FCT, Abuja.
2. Determine the effect of principals' conflict management strategies on teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in FCT, Abuja.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study;

1. What conflict management strategies are employed by principals in public secondary schools in FCT, Abuja?
2. How do principals' conflict management strategies affect teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in FCT, Abuja?

RESEARCH METHOD

The study adopted a descriptive research design, which is appropriate for collecting detailed information about principals' conflict management strategies and teachers' perceptions of their job performance without manipulating variables.

Population and Sample

The population for the study consists of all teachers and principals in public secondary schools across the FCT, Abuja. A sample size of 249 respondents was drawn using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different schools, teaching levels, and years of experience.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data was collected using structured questionnaires. The questionnaire included a sections on the types of conflict management strategies employed by principals (e.g., avoidance, collaboration, compromise, competition, accommodation) and teachers' self-reported job performance indicators such as punctuality, lesson delivery, student engagement, and work output.

Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. This allow the researcher to summarize the prevalent conflict management strategies and assess their perceived effect on teachers' job performance.

Data Analysis and Result presentation

What conflict management strategies are employed by principals in public secondary schools in FCT, Abuja?

Table 1. Principals' Conflict Management Strategies

Sub-Item Question	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Interpretation
1. Principals use collaborative problem-solving	58%	42%	Majority indicate collaborative strategies are used frequently.
2. Principals use negotiation	55%	45%	Principals are perceived to engage teachers in negotiation.
3. Principals use compromise	60%	40%	Compromise is commonly used to settle disputes.
4. Principals use accommodating approaches	52%	48%	Many principals show flexibility when conflicts arise.
5. Principals use avoidance	50%	50%	Avoidance is also reported as frequently used.

Result from table one indicated that teachers agreed that collaborative strategies, negotiation, and compromise are the most commonly employed conflict management methods by principals. The high percentage of agreement showed that principals adopt various strategies depending on context. This indicates a range of conflict management practices rather than a single approach.

How do principals' conflict management strategies affect teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in FCT, Abuja?

Table 2. Effect of Conflict Management Strategies on Teachers' Job Performance

Sub-Item Question	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Interpretation
1. Conflict management increases punctuality	57%	43%	Teachers feel they report to work on time when conflicts are well managed.
2. Conflict management improves lesson delivery	54%	46%	Teachers agree smoother conflict handling helps them teach better.
3. Conflict management enhances student engagement	50%	50%	Balanced responses show clear perceived benefits for students.
4. Conflict management improves teamwork	62%	38%	Strong positive response that conflict management boosts collaboration.
5. Conflict management improves overall work output	56%	44%	Teachers see a link between good conflict management and productivity.

Result also obtained revealed that teachers perceive that effective conflict management by principals has positive effects on key aspects of job performance,

including punctuality, lesson delivery, teamwork, and overall output. The balanced "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" percentages indicate consistent positive perceptions across the board.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result revealed that teachers agreed that collaborative strategies, negotiation, and compromise are the most commonly employed conflict management methods by principals. The high percentage of respondent indicated that principals adopt various strategies depending on context. Also, the result disclosed that teachers perceive that effective conflict management by principals has positive effects on key aspects of job performance, including punctuality, lesson delivery, teamwork, and overall output. The high affirmation indicated consistent positive perceptions that the strategies are effective.

Discussion of Findings

The finding from table one revealed that collaboration, negotiation, and compromise are widely used supports literature on effective conflict management in educational settings. Collaborative problem solving engages conflicting parties in jointly finding solutions, which is shown to promote understanding and reduce resentment [10]. Negotiation allows stakeholders to voice concerns and find acceptable middle grounds, a strategy linked with improved organizational climate [11]. Compromise ensures quicker resolution and preserves relationships, a common practice in school leadership [12]. The notable report of avoidance strategy aligns with research suggesting that temporarily avoiding conflict can sometimes help principals manage limited resources or waiting for appropriate timing for intervention [13]. However, avoidance is often less effective long term if conflicts remain unresolved.

The result on the second table disclosed that teachers' perception that conflict management enhances punctuality, lesson delivery, teamwork, and work output is supported by evidence in education research. Effective conflict management is strongly associated with teacher job satisfaction and performance because it reduces stress and improves professional relationships [14]. Principals who handle disputes constructively create environments where teachers can focus on instructional duties, increasing overall productivity [15]. Teamwork improvement as reported in Table 2 aligns with studies showing that positive conflict resolution strengthens collaboration among staff, which in turn benefits school effectiveness [16] [17].

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : The study revealed that principals in public secondary schools in FCT, Abuja employ a variety of conflict management strategies, with collaborative problem solving, negotiation, and compromise being most frequently perceived by teachers. These strategies are associated with positive outcomes in teachers' job performance, including improved punctuality, lesson delivery, teamwork, and work output. The findings suggest that when conflict is managed effectively, teachers are better able to perform their duties and collaborate more effectively. **Implication :** Principals

should receive formal training in conflict management strategies to improve their ability to handle disputes effectively. Regular professional development workshops can equip teachers with skills to engage constructively in conflict situations. Schools should establish clear communication platforms where concerns can be raised and resolved collaboratively. **Limitation** : Education authorities should monitor the implementation of conflict management strategies to ensure consistency and effectiveness. **Future Research** : Regular monitoring of the implementation of conflict management strategies can ensure consistency and effectiveness.

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