Research Article

Management of Interpersonal Conflict Involving Principals and Teachers of Selected Public Secondary Schools in Nigeria

Beauty Biokoro Ogharen[1]

Elizabeth Osita Egbule[2]

Anyanwu Chikodi Joy[3]

[1]Department of Educational Management and Foundations,
Delta State University,
330105, Abraka, Nigeria
[2]Department of Guidance and Counselling,
Delta State University,
330105, Abraka, Nigeria
[3]Department of Special Needs Education,
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education,
Orlu Rd, 460281, Owerri, Nigeria

Abstract

This study identified factors that contribute to interpersonal conflicts between secondary school teachers and principals in Nigeria. It likewise explores the effects of interpersonal conflict on achievement of students in school and on success of the school. Suggestions were made for conflict management programmes and potential strategies for adoption in order to promote and sustain an encouraging and productive interpersonal relationship between teachers and principals. A sample size consisting of 123 teachers and 8 principals were used. Descriptive statistics applied in the analysis of data collected. It was found that though there were healthy physical environment in the schools, incidence competition for limited resources was low, interpersonal conflicts were mainly caused by intergroup and interpersonal relations. It was also found that personnel practices, work structure, management issues, tribal and ethnic differences and issues of ethic

Keywords: Conflict Resolution, Conflict Management, Interpersonal Conflict, Teachers, Principals, Intergroup Conflicts

1. Introduction

Interpersonal conflict is as old as human existence. It is a factor that cannot be isolated from human interaction. Schools as social setting do not have immunity over interpersonal conflicts and it is capable of having some inhibiting effects on the social environment and success of schools (Kalagbor and Nnokam, 2015; Sompa, 2015). Various conflict types exists in schools, but the ones between teachers and principals are the most debilitating as it can grind school processes to a near halt. Interpersonal conflicts between teachers and principals can wreck severe damage on the climate of

the school, erode the school of desirable culture and eventually inhibit students' achievement. Effective interpersonal conflict management in schools is an important factor in ensuring that time and other scarce resources are not wasted on interpersonal conflict resolution.

In many public secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria, school heads invest much of their time on resolution of interpersonal conflicts among them and their teachers. Crossfield and Bourne (2018) state that a good part of principal time is put to addressing interpersonal conflicts in schools in Bermuda. Most times conflicts in schools are treated with the use of traditional grievance procedure. These procedure do not obliterate the conditions that led to conflict without compromise and makes on of the parties involved in such conflict feeling hurt. The procedure is capable of severely damaging interpersonal relationships in school settings. This study was articulated to identify the factors that cause interpersonal conflict between teachers and principals of secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria; it identifies the management strategies employed in resolution of interpersonal conflict and examines the effect of ethical factors that influence the option of conflict resolution programmes. The effectiveness of conflict management strategies was also determined. This study discussed the findings that will be of assistance to principals while identifying and managing conflicts in their schools; offer insight into more constructive conflict management and offer considerations for policy making.

2. Literature

Conflicts are borne as human beings interact independently and this interaction is permeated diverse humans who have different desires and objectives to achieve, bring to necessity, altercations in at least one party for their relationship to develop and remain sustained (Hartwick and Barki, 2002). Conflict is considered as a competition over perceived incompatible variation or distinctions in beliefs between two or more individuals that are interdependent (Wilmot and Hocker, 2011). These variations may involve desires for esteem, corrections, control and values.

According to Salleh and Adulpakdee (2012), the word conflict took its root from the term configure; meaning striking together. Hartwick and Barki (2002) view conflicts as a process which is dyadical or a phenomenon involving different persons or parties. Ghaffar (2010) considers conflict as a significant and avoidable human phenomenon that emerges anywhere varying interests are extant. We have found ourselves in an era of conflicts that is driven by increasing workers high level of assertion in the demand of their rights such as participation in decision-making, organizational perks, benefits, recognition, autonomy, wage raise, status and privileges (Chung and Megginson, 1981). Conflict is a constant variable that exists in every organization (De Janasz et al, 2006).

2.1 Interpersonal Conflict Types

Interpersonal conflicts have various classifications. These classifications are as follows:

Sustainable Conflict: These are conflict that emerge as a result of distinctive ideas and opinions that occur among group members relating to similar tasks that are performed (Jehn, 1994)

Goal Conflict: These are driven by difference in a preferred result of two social groups

Affective Conflict: This conflict type happens when interpersonal clashes between groups members are driven by negative social, psychological and emotional feelings (Ghaffer, 2010)

Conflict of Interest: This conflict type emerges when there is similar concept of a scenario by each group or persons but the channel to the challenge or constraint is seen through varying lens (Jehn, 1994).

Realistic versus non-realistic Conflict: This conflict takes root from disagreements which are goal oriented, but is not connected with organization or group. Thus, it is an end within itself (Ghaffer, 2010)

Conflict Values: This is said to occur when difference in ideology, values and perceptions on defined matters between two social groups exists.

2.2   Causes of Interpersonal Conflicts between Secondary School Principals and Teachers

Barki and Hartwick (2001) suggests that individuals and groups of individuals have needs for involvement in decision-making process, dignity, equity and identity that in one way or the other have effect on them. This needs cannot be suppressed, they further stated denial of such desires in the school can lead to interpersonal conflict.

Several sources of interpersonal conflict such as communication breakdown, working environment of the establishment, differentiation of activities, perceptual differences, independent job activities and limited resources are suggested by Gray and Stark cited by Hartwick and Barki (2001). They are of the suggestion that unclear authority, attitudinal differences, individual differences, task symmetries and time horizon differences are contributory factors to interpersonal conflict. Barki and Hartwick (2002) also state that Deutch and Coleman suggested that value, beliefs, resources control, nature of relationships, and preferences and nuisances as causes of interpersonal conflicts. However, Ramini and Zhimin (2010) offered a far reaching list of causes of conflicts between principals and teachers which include imposition of strict ultimatum for different job related activities, dictatorial leadership pattern of school principals, perceptual differences on management of particular issues in the school, failure to carry out assigned tasks on time, absenteeism without permission, setting unrealistic targets for teachers, setting unspecified goals, physical conditions that are poor or below standard, use of school resources for personal benefits by principals, tribal sentiment, absence of administrative support in form of provision of teaching/learning aids and psycho-social support as well as failure to communicate to teachers when the need to do so arises, engagement of teachers in accelerated programmes to cover broad sections of syllabus within a limited time frame, school administration's demand that are unrealistic and favouritism, and laxity among teachers and laxity during execution or enforcement of school laid down policies.

2.3   Conflict Management Programmes Employed while addressing Interpersonal Conflicts in School

Conflict management and resolution in school settings demand strategies that enhance amiable handling of misunderstandings constructively, cooperatively and successfully, coupled with laid down disciplinary processes. Ghaffer (2010) is of the view that constructively resolved conflicts result to a situation where all the parties involved in the dispute are satisfied, improvement in the relationship between disputing parties and improvement of the ability of the disputing parties in resolving future conflicts in constructive manner. Ghaffer (2010) suggest that although there is a catalogue of conflict management styles, a higher likelihood of protecting a relationship arises from collaborative approach. Tesfay (2002) identifies five interpersonal conflicts management styles such as avoiding, competing, accommodating, collaborating, and compromising as well as other three. The ones identified finally include:

Win-Lose Strategy: This arises in situations where one party wins while the other party loses. Compromise is given extremely little weight in this method. However, instances in which heads abuse their power and make decisions based on a majority vote, or in some cases, a powerful minority vote, can be utilized as a tactic for resolving interpersonal issues.

Lose-Lose Strategy: In this case, a compromising method is employed where the gain of every party involved is minimal, but largely loses through compromise of standards, qualities and other crucial values.

Win-Win Strategy: Those who support this strategy holds the belief that every party is capable of wining without anyone losing. This consists of realistic goal-oriented problem-solving activities that has the consequence of reaching decisions through consensus

Proposed five conflict management styles by Rohim (1985) include:

Integrating: Tesfay (2002) states that this entails information exchange, assessment of differences to arrive at an acceptable solution to both sides, and openness. This strategy is capable of leading to a resolution reached constructively.

Obliging or Smoothing: This involves highlighting of common interest as the actual or perceived conflict are openly brought to their lowest ebbs. This is mostly used by school heads to buy time while seeking cooperation among the teachers. This is regarded as a temporary style.

Dominating: This is applied when there is an emergency situation that requires decisive and rapid action to make decisions that are not usual, where the interest of the institution is concerned or when one party finds way of suppressing others and quick action is required for the interest of the school (Rahim, 1985)

Avoiding: This entails staying neutral and impartial during a conflict situation (Crossfield and Bourne, 2018).

Compromising: In this case, one party sacrifices his interest in order to arrive at an amicable solution. Tesfay (2002) regards this strategy as the give-and-take method.

Crossfield and Bourne (2018) suggest that many interpersonal conflicts arises as a result of variables such as gender, socio-economic status and ethno-cultural identity. Blaine (2006) states that teachers always tend to come to school with their stresses, giving rise to prolonged conflicts. Failure of principals to recognize work-related success is capable of giving rise to conflicts. Tesfay (2002) encourages scientific approach to problem solving. Scientific method establishes that there is a problem, then collects data relating to it, classifies the data, create one or more hypothetical solution from there, selects each solution and access its efficacy (Tesfay, 2002).

Okotoni and Okotoni (2003) are of the view that conflict to be managed and resolved, administration needs to organize seminar, symposia and conferences for educational administrators regularly; include courses on conflict management and human relations in teachers training curriculum, design standards for evaluation of teachers for promotion, put in place a disciplinary committee to handle disciplinary matters, employ counselors, offer job description, transparency and accountability should be expected from administrators and teachers and spell out and maintain definition of roles.

Mediation and negotiation remains the best methods for obliterating or eliminating conflicts (Bodin and Crawford, 1999). They are very useful in open social systems which include schools that is filled with people of diverse cultural and generational background (Bodin and Crawford, 1999). Ghaffer (2010) suggests that the mediator has to posses some skills for him/her to successfully handle interpersonal conflicts. A successful conflict management programme is the one that is able to meet its objective. It is successful if it is able to create a win-win or a consensus, satisfies the two parties and wipe out every rudiment of conflict. Every conflict management scheme should push to arrive at a win-win situation.

2.4 Implications of Interpersonal Conflicts between Principals and Teachers for Students' Achievement and Success in School

Interpersonal conflict is regarded as naturally existing as part of the life of an organization, and an open system such as the school which is also a social and a complex system. We should be reminded that as a social system, the school forms an ideal habitat for interpersonal conflict to emerge. Interpersonal conflicts are capable of having serious consequences on the climate of the school and students' success. Scholars have demonstrate that interpersonal conflicts existing between teachers and principals have far reaching direct impact on teachers' and students' attitude to work and study, and eventually on achievement level of students. Researches have indicated that task conflicts result to positive outcomes, but relationship conflicts give birth to negative outcome (Barki and Hartwick, 2001; Kalagbor and Nnokan, 2015). The win-win conflicts are recommended while relationship conflict should be discouraged in an educational system as a social arena.

3. Methodology

The descriptive survey was designed to survey elements of quantitative research. Eight principals and 12 teachers were selected from eight secondary schools which were randomly selected on the basis of 10% of the public secondary schools in Delta State. However, out of the 133 participants, all the

principals returned the questionnaire given to them and 123 teachers returned theirs. The questionnaire was a 30-item type and the reliability result was 0.721. The responses were categorized into high (4 – 5), moderate (2 – 3) and low (0 – 1) as adopted from Crossfield and Bourne (2018). Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data. This method and instrument were used because they can be adapted in diverse context and coonflict is regarded as being a complex and always existing human behavioural pattern.

3.1   *Demographic Characteristic of Respondents*

Many (52.30%) of the teachers were less than 31 years old (Table 1). Some, 26.83% were in the age bracket of 31-40 and 36.59% had 16-20 years of teaching experience; 25.20%, 11-15 years, and 20.33%, 6-10years of teaching experience. A lot of them (60.98%) held bachelors degrees and they were predominantly females. Among the principals, most (50%) were above 60years of age, while 37.50% were in the age bracket of 51-60 years. A half (50%) of them had 16-20 years of working experience, while 25% had more than 21 years of working experience and another 25% had 11-15 years of working experience. The information indicated s well-educated teaching work force and principals.

4.   **Result**

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Respondents	
	Teachers (n=123)	**Principals (n=8)**
Age (Years)		
< 31	64 (52.03)	0(0)
31 – 40	33(26.83)	0(0)
41 – 50	7(5.69)	1(12.50)
51 – 60	12(9.76)	3(37.50)
> 60	7(5.69)	4(50)
Experience (Years)		
1 – 5	5(4.07)	0(0)
6 – 10	25(20.33)	0(0)
11 – 15	31(25.20)	2(25)
16 – 20	45(36.59)	4(50)
> 21	17(13.82)	2(25)
Qualification		
Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE)	32(20.22)	0(0)
Bachelors (B.Sc., B.Ed.)	75(60.98)	3(37.50)
Masters (M.Sc., M.Ed.)	14(11.38)	4(50)
Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)	2(1.63)	1(12.50)
Gender		
Male	43(34.96)	5(62.50)
Female	80(65.04)	3(37.50)
Professional Qualification (TCRN)		
Yes	76(61.79)	8(100)
No	47(38.21)	0(0)

Mostly having postgraduate degrees. The range of working experience as teachers and principals ranged from one to more than 21 years. More than half (65.04%) of the teachers were females, while more of the principals were males. There were more (61.79%) professional teachers than auxiliary teachers (38.21%) and all 100% of the principals were professional teachers. this has implication for crisis management.

4.1   Contributing Factors to Interpersonal Conflicts between Principals and Teachers

Research Question 1: What are the contributory factors to interpersonal conflicts between principals and teachers in public secondary schools of Delta State?
        Table 2 indicates differences between the responses of teachers and principals with respect to the factors that often contributed to conflict between them. Most (59.51%) of the teachers rated lack of proper communication to teachers by principals high, while none (0%) of the principals rated it high. Majority (63.77%) of the teachers rated imposition of strict deadlines for different activities high as 25% of the principals rated it high; 25%, moderate and 50% low. Variations in perceptions of teachers and principals on management of particular issues relating to the school was rated high by 59.16% of the teachers, while 50% of the principals similarly rated it high. The principals' tendencies to assume the posture of a dictator was rated high by most (77.08%) of the teachers (T).

Table 2: Contributory Issues to Interpersonal Conflicts

Issues of Management	Respondents					
	Teac. (N =123)			Prin. (N =8)		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
Issues of rapport and communication with the instructors	59.51	28.42	12.07	0	27	73
Imposing ultimatum in getting task done	63.77	18.95	17.28	25	25	50
Variances in discernment regarding administering of particular subject relating to the institution	59.16	30.65	10.19	50	25	25
Inclination to act like a dictator by principals	77.08	17.05	5.87	0	25	75
Scarcity of assistance from school administration with regards to provision of teaching materials that support teaching	78.75	13.30	7.95	0	25	75

Contrastingly, none (0%) of the principals (P) rated it low, while 25% rated it moderate as 75% rated it low. Majority (78.75%) of the teachers rated high the lack of support or encouragement from school administration with regards to provision of teaching/learning aids and lack of psycho-social support from principals when teachers are in need. Most 75% of the principals rated it low. A similar trend was found in Crossfield and Bourne (2018) in their earlier study in Bermuda. The implication is that to the teachers, the contributory factors to interpersonal conflicts included all the issues aforementioned, while to the principal, only disagreement in perceptions on management of particular issues relating to school was their only contributory issue.

4.2   Respondents' Response to Diverse Relationships Existing in Secondary Education

Tribalism was rated high by 61.75% of the teachers as principals (100%) also rated it high (Table 3). Among the teachers, 60.25% rated laxity of teachers high, while 100% of the principals likewise rated it high. Truancy was rated high by 60.25% of the teachers and it was rated high by 60% of the Principals (P). Teachers (T) (61.02%) rated favaouritism high, as well, principals (60%) rated it high.

Table 3: Teachers' and Principals' responses to Intergroup and Interpersonal Relation

Different Relationships	Respondents					
	Teac. (n=123)			Prin. (n=8)		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
Tribalism	61.75	34.25	24.0	100	0	0
Laxity of Teachers	60.25	27.30	12.45	100	0	0
Truancy	60.25	27.30	12.45	60.0	25.0	15.0
Favouritism	61.02	32.20	6.78	60.0	25.0	15.0

The teacher indicated strong consonance with the responses of the principals as most of both group rated all of the factors high. This is partially in agreement with Crossfield and Bourne (2018), Kalagbor and Nnokan (2015). While responding to personal practices, 61.75% of the teachers and 50% of the principals rated unpermitted absenteeism among teachers high as being contributory factor to interpersonal conflicts in secondary schools. Exhibition of laxity in school policies implementation was rated high by 62.02% of the teachers and 75% of the principals. Principals' unreasonable demand was rated high by 67.81% of the teachers and 75% of the principals (Table 4). The responses of both parties were also similar in the case of personal practices.

Table 4: Rejoinder to Personal practice

Personal Practices	Respondents					
	Teac. (n=123)			Prin. (n=8)		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
Unpermitted absence	61.75	33.25	24.0	50.0	25.0	25.0
Laxity in implementation of policies	62.02	33.21	6.77	75.0	25.0	0
Principal's unreasonable demand	67.81	25.42	6.77	75.0	25.0	0

Table 5: Personnel Rejoinder to Job Arrangement

Work Structure	Respondents					
	Teac. (n=123)			Prin. (n=8)		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
Putting instructors in hurtle programme to cover wide sections of syllabus in a short time period	52.86	25.20	21.95	0	37.58	62.50
Setting unrealistic target for teachers	56.10	28.46	15.45	0	25.0	75.0
Setting unspecific goals	56.91	27.64	15.45	25.0	37.50	37.50
Failure to perform task on time	28.46	39.02	32.52	50.0	25.0	25.0

Table 5 shows that most of the teachers who participate in the study were of the opinion that work structure factors contributed to interpersonal conflicts in secondary schools. Most of them rated the factors as being moderate to high; while principals rated them as low to moderate.

On setting unspecific goals, 25% of the principals rated it as high, 37.50% rated it moderate and another 37.50% rated it low. Contrastingly, 84.55% were of the opinion that it is an important factor rating it moderate to high. The principals (75%) rated failure of teachers to perform task on time moderate to high and 25% rated it low.

Item number 29 in the questionnaire demanded for responses relating to influence of ethical factors on interpersonal conflicts in schools. The results show that most (65.81%) of the teachers rated this factor high. On the contrary, principals rated it low.

Item number 30 sought for responses as to the contributory factors of interpersonal conflict between principals and teachers. The responses were made into 7 groups according to the predetermined classification conceptualized for this study.

Table 6 indicates that under intergroup and interpersonal relations, the teachers prioritized cultural differences (55.28%), lack of professional commitment (545.47%), poor interpersonal skill (51.22%), vindictiveness (51.22%), personal differences (43.90%) and language and persona (43.90%) as the factors that contribute to conflicts. The principals corroborated only three of these factors. These are personality difference (70%), language and persona (50%) and poor interpersonal skills. Apart from these, the principals did not indicate the other factors indicated by the teachers.

Under the category of management and leadership matters, the major factor indicated by the teachers was authoritative approach mentioned inappropriate execution of rules and regulations (75%) and lack of involvement and cooperation (75%).

Table 6: Teachers' and Principals' Perception of Causes of Interpersonal Conflict

Perceived Factors	Respondents	
	Teachers (n=123)	Principals (n=8)
Intergroup and Interpersonal Relations		
Cultural differences	68(55.28)	0(0)
Language and persona	54(43.90)	4(50)
Personality difference	54(43.90)	6(75)
Poor interpersonal skills	63(51.22)	4(50)
Lack of professional commitment	67(54.47)	2(25)
Vindictiveness	63(51.22)	0(0)
Power struggle	32(26.02)	0(0)
Management and Leadership Matters		
Authoritative approach to problem-solving	50(40.65)	0(0)
Unreasonable performance assessment	29(23.58)	0(0)
Poor communication and outdated policies	40(32.52)	0(0)
Lack of understanding	33(26.83)	4(50)
Lack of purposeful employee development	44(35.77)	0(0)
Inappropriate execution of rules and regulations	18(14.63)	6(75)
Lack of involvement and cooperation	19(15.45)	6(75)
Micro-management	17(13.82)	0(0)
Rivalry for scarce materials	20(16.26)	0(0)
Individual practice		
Apparent unfair layoff	79(64.23)	0(0)
Unreasonable demands by administrators	81(56.91)	6(75)
Unauthorized absenteeism	70(56.91)	6(75)
Slackness in execution of policies	51(41.46)	0(0)
Work Structure		
Setting unrealistic targets for teachers	68(55.28)	0(0)
Setting unspecific goals	36(29.27)	0(0)
Failure to perform tasks on time	32(26.02)	4(50)
Subjection of teachers to too heavy workloads	62(50.41)	0(0)
Failure to set high expectations for students	68(55.28)	4(50)
Ethical Factors		
Failure to cooperate with teachers dealing with aggressive students and parents	58(47.15)	0(0)
Inappropriate involvement of parents in teaching/learning process	55(44.72)	0(0)
Parents undermining teachers' professional autonomy	32(26.02)	0(0)
Inappropriate allocation of resources	26(21.14)	0(0)
Discussing students and teachers inappropriately	30(24.39)	4(50)
Moral distress owing to lack of empowerment to address diverse values	47(38.21)	0(0)

Under personal practices, the teachers mentioned mainly unreasonable demand by administration (65.85%), perceived unjust layoff (64.23%), unauthorized absenteeism (56.91%) and laxity in implementation of policies (41.46%) as the factors that contribute to conflicts, while in contrast, the principals indicated only unauthorized absenteeism (75%) as a contributory factor to conflicts in secondary schools.

Under work structure, the teachers mentioned setting unrealistic targets for teachers (55.28%), failure to set high expectations for students on the part of the principals (55.28%)and subjection of teachers to too heavy workloads (50.41%). The teachers indicated failure to perform task on time (50%) and failure to set high expectation on the part of teachers for students (50%) as contributory factors. Both teachers and principals were congruent on the issue of setting high expectations for students. As far as ethical factors are concerned, the teachers indicated failure to cooperate with teachers dealing with aggressive students and teachers (47.15%) and inappropriate involvement of parents in teaching/learning process (44.72%), while principals indicated discussing students and teachers inappropriately as contributory factors to conflict. While some responses were at variance with the findings of Crossfield and Bourne (2018), some were in consonance with theirs. From the data, it is observed that while teachers indicted principals, principals also indicted teachers. It is

concluded that intergroup and interpersonal relations, management and leadership issues, personal practice, work structure and ethical factors were responsible or contributed to interpersonal conflicts between the teachers and the principals.

The results are congruent with earlier study as they are indicative of micromanagement, absence of autonomy, unfair appraisal of performance, dearth of purposeful staff development, and inappropriate execution of rules and regulations as contributory factors to interpersonal conflicts in secondary schools. Barki and Hartwick (2002) citing Gray and Stark suggest that the above indicated variables together with communication problems are common roots from which interpersonal conflicts emerge. Ramini and Zhimin (2010) suggests that imposing of strict ultimatum for different activities, distinct perceptions relating to management of particular issues in secondary schools, dictatorial attitudes of some school principals and absence of support from administration in provision of learning/teaching aids and psychosocial support as known source of interpersonal conflicts between teachers and administrators.

Hartwick and Barki (2001) while citing Fisher stated that a number of conflicts are rooted in ethno-cultural and racial tensions. This, in Nigeria and Delta State represent ethno-cultural and tribal tensions. However, Blaime (2006) opine that these factors are capable of originating from discrepancies and politics in the various areas or issues in the place of work, and are given sustenance by informal groups by gossip and rumour peddling. Blaime is of the belief that a powerful drive for achievement in the work place inherent in some teachers has the capability of breeding conflicts in situations where principals do not place emphasis on success that is work-related.

Question 2: What are the effects of inter-personal clash between administrators and instructors in secondary education in Delta State for students' achievement and success? The responses were rated to be high (4-5), moderate (2-3) and low (0-1)

Table 7 indicates that most (73.17%) of the teachers rated effects of interpersonal conflicts on staff morale and feeling as high. The teachers mostly (79.67%) were of the opinion that interpersonal conflicts decreases job effectiveness among staff, while 20.82% rate it as moderate. Among the administrators, 25% rated it high while 50% rated it as being moderate and 25% as being low with regards to direct effect on students' approach to study, 59.35% of the instructors view it as high. Among the administrators, 50% view it as high.

Majority the instructors view inter-personal clashes as decreasing job effectiveness as 71.67% rated it high and 20.33% moderate. Most (50%) of the principals rated it high and 25%, moderate.

Table 7: Teachers and Principals' response to Consequences of Inter-personal Clashes on learners' achievement

Effect of Inter-personal Clashes on Learners Achievement	Respondents					
	Teac. (n=123)			Prin. (n=8)		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
Impacts staff morale and mind-set	90(73.17)	17(13.82)	16(13.0)	4(50)	2(25)	2(25)
Decrease job effectiveness among staff	98(79.67)	25(20.33)	0(0)	2(25)	4(50)	2(2.0)
Direct effect on students' attitude towards their work and ultimately their achievement	73(59.35)	33(26.83)	17(13.82)	4(50)	2(25)	2(25)
Create variations in the effectiveness and commitment level of teachers	98(79.67)	25(20.33)	0(0)	4(50)	2(25)	2(25)
Impede school effectiveness and students' achievement	90(73.17)	17(13.82)	16(13)	6(75)	2(25)	0(0)

Figures in parenthesis are percentages

On direct effects of interpersonal conflicts on students' attitude towards their work and ultimately their achievement, 59.35% rated it high, 26.83% rated it moderate. Among the principals, 50% of them rated it high while 25% rated it moderate. Majority (79.67%) of the teachers felt that

interpersonal conflict give rise to variations in the effectiveness and commitment levels of teachers. The principals also felt the same way. It can be concluded from the findings to research question 2 that interpersonal conflicts that occur between teachers and principals affect the morale of staff and reduces job effectiveness among teachers. It directly affects students' attitude towards their work and ultimately, their achievement. It is as well capable of giving rise to variations in teachers' effectiveness and commitment levels and impedes school effectiveness.

Interpersonal conflicts have the capacity of serious outcomes for the climate of the school and success of students since it directly affects attitudes of teachers and students (Amason, 1996). Amason (1996), Jehn (1994) state that as much as interpersonal conflicts between teachers and principals are bound to occur, it implies that conflicts that erupt from accomplishment of tasks should be developed and nurtured while those emanating from relationship that are unproductive need to be discouraged in a school system.

Research Question 3: Which interpersonal conflict management programmes are instituted to manage such conflicts between teachers and principals? The distributions of responses to the questions are shown in tables. The responses were rated thus: high (4-5), moderate (2-3) and low (0-1).

Good interpersonal relationship between principals and teachers is necessary for success of the school was rated high by 76.42% of the teachers, 8.94% rated it moderate, while 14.63% as low. Among the principals, 75.0% rated it high and 25.0% as moderate (Table 8). According to the teachers who took part in this poll, clashes between staff in the school is inevitable as reflected in the percentage from teachers (78.05%) and principals (75.0%) agreed.

Table 8: Perceptions of Teachers and Principals of Conflict Resolution

Perceptions of Conflict Resolution Programme	Respondents					
	Teachers (n=123)			Principals (n=8)		
	High	Mod.	Low	High	Mod.	Low
Healthy interpersonal relationship between teachers and principals is necessary for success of the school	94(76.42)	11(8.94)	18(14.63)	6(75)	2(25)	0(0)
Interpersonal conflict between principals and teachers is bound to happen in schools	80(65.04)	31(25.20)	12(9.76)	4(50)	2(25)	2(25)
Interpersonal conflicts properly managed is of utility value in creating better school climates	96(78.05)	13(10.57)	14(11.38)	6(75)	2(25)	0(0)
Principals employ strategies to establish and sustain positive interpersonal relationship between him/her and teachers in the school	31(25.20)	11(8.94)	81(65.86)	4(50)	4(50)	0(0)
Tensions arise due to ethical challenges on proper actions taken in the process of conflict resolution programme	93(75.61)	16(13.0)	14(11.38)	0(0)	2(25)	6(75)
Conflict management strategy utilized is/are influenced by ethical issues	76(61.79)	38(30.89)	9(7.32)	4(50)	3(25.5)	1(24.50)

That properly managed interpersonal conflicts are of utility value in creating better school climate. Most (65.86%) of the respondent teachers were of the view that principals did not employ strategies to establish and sustain good interpersonal relationship between them and teachers. As expected, teachers did not corroborate this opinion as 75.0% of them rated it high. In a similar manner, 75.61% of the teachers felt that tensions arise due to ethical challenges on proper actions taken in the process of conflict resolution programme, will by rating it high, while 75% of the teachers rated it low. This is another sharp variation between principals and teachers opinions. Majority (61.79%) of the teachers were of the belief that conflict management strategies utilized are influenced by ethical variables as they rated it high. Contrastingly, 50% of the principals rated it as being moderate, 25% high and 25% low.

A few (43.09%) of the teachers opted for integration as a conflict management method that was used effectively to manage interpersonal conflicts in schools. Integration was opted for by just (25%) of the principals. Problem solving was the choice of 34.15% of the teachers and 25.0% of the principals. The win-win method was the choice of 17.07% of the teachers and 25% of the principals.

Very few (7.32%) of the teachers took compromising methods as the alternative choice that was most utilized effectively in schools for the management of interpersonal conflicts.

As for best practice, 37.39% of the teachers and 25% of the principals chose integration method. Problem solving was the choice of 36.59% of the teachers and 25% of the principals; while 26.02% of the teachers and 25% of the principals opted for win-win method as the best practice. Some (40.65%) of the teachers and 25% of the principals chose integration method as the most challenging method. Similarly, 40.65% of the teachers and 25% of the principals as the most challenging strategy used in secondary schools. Just 25% of the principals chose the win-win strategy as the most challenging methods and avoidance was chosen by 17.07% of the teachers.

Table 9: Teachers and Principals Responses to Conflict Management Programme

Conflict Management Programme	The Clashes management strategies below are utilized in my school		Best Clashes Management Strategies		Most Exigent Clashes Management Strategies	
	Teac.	Prin.	Teac.	Prin.	Teac.	Prin.
Integration	53(43.09)	2(25)	46(37.39)	2(25)	50(40.65)	2(25)
Problem solving	42(34.15)	2(25)	45(36.59)	2(25)	50(40.65)	2(25)
Win-win strategy	21(17.07)	2(25)	32(26.02)	2(25)	0(0)	2(25)
Obliging	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Win-lose strategy	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	2(25)
Dominating	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Forcing	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Suppression	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Prevention	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Avoidance	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	21(17.07)	0(0)
Withdrawal	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Compromising	9(7.32)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Lose-lose strategy	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)

Figures in parenthesis are percentages

Item number 21 in the questionnaire was the rating of principals on various attributes. The results indicates that principals were rated high by 17.07% of the teachers in the utilization of encouraging management skills in the process of solving problems, which contrasted the rating of 75% of the principals which was high (Table 10).

On involvement of stakeholders in conflict management, 30.89% of the teachers rated principals high, while 75% of this principals gave high rating to themselves and 25%, moderate. While rating principals on taking sides in an interpersonal conflict, 73.98% of the teachers rated the principals high and this was confirmed by 75% of the principals by rating it high, as 25% of them (principals) rated principals moderate. The teachers gave a negative opinion on principals as regards fair resolution of conflicts as only 23.58% of them rated principals high and 44.72 rated it low. However, 75% of the principals rated it high.

Table 10: Response to rating of Principals by Teachers and Principals

How do you rate your principal on the following attributes of interpersonal conflict resolution?	Respondents					
	Teachers (n=123)			Principals (n=8)		
	High	Mod.	Low	High	Mod.	Low
Utilizes good management skills while finding solution to problems	21(17.07)	30(24.39)	72(58.54)	6(75)	2(25)	0(0)
Involves every stakeholder in conflict management	38(30.89)	42(34.15)	43(34.96)	6(75)	2(25)	0(0)
Taking sides in a conflict situation	91(73.98)	22(17.89)	10(8.13)	6(75)	2(25)	0(0)

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How do you rate your principal on the following attributes of interpersonal conflict resolution?	Respondents					
	Teachers (n=123)			Principals (n=8)		
	High	Mod.	Low	High	Mod.	Low
Searches for solution that is fair in resolving conflicts	29(23.58)	39(31.71)	55(44.72)	6(75)	2(25)	0(0)
He/She mediates	30(24.39)	27(21.95)	65(52.85)	6(75)	2(25)	0(0)
Utilizes management skill in solution search	32(26.02)	27(21.95)	63(51.22)	6(75)	2(25)	0(0)
Strives towards healthy interpersonal relationship with teachers	25(20.33)	62(50.41)	36(29.27)	6(75)	2(25)	0(0)
Proactive in conflict management	24(19.51)	54(43.90)	45(36.59)	6(75)	2(25)	0(0)
Strive for a win-win situation in conflict management	17(13.82)	48(39.02)	58(47.15)	6(75)	2(25)	0(0)
Delegates crucial tasks based on merit	21(17)	30(24.39)	72(58.54)	6(75)	2(25)	0(0)

The sharp contrast between principals and teachers rating was manifested again where 24.39% of the teachers rated principals high, while 75% of the principals rated themselves high in the item of mediation in interpersonal conflicts between teachers and principals. On utilization of management skill while searching for solution to conflicts, only 26.02% of the teachers rated principals high, as 75% of the principals rated themselves high. Only 20.33% of the teachers felt that principals should be rated high on striving towards healthy interpersonal relationship with teachers, and again, 75% of the principals felt they should be rated high. On proactiveness in conflict management, 19.51% and 43.90% of the teachers rated principals high and moderate respectively just as principals (75%) rated themselves high. Principals do not strive for a win-win situation in conflict management as only 13.82% of them rated principals high, but 75% of the principals rated themselves high on this item. According to the teachers, principals were not disposed to delegating crucial tasks based on merit, but sentiment as 17% of them rated principals high and another 58.54% rated them low. However, 75% of the principals rated themselves high.

In Table 11, under item number 21, the respondents were requested to rate the effect of four sets of morale consideration in making the choice of interpersonal conflict resolution programme with regards to fairness of result versus standards of the school, 26.02% of the teachers expressed a high rating, with many (49.59%) of them rating it low. Among the principals, 75% of them rated it high. As regards confidentiality level against rules of the school, 24.37% of the teachers gave high rating as 26.83% of them gave low rating for it.

Table 11: Responses of Teachers and Principals to Interpersonal Conflict Resolution Initiatives in Schools

How do you rate the morale considerations while choosing conflict resolution initiatives?	Respondents					
	Teachers (n=123)			Principals (n=8)		
	High	Mod.	Low	High	Mod.	Low
Fairness of result compared to standards of the school	32(26.02)	30(24.39)	61(49.59)	6(75)	2(25)	0(0)
Confidentiality level versus rules of the school	30(24.39)	60(48.78)	33(26.83)	4(50)	4(50)	0(0)
Loyalty level to colleagues versus norms of the school	50(40.65)	43(34.96)	30(24.39)	0(0)	2(25)	6(75)
Family agenda versus standard of education	74(60.16)	28(22.76)	21(17.07)	0(0)	2(25)	6(75)

Half (50%) of the principals rated it high and another 50%, moderate. Loyalty to colleagues against norms of the school was highly rated by 40.65% of the teachers, while 24.39% gave low rating. Most (75%) of the principals rated it low as 25% rated it moderate. As regards to influence of family agenda versus standards of education, 60.16% of the teachers gave high rating of it in conflict resolution as being influential in the process. Contrastingly, the principals rated it high (75%) and moderate (25%).

The findings from the study question number 3 amongst other unveiled the fact that:

i.   Ethical issues have influence on strategies which are employed in secondary schools in the management of interpersonal conflicts that occur between principals and teachers

ii. Integration, problem solving and win-win technique form the most effective ones utilized in secondary schools, but they form the most challenging techniques used in secondary schools.

iii. Most principals take sides during conflict situations, while refusing to mediate impartially, they are bereft of problem solving skills for effective school management; they refuse to involve major stakeholders in management of conflict; often fail to look for solution that is fair to both parties, and have poor classroom problem-solving skills as they do not accurately evaluate performance of teachers.

iv. Family agenda versus standards of education formed the moral factor considered as having influence on the choice of conflict resolution initiatives in secondary schools (Table 11)

Arising from the results of question 3, it is comfortable to conclude that encouraging interpersonal relationship between teachers and principals is crucial to the success of secondary schools, however it is bound to occur in schools with proper management, interpersonal conflict has the potential to create better climate in schools.

From the perspective of the teachers, it is convenient to infer that:

i.   Principals often do not take steps to create and sustain encouraging interpersonal relationship with teachers in their schools

ii. Integration, problem solving and win-win techniques are the methods used to effectively manage conflicts in secondary schools. Principals fail to employ encouraging management skills to solve problems and seek solution. They also fail to include every stakeholder in conflict management.

Additionally, principals were obvious of moral factor considerations which have influence on their choice of interpersonal conflict resolution initiatives in secondary schools. There are clear contrasting data between principals and teachers, even when principals sample size was small.

Perceived or actual conflict always exists wherever interactions occur between or among human (Ghaffar, 2010). The present age is the one of conflicts that are driven by increased workers assertiveness while their demand for their lawful rights with regards to opportunities to participate in decision making, autonomy, wage, appreciation, remuneration, and status rights and privileges, and opportunities (Chung and Megginson, 1981).

Parents gets themselves involved in issues in secondary schools and thus their involvement constitute a very major ethical problem that increasingly face teachers and this has increasingly metamorphosed into material in nature (Wood et al., 1985). The situation becomes complicated as parents and various principals have started treating many students as belonging to the upper class in the society that is now ever more affluent-driven. However, Greenleaf (2002) has this strong belief that the level of conflict resolution skills possession by principals which emerged from these factors has the potential of helping to achieve the purpose of the school. To Tesfay (2002), integration involves being transparent, trading of information, and acceptance of differences to have a win-win conflict resolution.

Research Question 4: What are the steps to be taken to promote and maintenance of positive and productive interpersonal relationship between secondary school principals and teachers in Delta State, Nigeria? Tables show the frequency distributions of replies to the question. The answer classification is weighted as follows: high (4–5), moderate (3–4), and low (0–1).

Table 12 indicates that the teachers (21.14%) rated their principals high when asked if their principals evaluate teachers' performance accurately in order to solve classroom problems. Some (34.15%) rated the principals moderate, while 44.72% rated them low. Contrastingly, 75% of the principals rated themselves high as 25% rated themselves moderate.

When it came to grading their principals on their efforts to create and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships with their teachers, 31.71% of the teachers rated them high, 30.89%

moderate and 37.40% rated the principals low. Again, in contrast, 50% of the principals rated principals high in this wise as another 50% of them rated principals moderate. The teachers (24.39%) rated principals high in the questioning of steps taken in promotion and sustenance of positive interpersonal relationship between him/her principal and teachers, while 26.02% of the teachers rated principals moderate as 49.59% rated them low. The principals (50%) rated themselves high and 50% of them rated themselves moderate in this regard.

Table 12: Response on steps to promote maintenance of positive and productive relationship

Statements	Responses					
	Teac. (n=123)			Prin. (n=8)		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
Principals evaluate teachers' performance accurately to solve classroom problems	26(21.14)	42(34.15)	55(44.72)	6(75)	2(25)	0(0)
Steps are taken by principals to establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationship between him/her and teachers	39(31.71)	38(30.89)	46(37.40)	4(50)	4(50)	0(0)
The steps taken by principals in promotion and sustenance of positive interpersonal relationship between him/her and teachers in my school are effective	30(24.39)	32(26.02)	61(49.59)	4(50)	4(50)	0(0)
Teachers are given empowerment to discuss the various values available in my school while trying to better comprehend the critical incidences and ethical dilemmas involved in carrying out their functions	11(8.94)	44(35.77)	68(55.28)	6(75)	2(25)	0(0)

Figures in parenthesis are percentages

Table 13: Responses of Teachers and Principals to Research Question 4

How do you rate the principals' attempt to maintain smooth running of the school in each of the factors below?	Responses					
	Teachers (n=123)			Principals (n=8)		
	High	Mod.	Low	High	Mod.	Low
Establishes unity among role players	38(30.89)	40(32.52)	45(36.59)	6(75)	2(25)	0(0)
Manages and leads by example	41(33.33)	40(32.52)	42(34.15)	8(100)	0(0)	0(0)
School politics-driven	70(56.91)	34(27.64)	19(15.45)	0(0)	0(0)	8(100)
Encourages teaching and learning	46(37.40)	40(32.52)	37(30.08)	8(100)	0(0)	0(0)

However, 75% of the principals rated principals high and 25%, moderate, none of the principals rated principals low.

When asked to rate their principals attempt to establish unity or cohesion among role players in running of the school, 30.89% of the teachers rated principals high, 32.52%, moderate and 36.59%. Contrastingly, 75% of the principals rated principals high while 25% low. In response to the question as to principals leading by example, 33.33% of the teachers rated principals high, 32.52% rated them moderate and 34.15% rated them low. Among the principals 100% of them rated principals high in this question.

The responses of teachers to the question of principals being driven by school politics show that 56.91% rated the principal high, while 27.64% rated them moderate and 15.45% rated principals low. All the principals (100%) rated themselves low in this regard, implying denial of the allegation given by the teachers.

On the question of encouragement of teaching and learning, the teachers (37.40%) rated the principals high, while 32.52%, moderate and 30.08% low. In contrast, 100% of the principals rated principals high. These findings are of the same trend with those of Crossfield et al (2018) in their

study in Bermuda.

In this study, it was found that:

i. Secondary school teachers did not have the feeling of empowerment to participate in formulation of or negotiate the various values observed in their schools in order to have a better appreciation of the critical or crucial incidences and ethical replacement involved in the discharge of their functions

ii. Teachers perceived principals as being poor in solving problems that occur in classroom by carrying out accurate assessment of teachers' performance in the process of taking steps for establishment and maintenance of positive interpersonal relationship with teachers. They (teachers) also perceived that principals were highly driven by politics in their respective schools, but encourages schooling and erudition.

Instructors believe that principals do not find solutions to classroom problems by meticulously examining teachers' performance, and that they did not take steps to encourage and maintain positive interpersonal relationship with teachers under them; hence, they were not effective or efficient. It is also comfortable to conclude that teachers did not have the empowerment to negotiate the various values that were operational in their schools for better appreciation of the critical occurrences and ethical predicaments involved in discharging their duties and the principals failed to manage the school and exhibit leadership by example. The opinion of the teachers was that principals were propelled by politics existing in their respective schools. However, they had the opinion that the principals promoted teaching and learning.

Teachers' abilities to identify or isolate possible conflicts, as well as their causes and the skills required to address them, create the nucleus of effective work and enjoyment (Owen, 1995). Owens (1995) citing Walter asserts that leadership supports ethical predicament, effective and efficient behaviours. Greenleaf (2002) has the belief that the level to which principals have appreciation of these arrays of skills could become the thriving point in achievement of success of the school.

5. Conclusion

Out of all the most glaring trends observed in this study is the stark contrasting views of teachers and principals with respect to the causes, management an resolution of interpersonal conflicts that occur between them. The teachers had very adverse view about principals and their conflict causing roles. They were likewise very critical about the way principals handled interpersonal conflicts and establishment of a friendly climate that could prompt healthy interpersonal relationships in the schools as organizations. Principals, however had very distinct opinions on these matters. Generally, they failed to take responsibility for the existing interpersonal conflicts that was between them and teachers in their respective schools, but had positive opinion on the efforts they put into management of conflicts as they arose. They (principals) also had positive view regarding their assessment of the effort they made towards establishment of positive relationship in their secondary schools. The result in all the tables gave the similar pictures of the contrasting views of the teachers and the principals. As much as the narrative is disturbing some of the aspects of the teachers views are particularly disconcerting. For instance, the opinion on the existence of tribal and ethnic or cultural discrimination call for quick attention since it has implications for the needed harmony in Delta State as a society.

The teachers' perceptions indicate a very deep level of distrust against principals with respect to conflict and their management/resolution. The negative opinions held by teachers are glaringly in contrast to these of principals. This points to an environment that can be significantly considered as an uncomfortable or unconducive. Establishment of an encouraging culture in schools and gathering all stakeholders to work towards common objectives or goals could become an uneasy task without the execution of high level of coercion that are available before principals. This may give risk to enhancement of conflict and negative and unhealthy feelings among the rank and file of teachers. The challenge of interpersonal conflicts will continue to exists in Delta State secondary schools

except compromised is reached between teachers and principals.

6. Recommendations

In consideration of the above, the following recommendations are given:
  i. Principals need to form the habit of resolving interpersonal conflicts before it metamorphosed into serious challenges
  ii. Principals have to create programmes that will engender interpersonal relations that are powerful and empathically rooted. This is capable of reducing negative emotions that emerge during interpersonal conflicts
  iii. Conflict management and resolution should be made a part of the curriculum for training of principals and teachers. This will enable them to have the ability to identify and manage/resolve interpersonal conflicts.
  iv. Principals should strive to implement the policies and programme to take care of the ethical predicament that teacher experience while interacting with parents and students from diverse background.
  v. Principals need to involve teachers as members of a team for cooperating and exchange of ideas
  vi. There should be celebration of tribal and ethnic diversity among the teachers and other staff of the school by practical demonstration of respect for teachers and involving them in decision making in the schools.

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