

Original Article

PRINCIPALS' INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated principals' application of video surveillance, camera as security management practices in the administration of secondary schools in Enugu state. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population for the study was 8,816 respondents. It comprised 295 principals and 8,521 teachers in the public secondary schools in Enugu state. The sample size of the study consists of 338 respondents, consisting of 47 principals and 291 teachers in Enugu state public secondary schools, as at the time of this study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire which contained 5 items. The instrument was faced-validated by three experts; one from the Department of Mathematics and Computer Education and two from Department of Educational Management; all from the Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha and overall reliability coefficient of 0.95 was obtained, which indicates that the instrument was reliable and therefore, considered appropriate for data collection. Hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents by the researcher with the help of five research assistants who were briefed on the method of administering and retrieving of the instruments. Statistical tools used for data analysis for the study were Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test statistics. The findings revealed that the extent to which principals, use video surveillance cameras, as security management practice is to a low extent. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that, the governments through the federal, state Ministries of Education and the Post Primary School Management Board (PPSMB) should organize workshops and seminars that will expose principals on the latest technological tools such as video surveillance, cameras for ensuring security in their schools.

Keyword: Principals, Intervention Techniques, Conflict Resolution

Introduction

A school is a place of learning that is specifically designed to provide educational opportunities for students or pupils, overseen by teachers. In order to achieve the goals and objectives of a school, it is essential for all members to collaborate and coordinate their efforts. In Nigeria, there are various types of schools, including pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. This particular study focuses on the secondary school level, which is intended for students who have successfully completed their primary education. According to Oshunniyi (2011), secondary school refers to the formal education provided to children and adolescents, serving as a bridge between primary and tertiary education. It serves as a crucial link between primary and tertiary levels of education, as defined by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) in 2013. The secondary school system is a social entity comprising individuals with diverse personalities, needs, and dispositions (Oboegbulem & Onwurah, 2011). The person responsible for the administration of a secondary school is commonly known as the principal.

The principal serves as the executive leader of the administrative functions in a secondary school. According to Ekundayo's (2011) perspective, the principal's role involves coordinating activities to ensure smooth, prompt, and efficient functioning. In addition to the principal, other individuals within the secondary school community include teachers, students, and non-academic staff who operate within the established boundaries of the school to accomplish its predetermined goals. It is important to acknowledge that conflicts are likely to arise whenever two or more people come together, and if these conflicts are not addressed, they can escalate. Oresajo (2015) asserts that conflict is an unavoidable aspect of any organization that involves human

beings, who form the organization's human resources.

Conflict can be defined as a disagreement between two individuals or a group of people. It involves a divergence of interests, objectives, or priorities among individuals, groups, or organizations, as well as non-compliance with task requirements. Conflict is characterized by mutual hostility in interpersonal relationships and arises when individuals hold different values, opinions, needs, and interests without being able to reach a compromise. It leads to antagonism and opposition between individuals, groups, or organizations, obstructing the achievement of their goals and interests. Unlike healthy competition, which fosters positive values, conflict involves attempts to impede others' incompatible goals.

A secondary school environment encompasses a variety of values, beliefs, and attitudes, which inevitably leads to conflicts arising among students, parents, teachers, and staff. Ositoye, Adebayo, Alade, and Omolade (2012) attributed conflicts to clashes in interests, values, actions, or directions, often triggering the occurrence of conflicts. Oresajo (2015) stated that conflicts arise when the reduction of one motivating factor necessitates an increase in another, thus requiring a new adjustment. Furthermore, conflicts arise due to the inability of various parties involved, such as secondary school administrators, staff, and students, to reach an agreement on any issue related to their interactions. Anashie and Kulo (2014) believed that conflict resolution becomes necessary when conflicts manifest in an organization like a school.

Conflict resolution refers to the process of effectively managing a conflict and reaching a negotiated solution. According to Neil and Kevin (2015), conflict resolution can be understood as a working model consisting of two primary components: conflict management and negotiation.

Conflict management involves a communication process aimed at transforming the negative emotional state associated with a conflict into an emotional state that facilitates the resolution of the conflict. On the other hand, negotiation is a communication process that enables parties in dispute to achieve an outcome regarding their differences. Anashie and Kulo (2014) defined conflict resolution as the process or method of facilitating interpersonal communication, employing arbitration, bargaining, and negotiation, to minimize differences in ideals and perspectives among conflicting parties.

According to Nzeadi (2011), conflict resolution plays a crucial role in organizations because unresolved conflicts can disrupt the coordinated efforts towards achieving goals. Anashie and Kulo (2014), suggest that conflict resolution involves the use of non-violent resistance measures by conflicting parties to promote effective resolution, thereby using conflict as a catalyst for positive change. Conflict can arise in various contexts within a school, such as among staff, between staff and management, students and staff, or even between the school and the host community. Managing conflicts in these settings requires specific intervention techniques for better outcomes.

Intervention techniques refer to actions taken to interfere with or influence the outcome or process of a condition, typically with the aim of preventing harm or improving functioning. In the context of conflict resolution in school administration, intervention techniques are crucial because a conflict-ridden environment hinders meaningful teaching and learning (Shanka, 2017). Some examples of conflict intervention techniques used by principals, as mentioned by Nzeadi (2011), include conciliation, competition, cooperation, forcing, standing one's ground, compromising, giving in, accommodating, and competing.

Conciliation is an intervention technique where each party involved in a conflict compromises by gaining some of their demands while relinquishing others to establish peace. It is an alternative method of resolving disputes outside of the courtroom. Similar to mediation, conciliation is a voluntary, flexible, confidential, and interest-based process. The parties involved aim to reach a mutually agreeable settlement with the assistance of a conciliator who acts as a neutral third party (Nicole, 2013). Another method used in conflict resolution is competition intervention. This technique involves one party prioritizing their own assertiveness and disregarding empathy towards the other party. When adopting a competing style, the concerns and positions of the opposing side are completely disregarded.

However, if conflicts within secondary schools are left unaddressed, they can lead to chaos, the breakdown of law and order, and a decline in the standard of secondary education. It is crucial for principals to actively engage in conflict resolution within secondary schools. Consequently, it raises concerns about whether principals in urban and rural secondary schools in Enugu State possess specific intervention techniques for conflict resolution. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the conflict resolution techniques employed by principals in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Statement of the Problem

The occurrence of conflicts within secondary schools in Nigeria, particularly in Enugu state, has become a prevalent issue. These conflicts encompass various factors that can lead to tensions among the management, staff, and students. Examples of these factors include a lack of commitment from teachers, disciplinary problems among teachers and students, verbal abuse, character defamation, name-calling, false accusations, intolerance towards differences, misconceptions, and misrepresentations. The presence of conflicts among the management, staff,

and students hinders the achievement of the school's goals and objectives, as well as the overall progress, advancement, and development of the institution. If left unresolved, these conflicts perpetuate ongoing disputes, arguments, and animosity among the individuals involved. Unfortunately, the consequences of conflict within the secondary school system have worsened due to the absence of effective techniques for resolving these conflicts. Typically, the responsibility of conflict resolution falls on the shoulders of the school's management, led by the principal. However, principals, given their relationships with both staff and students, should actively participate in conflict resolution. This study aims to address these issues by focusing on the development of appropriate intervention techniques, such as conciliation and competition that principals can utilize to resolve conflicts in secondary schools in Enugu state. Consequently, the research question guiding this study is formulated as follows: "What are the intervention techniques employed by principals for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Enugu State?"

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine principals' intervention techniques for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Enugu state. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. ascertain principals' conciliation intervention techniques for conflict resolution in secondary schools;
2. Determine principals' competition intervention techniques for conflict resolution in secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the principals' conciliation intervention techniques for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Enugu state?

2. What are the principals' competition intervention techniques for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Enugu state?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided this study and were tested at .05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers with regard to principals' conciliation intervention techniques for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals and teachers as regards principals' competition intervention techniques for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Research Method

This research study employed a descriptive survey research design, as defined by Nworgu (2015), which involves collecting and analyzing data from a few individuals selected to represent a larger group. The study focused on a population of 8,588 respondents, consisting of 295 principals and 8,293 teachers from 295 public secondary schools in Enugu State. The sample size for the study was 258, including 47 principals and 211 teachers, selected using a multistage random sampling technique. The research instrument used was a structured questionnaire titled "Principals' Intervention Techniques for Conflict Resolution in Secondary Schools Questionnaire (PITCRSQ)", which was validated by three research experts. The reliability of the instrument was assessed through a trial test involving 14 principals and 26 teachers from public secondary schools in Anambra State. The Cronbach Alpha statistic was employed to determine the internal consistency of the instrument, resulting in a reliability index of 0.79 for cluster 1, 0.81 for cluster 2, and an overall reliability index of 0.80.

In addition, a four-point scale with assigned values was used to rate the responses to the questionnaire items. The scale included Strongly Agree (SA) with 4 points, Agree (A) with 3 points, Disagree (D) with 2 points, and Strongly Disagree (SD) with 1 point. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was calculated using the Cronbach Alpha statistic, yielding values of 0.84 and 0.76 for clusters 1 and 2, respectively. The overall reliability index was 0.80, indicating a high level of instrument reliability. Out of the 258 questionnaires administered, the researcher and research assistants collected 238 completed copies, with 37 from principals and 201 from teachers, resulting in a return rate of 92.25%. The research questions were analyzed using mean

and standard deviation, with numerical values assigned to each response option based on predefined ranges. Hypotheses were tested using the t-test statistic at a significance level of 0.05, and the interpretation of the test results was based on the significance (sig.) values obtained from the SPSS output. Null hypotheses were retained when the significance values were less than 0.05 and rejected when they exceeded 0.05.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the principals' conciliation intervention techniques for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Enugu State?

Table 1: Mean scores of principals and teachers on principals' conciliation intervention techniques for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Enugu State

ITEMS		PRINCIPALS = 37		TEACHERS 201		Overall = 238		Dec
S/N	Principals' conciliation intervention techniques for conflict resolution that are practiced in my school are:	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	
1	teachers and students are always allowed to meet privately for settlement of their conflict.	3.03	.833	3.05	.798	3.05	.802	A
2	mutually acceptable solutions to conflicts among students and teachers are guaranteed.	3.00	.882	3.02	.774	3.02	.790	A
3	in my school, teachers and students are moderately satisfied irrespective of who wins or loses in any conflict.	3.05	.880	3.03	.802	3.04	.813	A
4	students and teachers are encouraged to make concessions as a way to resolve their conflicts in school.	2.89	.843	2.99	.821	2.97	.824	A
5	teachers and students are encouraged to ignore the conflicting issues for peace to be in the school.	2.92	.862	3.07	.828	3.05	.833	A
6	Principal invites other stakeholders when dealing with any form of conflict.	3.05	.848	3.07	.797	3.07	.803	A

Grand Mean	2.99	.858	3.04	.803	3.03	.811	A
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The data presented in Table 1 depicted the viewpoints of principals and teachers regarding the conciliation intervention techniques employed by principals to address conflicts in secondary schools in Enugu State. The average scores of principals ranged from 2.89 to 3.05, while those of teachers ranged from 2.99 to 3.07. The overall mean scores for principals and teachers were 2.99 and 3.04, respectively, with corresponding standard deviations of 0.858 and 0.803. Moreover, the combined grand mean was 3.03, with a standard deviation of 0.811.

The researcher observed a consistent and uniform pattern in the responses, indicating that the participants were in agreement. Consequently, both principals and teachers acknowledged the utilization of conciliation intervention techniques by principals for conflict resolution in Enugu State's secondary schools.

Research Question 2: What are the principals' competition intervention techniques for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Enugu State?

Table 2: Mean scores of principals and teachers on principals' competition intervention techniques for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Enugu State

ITEMS		PRINCIPALS = 37		TEACHERS = 201		Overall = 238		Dec
S/N	Principals' competition intervention techniques for conflict resolution that are practiced in my school are:	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	
7	principal mobilizes the potential resources of members for accomplishing group goals.	3.14	.787	2.90	.825	2.94	.822	A
8	meting out punitive measure to any of the party who fails to adhere to directives given.	2.89	.875	3.03	.824	3.01	.832	A
9	principal utilizes the potential resources of members for accomplishing group goals.	3.05	.705	3.06	.807	3.06	.790	A
10	permitting each party to suggest satisfactory solution to the problem.	2.95	.815	3.02	.821	3.01	.819	A
11	Permitting each group to make satisfactory suggestions to solving the problems at stake.	2.92	.894	3.14	.794	3.11	.812	A
12	encouraging both parties to see conflict as a win issue.	3.03	.833	3.12	.781	3.11	.788	A
13	discouraging issues that lead to disagreement among staff and students.	2.84	.800	3.11	.826	3.07	.826	A
14	allowing collective resolutions to solving all controversial issues.	2.97	.833	2.97	.818	2.97	.819	A
15	permitting cross- examination by both parties involved.	2.95	.848	3.02	.827	3.01	.829	A

Grand Mean	2.97	.821	3.04	.814	3.03	.815	A
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The data presented in Table 2 displayed the responses of principals and teachers regarding the techniques used by principals to address conflicts in secondary schools in Enugu State. The average scores given by principals ranged from 2.84 to 3.14, while teachers' scores ranged from 2.90 to 3.14. The overall average scores for principals and teachers were 2.97 and 3.04, respectively, with standard deviations of .821 and .814. Furthermore, the combined average score was 3.03, with a standard deviation of .815. This indicates that both principals and teachers are in agreement regarding the utilization of competition intervention techniques by principals for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Discussion of Findings

The study's findings indicate that principals in Enugu State's secondary schools utilize conciliation techniques to resolve conflicts. According to the respondents, teachers and students are permitted to privately discuss and settle their disputes, and mutually agreeable solutions are ensured for conflicts involving students and teachers. In my school, both teachers and students express moderate satisfaction regardless of the outcome of conflicts. The study also highlights that students and teachers are encouraged to make compromises as a means of resolving their conflicts within the school. These findings align with Anashie & Kulo's (2014) research, which revealed that conciliation was employed by secondary school administrators for conflict resolution. Furthermore, the study indicates that there is no significant difference between principals and teachers in terms of the conciliation techniques employed by principals in Enugu State's secondary schools.

Additionally, the study's findings demonstrate that principals in Enugu State's secondary schools utilize competitive techniques for conflict resolution. As per

the respondents, principals mobilize the resources of individuals to achieve group objectives and impose penalties on those who do not comply with given directives. This finding is consistent with Anashie & Kulo's (2014) research, which found that secondary school administrators employed competitive techniques to resolve conflicts. It also aligns with Nicole (2013) assertion that many schools rely heavily on competitive, compromising, and accommodating strategies for conflict management. Moreover, the study reveals that there is no significant difference between principals and teachers regarding the competitive techniques employed by principals for conflict resolution in Enugu State's secondary schools.

Conclusion

The research examined how principals in Enugu State's secondary schools handle conflicts and find resolutions. It is important to acknowledge that schools function as social systems with their own set of norms and values. Within this system, there are complex relationships among various members, including principals, teachers, nonteaching staff, and students. Given the interdependence of their responsibilities and the varying expectations associated with their roles, conflicts naturally arise in different circumstances among these individuals. To address such conflicts, the study identified two primary intervention techniques employed by principals: conciliation and competition. In conclusion, the research findings indicate that principals in Enugu State's secondary schools utilize these strategies to resolve conflicts.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Relevant institutional frameworks should be appropriately put in place to enable the principals further appreciate the emerging ideas and

innovations concerning conflict resolutions in schools.

2. The principals as a matter of urgency should be exposed to the necessity of adopting all the effective conflict resolution strategies among others.

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