



PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS' CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES, TEACHERS' COMMITMENT TO WORK AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN UPPER BASIC SCHOOLS IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

This study investigated perceived influence of principals' conflict management strategies, teachers' commitment to work and students' academic performance in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. This study was anchored on three theories; The theory of Conflict Management by (Max Weber in 1906), Side-bet theory on Commitment to Work by (Becker Holland in 1960), and the theory of Academic Performance by (Don Elger in 2007). The study adopted correlational survey and Ex post factor research design. Eleven research objectives, eleven research questions and ten hypotheses were developed respectively for the study. The population of the study comprised of 1,837 principals and 22,464 teachers in 1,837 Upper Basic Schools in the North- Central Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling technique was used in selecting the number of principals, schools and teachers for the study. The instruments used for data gathering were Perceived Influence of Principals' Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire" (PIPCMSQ), Teachers' Commitment to Work Questionnaire' (TCTWQ) and Students' Academic Performance Results from 2014/2015-2023/2024 academic sessions. The instruments were validated and the PIPCMSQ and TCTWQ were tested for reliability which yielded reliability indices of 0.72 and 0.77 respectively. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while simple linear regressions was used to test hypotheses 1 – 9 and multiple regressions was used to test hypothesis 10. Findings from the study revealed that principals practice avoidance, collaborative, negotiating, compromising and competing management strategies to a high extent in Upper Basic Schools in



North Central Nigeria. Findings from the study showed that there was a significant relationship between principals' conflict management strategies, teachers' commitment to work and students' academic performance. The study showed there was a significant inter-relationship among perceived influence of principals' conflict management strategies, teachers' commitment to work and students' academic performance in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. The study recommended that principals in Upper Basic Schools of North Central should sustain those conflict management strategies in resolving conflict so that teachers can be committed towards enhancing students' academic performance in schools.

Keywords: Conflict Management Strategies; Teachers' Commitment to Work; Students' Academic Performance; School Leadership; Upper Basic Schools; North Central Nigeria

1.0 Introduction

Every organization, whether public or private, formal or informal is established with the aim of achieving set objectives and Upper Basic Schools are not exception. One of the most crucial means through which Upper Basic School can achieve its objectives is through human resources. Human resources are the major determinants of any school's success or failure, because they perform managerial functions and the manipulation of other devices, such as machines or material resources to work accordingly. In the context of the Upper Basic Schools, teachers are the main resources required to implement the school curriculum in order for the school goals to be realized. Hence, there is need for every teacher to be committed in discharging his or her duties in order to achieve the school goals.

School organization consists of people with diverse cultural, religious, social, political and economic backgrounds. This is evident in their commitment to work, temperament and frame of reference, which certainly makes their control often complex for the school administrators. Effective administration of Upper Basic Schools, to a large extent may depend on a cordial and cooperative working relationship among teachers, principals, students and even the non-academic staff. The harmonious working relationships, mutual implementation of decisions, and peaceful academic environment may be jeopardized, if the school teachers, principals and members of the school community are often in conflict. Conflict occurs when different perceptions or opinions are contradictory in nature (Bano, Ashraf, & Zia, 2018). Ositoye, Adebayo, Alade and Omolade (2017) attributed conflict to be a clash of interests, values, actions or directions that often spark the phenomenon (conflict). Kenan (2018), explained that conflicts are normal in any organization, because people have different opinions, and when some individuals cannot accept other peoples' opinions, resulting in conflict.



Onwurah and Oboegbulem (2018) asserted conflicts that are common occurrences in life. Conflicts are inevitable in all organizations, educational institutions inclusive. They involve human beings with varied interests, goals and aspirations. Conflict is therefore a social problem. Although conflict is endemic to all social life, it is an inevitable part of living due to the fact that it is related to situations of scarce resources, division of functions, power relations and role differentiation. Conflict entails discord in actions, lack of concordance in opinion in order to accomplish one's own goals. It connotes disagreement, distortions, inconsistencies, and antagonisms existing in a particular system. Lukeman, (2023) perceived conflict as human and social problems which involve mutual hostility, differences, disagreements, opposition resulting in man's inhumanity to man, use of violence.

Conflict is a mutual interference of parts, actions and reactions in a social system. Conflict is a process in which one party perceives that its interest is being opposed or negatively affected by another party (Ugwu, Emegini, Okeke-James, Igbokwe & Okparaji, 2020). Similarly, Amie-Ogan and Eziri (2021) defined conflict as any divergence of interest, objectives or priorities between individuals, groups or organizations or non-conformity to requirement of a task, activity or process. Amoda, Awe, Ogunade and Yakubu (2021) defined conflict as:

The behaviour of an individual, a group or an organization which impedes or restricts (at least temporarily) another party from attaining a desired goal. Although, conflict may impede the attainment of one's goals, the consequences may be beneficial if it produces new information which, in turn, enhances the decision-making, lengthy delays over issues which do not importantly affect the outcome of the project, or a disintegration of the term's efforts (p.257).

Conflict could arise among staff in a school setting, between staff and management, students and staff, between the school and the host community, or between trade unions and the government. Conflicts exist whenever an action by one party is perceived as preventing or interfering with the goals, needs, or actions of another party. Conflicts tend to be associated with negative features and situations which give rise to inefficiency, ineffectiveness or dysfunctional consequences. However, in some cases, it can actually stimulate creative problem solving and improve the situation for all parties involved.

The consequences of conflicts on the school organization have always been regrettable, part of the repercussions on the school is disruption of academic programmes, hostility, stress, anxiety, unnecessary tensions, suspicion and withdrawal from active participation in school activities (Ihuarulam, 2015). It also renders the school environment uncomfortable for serious academic activities. Unresolved conflict can result in the breakdown of a group. When conflict that occurs in the school is unaddressed, it reduces teachers' effectiveness, reduces morale, hampers students' academic performance, and increases absenteeism among teachers and students. It leads to increased stress among employees, decreases productivity, and at worst, aggression or violence.



These could affect the commitment of teachers which would as well affect students' academic performance.

Conflict, like any other key business process, must be managed. If education is to be managed effectively for sustainable peace and economic development in Nigeria, then education of the Upper Basic Schools should be managed free of conflict. The aim of conflict management is to put an end to conflict by addressing the root causes of the problem(s) at hand and coming up with fair solutions that all sides can agree on. There is a need for school administration to adopt appropriate strategies to manage conflict in schools. (Ihuarulam, 2015). Conflict management strategies refer to those techniques or approaches that can be used to prevent, control or resolve conflicts.

Conflict management strategies refer to internal processes that allow various authorities to address the fundamental causes of issues in order to settle disputes in a way that is agreeable to the parties involved. Conflict management strategies may be characterized as the procedures, controls, or methods used by the principal of a school in an effort to curb conflict's destructive inclinations (Edet, Benson & Williamss, 2020). Conflict management strategies are those tactics or methods that may be applied to stop, manage, or settle conflicts in educational settings. Any school should prioritize conflict management strategies since they enable the reduction or management of the negative impacts of disputes (Mbah, Oluka & Alio, 2021). Different disputes may necessitate different conflict management strategies, with the decision based on the nature of the conflict or the persons involved. Conflict management strategies are very vital to any school organization because it is via these strategies that negative effects resulting from conflicts can be minimized or controlled.

There exist several strategies that could be used to resolve conflicts in schools. These include: dominance, compromise, synergy, culture of civility, win-lose strategy, lose-lose strategy, win-win strategy; integration, obliging, smoothing, avoidance, mediation, dialogue, arbitration, conciliation, diplomacy (Crossfield & Bourne, 2018); negotiation, avoidance, effective communication, accommodating (Oshionebo & Ashang, 2017); adjudication, collective bargaining, confrontation, problem solving, creation of budget committee, separation device, neglect or silence, clarification of inter dependencies, consultation, boxing the problem, clarification of goals, and prayer (Ihuarulam, 2015).

The process of managing conflict includes the explicit interplay of knowledge types, attitudes, and abilities that aims at productivity in organizational operations, as well as encouragement by the management of the organization. In an effort to discover answers to the issues affecting organizations, managing conflicts necessitates conversations between the opposing groups with conflicting viewpoints. The main goal of conflict management approaches is to completely prevent the escalation of negative or destructive linked conflict and to do so at all costs. A social process



that includes all stakeholders must articulate competent and effective conflict management systems for this to be carried out successfully (Aja, 2018).

Each and every school administrator needs to use conflict management techniques. Techniques or methods that can be utilized to prevent, control, or resolve disputes are referred to as conflict management strategies. Any school should prioritize conflict management techniques since they enable the reduction or management of the negative effects of disputes (Saka, 2020).

Various strategies are therefore opened to principals to apply in any given conflict situation in their schools. There is no one best conflict management strategy that may be used in all conflict situations. Different conflicts may need different strategies, depending on the nature of the conflict or the parties involved. However, five conflict management strategies were of major concern in this study, they include: collaborative, avoidance, negotiation, compromising and competing conflict management strategies.

Negotiation conflict strategy refers to a situation where two or more parties have opposing interests and are willing to find a mutually acceptable solution to the issue that is acceptable to both parties.

Avoidance, in the context of conflict, refers to a strategy where one or more parties deliberately choose not to engage in the conflict or confrontation. Instead of addressing the issue directly, they evade or withdraw from the situation. Avoidance can occur for various reasons, such as fear of escalation, a desire to keep the peace, or a belief that the conflict is not worth the effort.

Competing is a conflict resolution strategy in which one party seeks to satisfy their own interests at the expense of others. It is a power-oriented approach where the focus is on winning the conflict, often without considering the needs or concerns of the opposing party. In this approach, one party pushes for their desired outcome, sometimes aggressively, and may use authority, position, or persuasive tactics to achieve their goals.

Collaborating strategy of conflict management, sometimes called problem-solving or integrating, involves working through conflict differences and solving problems so that everyone wins (Shee, Mwawasi & Kirigia, 2021). It seeks to resolve conflict by placing maximum focus on both groups' concerns. The collaborative strategy views conflict as problems to be solved and finding creative solutions that satisfy all the parties concerned. Collaboration takes time and if the relationship among the parties is not important, then it may not be worth the time and energy to create a win-win solution (Amoda, Awe, Ogunade & Yakubu, 2021). It is commonly named as problem-solving style. Furthermore, collaboration fosters respect, trust, and the development of connections. Conflict must be addressed frankly and in a way that displays openness for all parties to acquire what they need in order to create a more collaborative atmosphere. When both sides are concerned, the collaborative technique is used in conflict resolution. It is both aggressive and cooperative, with the purpose of finding a "win/win" solution. These conflict management strategies have been suggested to have an influence on teachers' job effectiveness (Thote & Gowri, 2020).



Compromising conflict management strategy includes the preparedness of each conflicting party to give up a portion. Its significance is to resolve conflict; each disputing part gives value to the conflict and not having a loser or winning but maintaining peace (Ghaffar, 2019). The School Management Team and teachers must provide insight towards the best way of resolving conflict and providing all the conflicting parties with an acceptable method of behaviour that will be tolerated in school. From these discussions, in a nutshell, it can be deduced that managing conflict reduces adverse effects, which is critical in maintaining a balanced, productive school environment. Undoubtedly, each style is contingent upon the situation, and measuring an individual's inclinations towards a specific conflict resolution strategy is feasible, considering that conflict is unavoidable, especially in a school.

Work commitment can be referred to as psychological relationship between an individual and the organization where he works. It determines the decision to continue or to leave the organization. Organization commitment can also be seen as loyalty and attention show to the success of the organization. An organization that the employees are committed to work accomplishes the expected results through high performance, low resignation level, and short absence (Arifin, 2019).

Teachers are expected to display the skills they have acquired to students in the classroom setting. The teacher's knowledge is much concerned with how a teacher relates their subject matter knowledge to their pedagogical knowledge and how subject matter is related to the process of academic reasoning. Teachers who possess strong subject matter knowledge give details in their lessons and link the topic to other topics, demanding many questions from students. In secondary schools, teachers must have the skills of topics difficult for students and why, know ways to facilitate students to understand the subject, and use varieties of methods that are useful for teaching a particular concept.

Warrah et al. (2020) expressed that the transformation of subject matter knowledge includes a series of actions from the representation of ideas in various forms, instruction selection of teaching methods to adapting. Teachers' job commitment expresses the teachers' motivational orientation to the job in which they are engaged. Teachers who are highly committed to their job would consider their work to be a very essential part of their lives and their happiness depend on how they perform the jobs. They truly care for and are concerned about their teaching job. Teachers job commitment is undoubtedly needed for all establishments to cultivate organization commitment since personnel is the key foundation of sustained achievement and efficiency. The commitment of workers is a sign of greater devotion and improved efficiency". Committed personnel (teachers) often work assiduously to fulfill objectives of establishment and appear to positively consent to their values.

Many positive behavioral outcomes can be correlated with organizational commitment of employees, such as greater retention of workers, motivation, efficiency, quality of work, and willingness to make sacrifices to enhance the reputation and performance of organizations.



Organization commitment is a crucial element in assessing organizations' effectiveness, which increases employee morale (Hayat, Azeem, Nawaz, Humayon, & Ahmed, 2019). Organizational commitment as a person's feeling with regard to continuing his or her association with the organization, acceptance of the values and goals of the organization, and willingness to help the organization to achieve such goals and values. Thus, organizational commitment is a bond the employee has with his/her organization. Commitment is regarded as the opinion that teacher commitment is one of the major professional characteristics that influence an educator's success (Desta, 2014).

Academic performance, which is measured by the examination results, is one of the major goals of a school. Academic performance is a measure of how students have fared in various courses or subjects offered in an educational setting with which students can be awarded grades. Academic performance is commonly measured through examinations or continuous assessments but there is no general agreement on how it is best evaluated or which aspects are most important. For example, A1, B2, C4, C5 P7 as a convenient summary measure of the academic performance of their students (Oyeshiku, 2019). In recent times, there have been great reduction in the academic performance of Upper Basic Schools students and this study investigated the relationship between this poor performance of students and teachers' commitment to work. Teaching requires dedication, commitment, and excitement. Commitment has been known to be related to teachers' performance and teachers' commitment contribute to the academic performance of students and the teaching quality.

However, among the human resources required for attaining the school objectives, the roles of the teachers cannot be overemphasized. The teachers are the main human resources required to implement the school curriculum in order for the goals of the school to be realized. Teacher commitment has been recognized since 1980 when people left the teaching industry to find lucrative work. Gift (2023) added that teacher commitment has been used for teacher quality and a committed teacher has been used interchangeably for dedicated teachers. Teacher commitment is a strong emotional bond that the educational workers have towards the schools. Commitment is a job attitude that drives individuals to be willing to work harder to accomplish objectives and be in employment. Teachers who love teaching would exhibit hard work and derive satisfaction from it. Commitment differentiates professional teachers from unprofessional teachers. A teacher who is committed to work would be after students' progress, cater for them and guide them to accomplish the learning outcome. They endeavor to improve their method of teaching and their practices in the class as well as considering their individual differences.

The researcher observed that some of the Upper Basic Schools in the North Central Nigeria are still experiencing ineffective administration, indiscipline, unconducive atmosphere for teaching and learning, inadequate teaching and learning materials, unplanned expansion, inadequate funding, inadequate human and material resources, poor attitude to work among teachers, poor



leadership style on conflict management, improper supervision, poor communication network, objective differences, hostile atmosphere and lack of proper incentives to teaching profession. All these may be sources of conflict between principals and teachers, principals and students, teachers and teachers, teachers and principals and teachers and students. These might as well have influence on teachers' commitment to work and also poor students' academic performance in Upper Basic schools' administration. It is on this background that this study examined Perceived Influence of Principals' Conflict Management Strategies, Teachers' Commitment to Work and Students' Academic Performance in Upper Basic schools in North Central, Nigeria.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate perceived influence of principals' conflict management strategies, teachers' commitment to work and students' academic performance in

Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study were to:

- i. find out the common types of conflict management strategies that exist in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria;
- ii. determine the extent to which principals practice collaborative conflict management strategy in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria;
- iii. ascertain the extent to which principals adopt avoidance conflict management strategy in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria;
- iv. assess the extent to which principals use negotiation conflict management strategy in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria;

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study

1. What are the common types of conflict management strategies that exist in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria?
2. To what extent do principals practice collaborative conflict management strategy in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria?
3. To what extent do principals adopt avoidance conflict management strategy in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria?
4. To what extent do principals use negotiation conflict management strategy in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria?



.5 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between principals' collaborative conflict management strategy and students' academic performance in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria

H0₂: There is no significant relationship between principals' avoidance conflict management strategy and students' academic performance in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria

H0₃: There is no significant relationship between principals' use of negotiation conflict management strategy and students' academic performance in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria

H0₄: There is no significant relationship between principals' compromising conflict management strategy and students' academic performance in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria

2.0 Method

Research Design

The design adopted for this study was a correlational survey and ex post factor design. Correlational survey design aims at predicting relationship between two or multiple variables. Cheprasov (2018) defined a correlational survey design as a type of research design where a researcher seeks to understand the kind of relationships that exist between two or more variables. This design was relevant and appropriate for this study because the researcher correlated the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables are principals' conflict management strategies and teachers' commitment to work while the dependent variable was students' academic performance. It is believed that the students' academic performance is dependent on the principals' application of the appropriate conflict management strategy and also on the teachers' commitment to work in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of 1,837 principals and 22,464 teachers in 1,837 Upper Basic schools in the North- Central Nigeria.

**Table 1: Population Distribution of Upper Basic Schools, Principals and Teachers**

S/N	States	Schools	Principals	Teachers
1	Benue	309	309	3,985
2	Kogi	257	257	2,724
3	Kwara	335	335	4,484
4	Nasarawa	275	275	2,493
5	Niger	261	261	3,593
6	Plateau	312	312	2,668
7	FCT, Abja	88	88	2,517
Total		1,837	1,837	22,464

Source: Secondary School Education Board Statistics Digest (2024)

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The sample size for schools and principals was determined by 10 % of the population of study. According to Allen (2017) 10% sample is suitable when the desired respondents or institution is manageable. Research Advisor (2006) at confidence of 95% was used to determine the sample size for teachers. The sample size consisted 41 principals, 357 teachers in 41 Upper Basic secondary schools in 9 Educational Zones in 3 States of the North Central, Nigeria.

The sampling procedure adopted for this study was multi-stage sampling technique. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 3 States namely; Kogi, Nasarawa and Niger States. The reason is that, Kwara and Kogi were together as one state before they were separated, Nasarawa, Benue and Plateau were together and also Niger and FCT. Stratified sampling technique was adopted to cluster all Upper Basic schools according to Educational Zones and 3 Educational Zones in each state of Kogi, Nasarawa and Niger States were randomly selected for the study.

Proportionate sampling technique was used to assign sampled respondents proportionately according to the population of each state. Simple random sampling technique through balloting was used to select the respondents in order to achieve proper representation as well as fair and even spread of respondents.

**Table2: Sample Size of Schools, Principals and Teachers**

S/N	Sampled States	Sampled Education al Zone	Population of Schools	Sampled Schools	Population of Principals	Sampled Principal s	Populatio n of Teachers	Sampled Teachers
1	Kogi							
		Ankpa	49	5	49	5	726	40
		Lokoja	23	2	13	2	383	21
		Kabba	36	4	36	4	384	21
2	Nasarawa							
		Lafia	57	6	57	6	776	43
		Keffi	53	5	53	5	873	49
		Akwanga	59	6	59	6	774	43
3	Niger							
		Bida	45	4	45	4	768	43
		Suleja	43	4	43	4	853	47
		Minna	47	5	47	5	892	50
		Total	412	41	412	41	6,429	357

Instrumentation

Three researcher developed instruments were used for collection of data for this study; Instrument 1 titled: “Perceived Influence of Principals’ Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire” (PIPCMSQ) for teachers. Instrument 1 was on principals’ conflict management strategies with 30 statement items in five parts. The response format to the questionnaire items for part one on instrument 1 is on 4- point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA)=4 , Agree (A)= 3, Disagree (D)= 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD)= 1. For part two to four of the instrument 1 is High Extent (HE)=4 , Moderate Extent (ME)= 3, Low Extent (LE)= 2 and Very Low Extent (VLE)= 1.

Instrument 2 titled “Teachers’ Commitment to Work Questionnaire” (TCWQ) for principals. Instrument 2 has 20 statement items in four parts. The response format to the questionnaire items



for instrument 2 is on 4- point rating scale of High Level (HL)=4 , Moderate Level (ML)= 3, Low Level (LL)= 2 and Very Low Level (VLL)= 1.

Instrument 3 “Students’ Academic Performance (Proforma) checklist to harvest students’ results. It is data of Upper Basic Schools Certificate Examination results for the period of 10 years (2014/2015 –2023/2024 academic sessions) The Researcher collected students’ academic performance from 2014/2015 to 2023/2024 academic sessions. The BECE results was categorized using 4 point rating scale as follow:

Five credits including mathematics and English language = 4

Five credits with either mathematics or English language = 3

Five credits without mathematics and English language = 2

Less than 5 credits = 1

The decision rule is as follows:

Mean Scores of 3.50 -4.00 Very good performance

Mean scores of 2.50 – 3.49= Good performance

Mean scores of 1.50 – 2.49= Poor performance

Mean scores of 0.00-1.49= Very poor performance

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The validity of the two instruments “Perceived Influence of Principals’ Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire” (PIPCMSQ) and “Teachers’ Commitment to Work Questionnaire” (TCWQ) were ascertained by the researcher’s supervisors. The instruments were validated by two senior lecturers in the Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, to ascertain whether items are clearly stated, relevant and could elicit the required responses. The appropriateness, clarity and comprehensiveness of the instruments were also checked. They made some modification of some items for improvement of the study. Their suggestions were adopted into the final draft of the instruments that were administered to respondents for collecting data for the study. Instrument three did not require validation because it was standardized.

For reliability of the instruments, a pilot- test was carried out using 2 principals and 20 teachers in 2 Upper Basic Secondary Schools in the FCT, Abuja which were not within the sample for the main study. Split half method was used to analyze their responses. Their responses were divided into odd and even numbers and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was applied and the reliability index values for ‘Principals’ conflict management strategies questionnaire’ and ‘Teachers’ commitment to work questionnaire’ were 0.72 and 0.77 respectively.



The researcher therefore considered the instruments to be reliable for the study. According to Olayola (2007) a reliability Coefficient index of 0.50 and 0.60 and above is appropriate for research work.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher collected a letter of introduction from the Head of the Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja. The researcher took the introduction letter to Secondary School Education Board in each state of the study who in turn gave letter of permission to the researcher to enable him administer the instruments. The letter from the board were submitted to the Principals of the sampled schools. The researcher administered the questionnaire with the help of research assistants who were teachers in each of the schools. The researcher and his assistants adopted on the spot delivery approach in distributing and collecting the questionnaire. A period of two days was given to respondents who were not able to fill the questionnaire on the spot. This was to ensure maximum recovery of the questionnaire that was administered. The proforma check list was to harvest the students' results from 2014/2015 to 2023/2024 academic sessions.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed by both descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used for answering the research questions. Simple linear regressions was used for testing hypotheses 1 – 9 and multiple regressions was used for testing hypothesis 10 at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule for the research question was that mean, rating of 2.50 and above was taken as agreement and any mean rating that falls below 2.50 was taken as disagreement. Standard deviation was used to ascertain the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents mean ratings. In taking decision on the null hypotheses, if t-calculated value is equal to or greater than t-critical, the null hypotheses was adjudged to be significant, but if otherwise, it was adjudged not significant. Therefore accepted or rejected.

The BECE results from 2014/2015-2023/2024 academic sessions was categorized using 4 point rating scale as follows:

Five credits including mathematics and English language = 4

Five credits with either mathematics or English language = 3

Five credits without mathematics and English language = 2

Less than 5 credits and no credits = 1

3.0 Data Analysis and Results

The information on data analysis and results were shown on table 3 to 23



3.1 Answers to Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the common types of conflict management strategies that exist in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria?

Table 3: Common Types of Conflict Management Strategies that Exist in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria

N = 41

S/N	The Following Conflict the Management Strategies Exist in My School	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Collaborative	12	26	3	0	3.61	0.66	Agreed
2	Avoidance	15	22	4	0	3.71	0.46	Agreed
3	Negotiating	10	27	3	1	3.12	0.64	Agreed
4	Compromising	6	4	10	21	1.88	0.40	Disagreed
5	Competing	11	16	11	13	2.85	0.80	Agreed
Sectional Mean						3.03	0.59	Agreed

Table 1 indicated the mean scores of respondents on the common types of conflict management strategies that exist in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. It was observed from the table that the sectional mean is 3.29 (greater 2.50 mid-point) which showed that all the conflict management strategies are common types that exist. However, Item 2 (avoidance) has the highest mean score of 3.71. Hence, avoidance strategy is the most common type of conflict management strategy that exist in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria

Research Question 2: To what extent do principals practice collaborative conflict management strategy in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria?

**Table 2: Mean Scores on the Extent to which Principals' Practice Collaborative Conflict Management Strategy in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria****N = 357**

Table 2 showed the mean scores on the extent to which principals practice collaborative conflict

S/N	Collaborative	HE	ME	LE	VLE	Mean	SD	Decision
6	Principal encourages brainstorming sessions to collectively find solutions to problems.	288	69	0	0	3.81	0.40	High Extent
7	Principal establishes a working relation among the teachers.	288	69	0	0-	3.81	0.40	High Extent
8	Principal addresses conflicts early and constructively in order to prevent escalation	34	323	0	0	3.19	0.40	High Extent
9	Principal develops trust by being transparent and consistent in actions and communications with teachers	70	287	0	0	3.10	0.29	High Extent
10	Principal sets common objectives that align with both school goals and individual teacher aspirations.	69	35	253	0	2.49	0.40	Low Extent
Sectional Mean						3.28	0.37	High Extent

management strategy in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. It was observed from the table that a sectional mean score of 3.28 was obtained (greater than 2.50 mid-point). This showed that principals practice collaborative conflict management strategy to a high extent in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria.



Research Question 3: To what extent do principals adopt avoidance conflict management strategy in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean Scores on the extent to which Principals' Adopt Avoidance Conflict Management Strategy in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria

N = 357

S/N	Avoidance	HE	ME	LE	VLE	Mean	SD	Decision
11	Principal ensures that teachers ignore conflicting issues for peace to reign in the school	253	104	9	0	3.01	.660	High Extent
12	Principal set-asides conflicting matters in order to avoid conflict.	253	104	0	0	3.71	0.46	High Extent
13	Principal ensures that teachers are treated equally in order to avoid conflict	288	69	0	0	3.81	.40	High Extent
14	Principal ensures that teachers are motivated in order to avoid conflict.	288	69	0	0	2.87	.81	High Extent
15.	Principal ignore controversial issues that involve teachers in order to avoid conflict in the school	287	70	0	0	3.81	0.40	High Extent
Sectional Mean						3.44	0.55	High Extent

Table 3 showed the mean scores on the extent to which principals adopt avoidance conflict management strategy in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. It was observed from the table that a sectional mean score of 3.44 was obtained (greater than 2.50 mid-point). This showed that principals adopt avoidance conflict management strategy to a high in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria

Research Question 4: To what extent do principals use negotiation conflict management strategy in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria?

**Table 4: Mean Scores on the extent of use of Negotiating Conflict Management Strategy in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria**

N = 357

S/N	Negotiation	HE	ME	LE	VLE	Mean	SD	Decision
16	Principal settles grievances by coming up with views which appear similar to all the parties	288	69	0	0	3.81	0.40	High Extent
17	Principal encourages all sides to make concessions	288	69	0	0	3.81	0.40	High Extent
18	Principal ensures that all parties accept blames and praises appropriately	69	288	0	0	3.19	0.40	High Extent
19	Principal fosters a culture of open communication where teachers feel safe to express their concerns and conflicts	34	323	0	0	3.10	0.29	High Extent
20.	Principal practices active listening and show empathy towards teachers' perspectives in order to de-escalate conflicts.	253	87	17	0	3.20	0.40	High Extent
Sectional Mean						3.42	0.40	High Extent

Table 4 showed the mean scores on the extent to which principals use negotiation conflict management strategy in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. It was observed from the table that a sectional mean score of 3.42 was obtained (greater than 2.50 mid-point). This showed that principals use negotiating conflict management strategy to a high extent in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria



3.1 Discussion of the Findings

Based on the findings from this study, the following were discussed;

Avoidance strategy is the most common type of conflict management strategy that exist in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. However, there was a significant relationship between principals' collaborative conflict management strategies and students' academic performance in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. This finding is in agreement that of Jack *et al* (2018) who discovered from his findings that conflict management strategies of principals enhance sustainable learning environment for improved achievement in secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The reasons for the similarities in the findings of the current and previous studies is hinged on the fact when principals adopt the use of collaborative strategy in managing conflict, it enhances teachers' performance and helps them to work towards improving students' academic achievement. To further support the current findings, Bakwaph (2023) found that principals' and teachers' perception had significant impact on conflict management strategies for effective teaching in order to enhance achievement in secondary schools in Enugu State. Hence, it is pertinent to note that management strategies play a vital role in ascertaining academic performance of students. In their findings Ghaffar, Amir & Naz, (2017) posited that Poor management of conflict in school administration may result in deficiencies in the performance of the students in terms of discipline and academic performance. Hence, the fact is that if teachers or students are able enough to understand the nature of conflict then it is very easy for them to manage any type of conflict in a constructive way.

Principals practice of collaborative conflict management strategy to a high extent in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. However, there was a significant relationship between principals' avoidance conflict management strategies and students' academic performance in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. Similarly, Uwaezuoke (2021) in his study found that conflict management practices employed by secondary school principals enhanced quality service that improves students' outcomes and achievement in secondary schools in Rivers State. The reason for the similarity in the current and previous is hinged on the fact that when avoidance strategy is adopted, the school learning environment becomes conducive for effective learning and this enhances students' academic achievement. Findings is due to the fact that when principals decide to suspend deliberations or avoid deliberating on issues that may stir up conflict, the school environment becomes peaceful and this enhances students' academic achievement. Principals' conflict management has placed the educational system in a state of anarchy among staff in secondary schools thus the sources of conflict resulting from inadequate funding, poor facilities, poor appraisal, absenteeism, teacher's strike and student's demonstrations have caused the standard of education at the secondary school level to be rated low. The fact is that a conflict-ridden education system will not be able to provide good quality education to students



Principals adopt avoidance conflict management strategy to a high extent in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. However, it indicated that there was a significant relationship between principals' negotiation conflict management strategies and students' academic performance in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. This is in agreement with findings from the study of Aniefiok (2017) which showed there is a significant relationship between Principals' Conflict Resolution Strategies and Teachers' Job Effectiveness for enhanced student learning outcomes in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Similarly, findings from the study of Victor (2024) revealed that conflict management strategies have positive and significant relationship with teaching partnership for improving students' performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Furthermore, study of Victor (2024) concluded that there exists relationship between conflict management skills and teaching partnership in public secondary schools in Anambra State. In the same vein, Wahum, Sammy and Kyalom (2023) found in their studies that negotiation conflict management strategy had significant impact on teachers' productivity in terms of students' performance in public secondary schools in Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya. The reason for the similarities in the findings is due to the fact that when conflicts are managed through negotiations, it produces results that make school management effective and helps in improving students' achievement. Principals use negotiating conflict management strategy to a high extent in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. However, it indicated there was a significant relationship between principals' compromising conflict management strategies and students' academic performance in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. This is in agreement with the findings of Mutai (2024) which indicated there was significant influence of conflict resolution strategies such as compromising used by the school administration, on learners' academic performance in KCSE in Narok County, Kenya. Shahmohammadi (2014) contends that conflict organization limits the unfavourable consequences of conflict and endorses the positive results of conflict to improve education in a school. In contrast, Saiti (2015) states that school circumstances in pragmatic terms can be uncertain; school associates, especially principals, should comprehend the underlying foundations of any resistance. Furthermore, such resistance should be challenged adequately in a suitable method to establish a conducive educational environment. The findings from the current and previous studies is hinged on the fact that through effective negotiation, staff conflict is easily managed in schools thereby making school management and teachers focused towards improving students' academic performance

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that avoidance strategy was the most common type of conflict management strategy that exist in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria.. Principals practice collaborative conflict management strategy to a high extent in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. There was a significant relationship between principals' collaborative conflict management strategies and students' academic performance in Upper Basic Schools in North



Central Nigeria. Principals adopt avoidance conflict management strategy to a high extent in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. There was a significant relationship between principals. Avoidance conflict management strategies and students' academic performance in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria.. Principals use negotiating conflict management strategy to a high extent in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria. There was a significant relationship between principals' negotiation conflict management strategies and students' academic performance in Upper Basic Schools in North Central Nigeria.

In line with the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- 1) Principals in upper basic secondary schools of North Central should strategically employ the use of collaborative strategy in resolving conflict so that teachers can work committedly towards enhancing students' academic performance in school.
- 2) Teachers should be sensitized and enlightened on the need to evade or retreat from conflict by school principals so that can work peacefully to promote student performance in North Central, Nigeria.
- 3) Management of schools should ensure that in cases of conflict, there should be room to concede to one another in order to reach an agreement and promoting a healthy learning environment that will enhance students' academic performance in Upper Basic Schools in North Central, Nigeria
- 4) School principals should learn to manage school conflicts to a point where staff will be positioned to compromise by ensuring they let go certain benefits and rights and reach a middle ground for the purpose of promoting a conducive learning atmosphere for improved students' academic performance.

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