PRINCIPALS' PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND WORK EXPERIENCE AS PREDICTORS OF TEACHERS' CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The study examined principals' personnel management strategy and work experience as predictors of teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study was 6,598 teachers which comprised 1,103 males and 5,495 females in the 267 public secondary schools from the six education zones in Anambra State. The sample of 660 teachers was used for the study. Multistage sampling procedure comprising proportionate stratified and simple random sampling technique was used for the study. Three researcher-developed instruments were used for data collection: Principals' Personnel Management Strategy Questionnaire (PPMSQ), Principals' Work Experience Scale (PWES) and Teachers' Conflict Management Questionnaire (TCMQ). The instruments were subjected to face and construct validation. The data obtained were subjected to test for internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha which yielded coefficients at 0.81 for PPMSO, 0.77 for PWEQ, 0.78 for TCMQ. Simple linear regression statistical tool was used for the study. The findings of the study revealed that personnel management strategy (r=0.707, p=0.000) and work experience (r=0.715, p=0.000) positively and significantly predicted teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study concluded that principals' good practices of personnel management strategy and professionalism through work experience is positively and significantly effective in managing teachers conflict in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others principals should be encouraged to gain more experiences in their work and managing conflict and also, develop their skills through professional development programmes, because it builds their capacity and creativity and make them to be more resourcefulness.

Keywords: Principals' Work Experience, Teachers' Conflict Management

Introduction

Conflict occurs when personnel in school disagree or take opposing stands concerning issues and this can be expressed through argument, protest or any form of action. Okaforcha et al. (2020) opined that conflicts are inevitable and it is believed that there will always be disagreements among school administration, teachers and students. Furthermore, Nwogwugwu (2024) stressed that conflicts may be present through: students not obeying school rules, students not doing manual work, students not respecting teachers, students engaging in vices like theft, fights, bullying or not attending lessons; teachers not respecting their principal or not completing curriculum, the principal's style of leadership demeaning teachers and disregarding students, among others. In the Nigerian school system, conflict occurs from time to time. Adinna and Okafor (2023) noted that efficient and effective management of teachers in the teaching profession is important to the growth and development teachers in the school.

In the school system, a lot of things can cause conflict like, poor communication, method of staff promotion, school environment, values, beliefs and attitudes, difference of people, inadequate tools and equipments, sharing of limited resources, difference in performance criteria, favouritism by principal, embezzlement of fund, reward system, subjective performance appraisal of teachers, limited training opportunities and breaches in following internal school rules. Iloakasia (2022) enumerated causes of conflict in schools as generational gap, reality distortion, authoritarian rule, anti-authority and organizational structure factor. Obi et al. (2020) opined that conflict has both positive and negative effect on organization that is why there is a need for effective conflict management. Negative effects of conflict include low morale, poor communication, violence, creating tension, erode the strength and satisfaction of relationships, and even make people feel physically sick. Abdul et al. (2023) opined that conflict can increased stress and anxiety among individuals, which decreases productivity and satisfaction, feelings of being defeated and demeaned, which lowers individuals' morale and may increase turnover. Fortunately, not all conflict is negative. Positive conflict can improve problem solving, clarify issues, increase participant involvement and

commitment, and result in a better decision or outcome. Ikediugwu and Ibezim (2023) noted that conflict produces new ideas, solves continuous problems, provides an opportunity for people and teams to expand their skills, fosters creativity, improved communication and a better understanding of each other's perspectives. The key is managing conflict to bring about these positive effects.

In today's educational landscape, teachers' conflict management and resolution are pivotal to creating a harmonious learning environment. As teachers from diverse backgrounds, culture, norms and beliefs and with varying needs come together, it is inevitable that conflict arises. Principals, who are the architects of school dynamics, face the challenge of navigating these disputes tactfully and efficiently. Usman et al. (2023) noted that effective teachers' conflict management involves addressing conflict promptly and constructively, turning potential disruptions into valuable learning opportunities. In the words of Nwogwugwu (2024), principals play a pivotal role in managing conflict and preventing it through creating a supportive and understanding classroom culture. This involves implementing strategies that encourage teachers to express their opinions and feelings constructively, thus reducing teachers' conflict in the school. When conflict arises, the principal of the school has to control it and put it under check, in doing this, he is trying to manage conflict, because conflict can only be managed and cannot be removed entirely from an organization.

Contextually, teachers' conflict management is the process by which school principals use skills, tools and processes to resolve disagreements and disputes among teachers in a way that is respectful and creative. The goal of teachers' conflict management is to minimize the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects. This implies that teachers' conflict management hinges on principals' application of administrative strategies which deals with effective coordination, control and motivation of teachers. Proper management of teachers' conflicts or other related conflicts in the schools by principals can produce motivated teachers for the achievement of educational goals and objectives through good application of personal management of staff.

Principals' practices of effective staff personnel management strategy in the school are to improve the quality of teaching in the school system. Aja-Okarie (2022) defined staff personnel administration as an important management function concerned with obtaining, developing and motivating the human resources required by an organization to achieve its objectives. Okaforcha and Ifediorah Okeke (2019) noted that staff personnel include both teaching and non-teaching staff employed by the government and posted to various schools to teach and work. However, the interest of this work is on the teachers alone because they are solely responsible for providing instructional delivery to the students. Ohamobi et al. (2018) opined that personnel management is a complex task that involved recruitment, training, development and motivation of human resources and policy implementation in an organization. Hence, Okaforcha et al. (2024) acknowledged that, it is the function of the principals to adopt various administrative practices to ensure that teachers perform their duties creditably. Obi and Nwabuogookoye (2022) opted that, human resource management are geared toward attracting, retaining and developing a team of highly dedicated, committed and motivated workforce that is willing to contribute meaningfully to improve instructional delivery. In the same vein, Umeh et al. (2024) stated that staff personnel administrative practices include: orientation, decision-making, delegation of duties, supervision, staff professional development and motivation. Ohamobi and Osegbue (2025) noted that personnel administrative strategies involve efficient management and decision-making to maximize organizational performance. Corroborating, Eno (2022) posited that the manners in which these tasks are managed contribute to the general school atmosphere, reduce or increase teachers' conflict and these vast tasks of principals add to their work experience in their various schools.

Work experience of principals is defined as something or ability possessed by principals in carrying out their routine tasks and administrative routines. With quite a long experience and quite a lot, it is expected that they will have a greater ability than those without experience. Principals who are experienced in work have better work ability than teachers who have just been promoted to principalship, because the experienced principals have learned from the activities and problems that arise in their work (Ohamobi et al., 2024). With the existence of work experience, there has been a process of adding knowledge, skills and attitudes to a person, so that they can support developing themselves with existing changes. The experience of a person has a very valuable value for his career interests in the future. Ichazu and Omoregie (2021) stated that work experience includes the number of types of jobs or positions that have been occupied by someone and the length of time they work for each job or position. Eromosele (2023) maintained that work experience is the period of work in carrying out tasks as educators in certain educational units in accordance with the assignment letter from the authorized institution. Yakubu (2023) submitted that work experience is in the form of a period of work that has been carried out by the teacher, a collection of learning plans made, and awards achieved.

Contextually, principals' work experience is seen as to the practical knowledge, skills, and expertise acquired by an individual through their employment or participation in various professional activities. Principals' work experience is gained by actively engaging in the workforce, which includes work placements, internships, apprenticeships and full-time or part-time employment. Principals' work experience is important because it allows principal to make more accurate decisions in uncertain situations. It provides the principal with a practical understanding of the school, helping him to make informed decisions for school growth. Principals typically have a background in teaching and leadership, and may also have experience in administrative or assistant principal roles which aid them in tackling school problems.

The various conditions faced by the principal will certainly encourage the principal to find a solution to overcome them. Thus, the work experience of a principal when he was a teacher could aid him an edge in handling and resolving school dispute to its barest minimum. Agbor et al. (2023) noted that the work experience of a principal is certainly based on his ability to: (1) lead the school; (2) master the method, (3) master the educational foundation; (4) plan school programs appropriately; (5) evaluate the results of school program activities, (6) apply the results of research in school implementation activities; (7) be loyal to the organization; (8) psychological attachment; (9) task involvement; and (10) enthusiasm. It is from these indicators that the principal can be considered experienced or not in managing educational institutions. If the above elements have been fulfilled and owned by a principal, then the principal can be said to be experienced. The more work experience, the more the performance of principals tends to be higher. Likewise, on the contrary, the less work experience, the less the principals' performance tends to be lower. As explained by Agbor *et al.* (2023), the more work experience a person has, the more benefits that will have an impact on the breadth of knowledge in the field of work and increasing one's skills.

Conflict that exists in public secondary schools in Anambra State as observed by the researcher and the report given at PTA (Parent-Teachers Association) appears to be evident in principals' criticism of staff in front of students, teachers' rude words in response to principal, exchange of unpleasant words among principals and staff, poor interpersonal relationship, hatred among principals and staff, teachers' gossiping and hate speech among others. Teachers have been seen exhibiting negative behaviours within the school and even outside the school (Obi & Nebolisa, 2024); teachers are seen putting up unacceptable behaviours with fellow teachers due to unresolved malice created in school. In line with the above, Onyali and Nnebedum (2023) reported that prevalence of poverty and hunger, incompetence, bribery and corruption, inequality, stealing, degeneration of individual and individual values, struggle for supremacy of physical power are observed among teachers in public secondary schools in Anambra State. With all these unpleasant situations surrounding public secondary schools in Anambra State, it becomes imperative to ascertain how principals' work experience predict teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine principals' work experience as predictors of teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to:

- 1. find out the predictive value of principals' personnel management strategy on teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
- 2. determine the predictive value of principals' work experience on teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:

- 1. What is the predictive value of principals' personnel management strategy on teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
- 2. What is the predictive value of principals' work experience on teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- 1. Principals' personnel management strategy does not significantly predict teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
- 2. Principals' work experience does not significantly predict teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Methods

The study was carried out in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study was 6,598 teachers which comprised 1,103 males and 5,495 females in the 267 public secondary schools from the six education zones in Anambra State. The sample of 660 teachers was used for the study. Multistage sampling procedure comprising proportionate stratified and simple random sampling technique was used for the study. Three researcher-developed instruments were used for data collection: Principals' Personnel Management Strategy Questionnaire (PPMSQ), Principals' Work Experience Scale (PWES) and Teachers' Conflict Management Questionnaire (TCMQ). The instruments were subjected to face and construct validation. Face validation was done by three experts, while construct validation was carried out by Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with the help SPSS v.26 and the results showed that the construct validity was met. The data obtained were subjected to test for internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha which yielded coefficients at 0.81 for PPMSQ, 0.77 for PWEQ, 0.78 for TCMQ. Direct method of data administration was utilized by the researcher together with five research assistants who were secondary school teachers in Anambra State. Out of 660 copies of the instrument administered, 648(98%) of the instrument were correctly completed and returned. Simple linear regression statistical tool was used for the study.

Results

Data Analysis

Research Question One: What is the predictive value of principals' personnel management strategy on teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Summary of simple regression analysis on the predictive value of principals' personnel management strategy on teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State

		Unstandardized β	Std. Dev. _{\$\beta\$}	Standardized β
Constant		29.348	3.124	•
Personnel management strategy		0.725	0.239	0.707
R	0.707			
\mathbb{R}^2	0.624			
Adj. R ²	0.578			

The summary of the simple regression analysis as shown in Table 1 indicated that the regression line has a positive intercept as presented by the constant value of 29.348. This means that if all the variables are held constant or fixed (zero) at the expense of principals' personnel management strategy, the management of teachers' conflicts will be valued at 29%. The analysis showed that principals' personnel management strategy positively predict teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State as shown by the regression coefficient (R = 0.707). More so, the standardized beta is also values at $\beta = 0.707$ which showed that principals' personnel management strategy is a positive predictor in the management of teachers' conflicts in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This implies that a unit advancement in principals' personnel management strategy led to 0.707(71%) advancement in managing teachers' conflicts in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Thus, the positive prediction of principals' personnel management strategy on teachers' conflict management means that managing teachers' conflicts highly depends on principals' personnel management strategy in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.624 indicated that the explanatory power of the variable was highly strong. This implies that 62% of the variations in managing teachers' conflicts in public secondary schools in Anambra State were accounted for by the variations in principals' personnel management strategy. The adjusted R² supported the claim of the R² with a value of 0.578 indicating that 58% of the total variation in the dependent variable (teachers' conflict management) was explained by the independent variable (principals' personnel management strategy).

Research Question Two: What is the predictive value of principals' work experience on teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2: Summary of simple regression analysis on the predictive value of principals' work experience on teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State

		Unstandardized $oldsymbol{eta}$	Std. Dev. ß	Standardized β
Constant		31.942	3.151	
Work experience		0.751	0.265	0.715
$\begin{array}{c} R \\ R^2 \end{array}$	0.715 0.606			
Adj. R ²	0.569			

The summary of the simple regression analysis as shown in Table 2 indicated that the regression line has a positive intercept as presented by the constant value of 31.942. This means that if all the variables are held constant or fixed (zero) at the expense of principals' work experience, the management of teachers' conflicts will be valued at 32%. The analysis showed that principals' work experience positively predict teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State as shown by the regression coefficient (R = 0.715). Furthermore, the standardized beta is also values at β = 0.715 which showed that principals' work experience is a positive predictor in the management of teachers' conflicts in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This implies that a unit improvement in principals' work experience led to 0.715(72%) improvement in managing teachers' conflicts in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Thus, the positive prediction of principals' work experience on teachers' conflict management means that managing teachers' conflicts highly depends on principals' work experience in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The coefficient of determination (R²) value of 0.606 indicated that the explanatory power of the variable was highly strong. This implies that 61% of the variations in managing teachers' conflicts in public secondary schools in Anambra State were accounted for by the variations in principals' work experience. The adjusted R² supported the claim of the R² with a value of 0.569 indicating that 57% of the total variation in the dependent variable (teachers' conflict management) was explained by the independent variable (principals' work experience).

Test of Hypotheses Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Principals' personnel management strategy does not significantly predict teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 3: Test of significance of simple regression analysis on principals' personnel management strategy as predictor of teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State

		Unstandardized β	Std. Dev.	Standardized β	t- value	p- value
Constant		29.348	3.124		31.532	0.000
Personnel mana strategy	gement	0.725	0.239	0.707	25.486	0.000
R	0.707					
\mathbb{R}^2	0.624					
Adj. R ²	0.578					
F	42.351					0.000

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 3 showed that the regression line is constant at 29.348; simple regression coefficient (R) is valued at 0.707 while the R² is valued at 0.624 and Adjust R² is valued at 0.578. The F-ratio associated with regression is significant at 42.351, the t-test is 25.486 and the p-value = 0.000. Since p-value (0.000) is less than the specified level of significance at 0.05, the study therefore rejected the null hypothesis that principals' personnel management strategy does not significantly predicted teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State and accepted the alternative hypothesis that principals' personnel management strategy significantly predicted teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Principals' work experience does not significantly predict teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 4: Test of significance of simple regression analysis on principals' work experience as predictor of teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State

		Unstandardized	Std. Dev.	Standardized	t-	p-
		β	β	β	value	value
Constant		31.942	3.151		28.208	0.000
Work experience		0.751	0.265	0.715	24.435	0.000
R	0.715					
\mathbb{R}^2	0.606					
Adj. R ²	0.569					
F	40.852					0.000

The summary of the test of significance of simple regression analysis as shown in Table 4 showed that the regression line is constant at 31.942; simple regression coefficient (R) is valued at 0.715 while the R² is valued at 0.606 and Adjust R² is valued at 0.569. The F-ratio associated with regression is significant at 40.852, the t-test is 24.435 and the p-value = 0.000. Since p-value (0.000) is less than the specified level of significance at 0.05, the study therefore rejected the null hypothesis that principals' work experience does not significantly predicted teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State and accepted the alternative hypothesis that principals' work experience significantly predicted teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion of the Findings

Findings on the predictive value of principals' personnel management strategy on teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State showed that principals' personnel management strategy has a positive predictive value of 0.707(71%) on teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This means that increase in principals' use of personnel management strategy will bring about 71% increases in teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study also showed that principals' personnel management strategy significantly predicted teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The finding is in line with the findings of Okaforcha (2021) that principals' staff personnel practices have positive and significant relationship between teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The findings of Jideofor (2022) also revealed that principals' practices of putting proper personnel discipline in place is to avoid misconduct by teachers. In agreement to this, Ughamadu et al. (2024) identified the following as principals' administrative strategies necessary for controlling teachers' activities: teachers' evaluation, monitoring and supervision strategies, staff-personnel strategies, student-personnel strategies, utilizing various organizing, planning, coordinating and budgeting strategies, among others. In line with this, Umeh et al. (2024) stated that principals analyses tasks for evaluation purposes and shares responsibilities to the staff according to specialization and expertise. Umeh et al. (2024) are of the view that principals who discharge proper administrative functions very well help to curb teachers' conflicts and work more on achieving school predetermined objectives.

Findings on the predictive value of principals' work experience on teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State showed that principals' work experience positively predicted teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study also showed that principals' work experience significantly predicted teachers' conflict management in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The positive and significant findings of the result could be an indication that experienced principals exhibit strategic school management and control. They are versed in motivation techniques, effective in guiding teachers on different teaching methods, putting teachers through in their performance of teaching responsibilities in accordance with school policies and practices. This finding supports Eno (2022) findings that experienced principals are more likely to prefer to be in control of all teachers' activities in their school while interacting with teachers and students when making decisions. Similarly, Agbor et al. (2023) confirmed that on average newly appointed principals are less effective than those with some level of work experience. The finding is also in consonance with Yakubu (2023) findings that principals' work experience facilitates the principals' better understanding of the school. Yakubu (2023) further buttressed this by asserting that highly experienced principals' demonstrate competency in their school administration, classroom management and control, and demonstrate willingness for reflection on their commitment to their teachers in the school. Viewed from the angle of Eromosele (2023) studies that teaching experience related positively to learning, the long experienced teachers might have become creative and flexible in their thinking and professional practices. These long experienced teachers may no long be

unfavourably disposed to acquire new knowledge and skills in their day-to-day teaching activities. It has been observed that the long experienced teachers when appointed a principal appear to be more highly disposed in managing conflicts for positive outcome in school.

Conclusion

The study has shown that principals' personnel management strategy and work experience are essential factors in managing teachers' conflict in schools. The study therefore, concluded that principals' practices of good personnel management strategy and professionalism through work experience is positively and significantly effective in managing teachers' conflict in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Recommendations

The researcher made the following recommendations:

- 1. Principals should employ approved personnel management strategy to make sure staff are adequately managed and maintained in the school in order to help reduce teachers' conflicts in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
- 2. Principals should be encouraged to gain more experiences in their work and managing conflict and also, develop their skills through professional development programmes, because it builds their capacity and creativity and make them to be more resourcefulness.
- 3. All Nigeria Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS) should sponsor principals to workshops, seminars and conferences to enable them up-date their knowledge and skills to keepabreast with recent development in conflict management practices and gain work experience in school administration that would help to reduce conflicts among teachers in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

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