

**PRINCIPALS' APPLICATION OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES AND  
TEACHERS' JOB SATISFACTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN  
ORLU EDUCATION ZONE 1 OF IMO STATE**

**BY**

**Nwagba Oluchi Marvelous**

Department of Social Science Education  
Imo State University, Owerri

**&**

**Obasi Samuel Ugochukwu**

Directorate of General Studies  
Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria.

Email: [lordugosamuel@gmail.com](mailto:lordugosamuel@gmail.com)

+2348062730002

**Abstract**

This study examined principals' application of conflict management techniques and teachers' job satisfaction in secondary school in Orlu Education Zone 1 of Imo State. Two (2) hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted the correlational survey design. Conflict Management Techniques Rating Scale (CMTRS) and Teachers Job Satisfaction Rating Scale (TJSRS) were the instrument used for data collection in this study. The reliability coefficients obtained were 0.86, and 0.85 for arbitration and dialogue conflict management techniques respectively and 0.82 was obtained for Teachers' Job Satisfaction Rating Scale (TJSRS). A sample of 288 teachers was selected using Taro Yamane and proportionate random sampling technique from a total population of 1,029 teachers in 61 public secondary schools across the eight Local Government Areas of Orlu Education Zone I in Imo State. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson "r" statistics and t-test of the significance of Pearson "r" statistics at a 0.05 significant level. The result found that arbitration and dialogue techniques as conflict management technique have low, positive and significant extent of relationship with teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Owerri Education Zones of Imo State. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that; Secondary school principals should not limit themselves to a single conflict management strategy as the most suitable for all circumstances. Instead, they should seek to learn and master various conflict management techniques, applying them appropriately to the specific conflict situations that arise in their educational environments.

## **Introduction**

Education is regarded as the foundation of any nation. It plays a crucial role in the positive transformation of an individual's values, beliefs, and ideas, thereby enhancing their utility to themselves, their families, and society as a whole. Throughout history, the pursuit of knowledge has been a fundamental aspiration of humanity. In this context, Onuoha & Uyanga (2024) identified education as an instrument for the realization national development, as it equips individuals with the intellectual skills necessary to effectively utilize human and material resources for advancements in science and technology. Education serves as the cornerstone for the economic, social, and political progress of any nation. Furthermore, according to Duru & Opara (2017), education encompasses all societal efforts aimed at achieving established objectives deemed beneficial for both individual and collective needs.

Secondary education is that sector of the education pyramid that usually comes immediately after primary education and before tertiary education. It is at this stage of education that students are prepared for the Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Universities. Within the framework of the New National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013), secondary education shall last for six years, broken into two distinct parts that are perfectly correlated with the ground works of the first three years – Junior Secondary School (J.S.S.) dovetailing into the next three years of Senior Secondary School (S.S.S.). In the context of the secondary school, teachers are the main human resources needed to implement the secondary school curriculum in order for the goals of secondary education to be realized. On this note, there is need for every secondary school teacher to be very satisfied in discharging his or her duties in order to improve the quality of students produce, and to boost the manpower of the economy.

Teachers' job satisfaction is referred to as the positive emotions that results from a teacher's perception of their job, the feeling of pleasure and achievement resulting from job experiences which leads to increased effort, willingness to take on extra work, loyalty and improved performance. Teachers' job effectiveness is the pivot around which teaching and co-curricular activities of the school revolve. It offers learners the opportunity to get adapted to the school environment for improved academic performance (Owan, 2012). An effective teacher can be judged based on the following indices: having a positive attitude, development of a pleasant social /psychological climate in the classroom, having high expectations of what students can achieve, lesson clarity, effective time management, strong lesson structuring, the use of different teaching methods, using and incorporating pupil ideas, using appropriate and varied questioning, proper classroom management, good chalkboard management, use of good disciplinary approaches, proper classroom sitting arrangement, understanding individual differences of learners, high level of punctuality, decent dressing attitudes, good possession or grasp of subject mastery, good record keeping attitudes, effective communication skills, good health practices within and outside the classroom environment, and other good personal characteristics such as honesty, politeness, flexibility, simplicity, trustworthiness, firm and fairness and so on (Avwerosuo, 2017).

In the past, teachers' job satisfaction in the school system had been hindered by a lot of factors, which resulted in teachers embarking on strikes at various times in an attempt to draw the attention of the Government to their plight. The situation in the past was so bad that teachers' job, called for sympathy from other professions. It was considered a reproach to take up teaching as a profession, parents were finding it very difficult to release or give their daughters in marriage to teachers. Teachers' job satisfaction was also hindered by the problem of poor

salaries. Salaries were not paid, and as when due. Teachers were deprived of their promotion and lack of good working environment which affected most teachers' attitude to work. Teachers' poor job satisfaction can be said to be one of the major causes of conflicts in secondary schools in Imo State.

Conflict is an expression of disagreement, antagonism and misunderstanding between individuals, groups or organizations. In other words, conflict is divergence of interest, objectives or priorities between individuals, groups or organizations or nonconformity to task, activity or process. It can be said from the foregoing that 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. But in some cases, it can actually stimulate creative problem solving and improve the situation for all parties involved (Barasa, 2015). It is quite obvious that the human resources of any organization (school) consist of people with diverse cultural, religious, social, political and economic background. This is shown in their attitude to work, temperament and frame of reference, which certainly makes their control often complex for secondary school administrators.

These differences ultimately lead to clash of interest among the personnel, which if not effectively managed, could degenerate into serious conflict situation (Anashie & Kulo, 2014). 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. The secondary and tertiary school levels of education in Nigeria, for example, have witnessed a lot of conflicts, ostensibly due to the divergent perceptions of government and the various unions, or different positions held by personnel in the school. Studies have shown that 80% of conflict situations occur independently of human will (Kharadz & Gulua, 2018).

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 unaddressed conflict occurs in the school, it reduces teachers' effectiveness, reduces morale, hamper performance, and increase absenteeism. It leads to increased stress among employees, decreases productivity, and at worst, aggression or violence. This affects the output of the work group and can have a profound impact on the performance of the organization. Conflict, like any other key business process, must be managed (Anashie & Kulo, 2014). According to the authors, if education is to be managed effectively for sustainable peace and economic development in Nigeria, then education of the post primary level should be managed free of crisis/conflict. There is a need for conflict management strategies to be employed by every school administrator (Ihuarulam, 2015).

Conflict management techniques refer to those techniques or approaches that can be used to prevent, control or resolve conflicts. Conflict management strategies are very important to any school because it is through these strategies that negative effects resulting from conflicts can be minimized or controlled. There exist several strategies that could be used to resolve conflict in schools. These include: dominance, compromise, synergy, culture of civility, win-lose strategy, lose-lose strategy, win-win strategy (Anashie & Kulo, 2014); integration, obliging, smoothing, avoidance, mediation, dialogue, arbitration, conciliation, diplomacy (Crossfield & Bourne, 2018);

negotiation, effective communication, accommodating, collaborating, competing, harmonizing (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). These strategies are therefore open to secondary schools principals' techniques 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 require different strategies, with the choice of strategy, depending on the nature of the conflict or the parties involved. However, four conflict management strategies were of major concern in this study, they include: arbitration, dialogue, effective communication and smoothing conflict management strategies.

Arbitration conflict management technique is used in a situation where a neutral party helps groups in conflicts to discuss their difficult issue which allows disputants to ventilate anger and frustration in a free, open and therapeutic fashion (Crossfield & Bourne, 2018). It can also be seen as a process in which a third party, neutral in the matter, after reviewing evidence and listening to arguments from both sides, issues a decision to settle the case. The authors further stated that it is also the process by which a peace maker, arbitrator or a peace panel settles the conflict through appealing to the conscience of those in conflict. Members of the panel are usually impartial individuals acceptable to those in conflict. The next conflict management strategy to be discussed is dialogue conflict management strategy.

Dialogue conflict management technique is a process where groups in conflicts are brought together (face-to face) to express their views on the subject matter. The conflict parties share their feelings and fears, are open to listening to the other parties' needs, are willing to be changed by what they hear, and are open to the idea of being vulnerable (Oboegbulem & Onwurah, 2011). In dialogue, each party makes a serious effort to take the others' concerns into his or her own picture, even when disagreement persists. No participant gives up his or her identity, but each recognizes enough of the others' valid human claims that he or she will act differently toward the other. The goal of dialogue according to Idris (2016) is to develop joint approaches to conflict resolution, as well as improve relationships, understanding, and trust between individuals or groups in conflict.

Given the fact that conflicts are inevitable in a school, it implies that staff of secondary schools in Orlu Education Zone 1 of Imo State must definitely face conflicts as they relate with another. It also means that secondary school administrators must live with conflicts in their various schools, and it is a necessity for them to reorganize inevitability of conflicts in the school and develop an understanding of the strategies for managing, minimizing and resolving it. The ability and credibility to manage and resolve conflicts in any school depends on the experience of the school administrator and his leadership styles.

Workability of any strategy depends on the proper application and level of acceptability amongst the teachers. If the teachers are comfortable with the principals' methods of conflict resolution, it is expected that their job satisfaction will be enhanced and vice versa. This is the reason this study want to ascertain the techniques used in conflict resolution and how much each contributes to teachers job satisfaction.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In an ideal condition, teachers were supposed to maintain good attitudes towards the teaching and instruction of learners. They were supposed to do this with all amount of effectiveness in terms of having a positive attitude, development of a pleasant social /psychological climate in the classroom, having high expectations of what students can achieve, lesson clarity, effective time management, strong lesson structuring, the use of different teaching methods, using and incorporating pupil ideas, using appropriate and varied questioning, proper classroom management, good chalkboard management, use of good disciplinary approaches, proper classroom sitting arrangement, understanding individual differences of learners, proper teaching, high level of punctuality, proper note writing/records keeping and many other such good attitudes. Such effectiveness was also expected to yield positive results in terms of improved academic performance of student and the attainment of set goals.

Unfortunately, this does not appear to be the case in Orlu Education Zone 1 of Imo State, where many secondary school teachers have been observed to be ineffective in performing their duties as manifested in their lateness to school, irregular attendance to classes, lack of self-discipline, poor attitudes towards writing notes of lesson, improper marking of students' attendance register, and several other unacceptable attitudes that cannot contribute to the attainment of set objectives. In the past, many teachers have attributed their ineffectiveness to poor motivation, poor facilities/infrastructural supply, poor/late payment of salaries by the government, and so on. Inadequate teaching facilities could lead to quarrels and conflict amongst staff and this is the reason the study wants to ascertain the efforts of the principals in managing the conflicts and how satisfied the teachers feel with their efforts so as to have job satisfaction among teachers in secondary schools in Orlu Education Zone 1 of Imo State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to ascertain the relationship between conflict management techniques used by principals and teachers' job satisfaction in secondary schools in Orlu Education Zone 1 of Imo State. Specifically, this study sought to:

1. ascertain the extent of relationship to principals use of arbitration as conflict management technique and teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Orlu Education Zone 1 of Imo State.
2. ascertain the extent of relationship between principals use of dialogue as conflict management technique and teachers' job satisfaction in secondary schools.

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated at 0.05 level of significance to guide the study;

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** The coefficient of the extent of relationship between principals' use of arbitration as conflict management technique and secondary school teachers' job satisfaction is not significant

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** There no significant relationship between the extent of principals' use of dialogue as conflict management technique and secondary school teachers' job satisfaction.

## Methodology

This study adopted the correlational design. The rationale for selecting this design was to identify the relationships that exist between the variables under investigation. The population for the study was one thousand and twenty-nine (1029) teachers in the sixty-one (61) public secondary schools in the eight (8) Local Government Areas in Orlu Education Zone I of Imo States. (Source: Department of Statistics: State Education Management Board (SEMB) Owerri, 2022/2023). A sample of 288 teachers was obtained from 61 public secondary schools in the eight local government area in the zone. The sample size was calculated using the Taro Yamane formula. Proportionate sampling techniques were employed to select the schools and respondents. Two rating scales titled “Conflict Management Techniques Rating Scale (CMTRS)” and Teachers Job Satisfaction Rating Scale (TJSRS) constructed by the researcher were used for data collection. The reliabilities of the instruments were determined on one administration to 30 teachers that were not involved in the study, precisely from Abia State. The raw score and the data collected on the two instruments were subjected to Cronbach alpha analysis to establish the reliability index. A computed reliability coefficient of 0.86 and 0.85 for arbitration and dialogue conflict management techniques respectively for CMTRS and 0.82 for TJSRS were obtained indicating that the instruments were reliable for the study. Face to face method was employed in order to help clarify the purpose of the study to the respondents and also ensure maximum return of the instruments. The hypotheses were tested with using Pearson (r) and t-test of significance of correlation statistics. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

### Hypothesis 1

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** The coefficient of relationship between arbitration as conflict management technique and teachers’ job satisfaction in public secondary schools’ public secondary schools Orlu Education Zone 1 of Imo State is not significant.

**Table 1:** Summaries of inferential/test statistics (t-test of significance of simple linear correlation) for the coefficient of relationship between arbitration as conflict management technique and teachers’ job satisfaction in public secondary schools Orlu Education Zone 1 of Imo State

Sample Size (n), Summation ( $\Sigma$ ), Coefficient of Relationship (r), Alpha Level ( $\alpha$ ), Degree of Freedom (df) and t-test of Significance of Simple Linear Correlation between two Variables

V	n	$\Sigma$	r	$\alpha$	df	t <sub>cal</sub>	t <sub>tab</sub>	Decision
X	288	8357	0.29	0.05	286	6.006	1.96	Reject Ho <sub>1</sub>
Y	288	15189						

Table 1 shows the result for the test of the significance of the coefficient of relationship between principals use of arbitration as conflict management technique and teachers’ job satisfaction in public secondary schools Orlu Education Zone 1 of Imo State. The result indicates the degree of freedom as 286 and the t-calculated value of 6.006 is greater than the t-tabulated value of 1.96. Since the-calculated value is greater than the t-tabulated value, the researcher therefore rejected the null hypothesis; thus, concluding that that there is a low positive and

significant relationship between principals' use of arbitration as conflict management technique and teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools.

## **Hypothesis 2**

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:**The coefficient of relationship between use of dialogue as conflict management technique and teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Orlu education zone 1 of Imo State is not significant.

**Table 2:** Summaries of inferential/test statistics (t-test of significance of simple linear correlation) for the coefficient of relationship between use of dialogue as conflict management technique and teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Orlu education zone 1 of Imo State

Sample Size (n), Summation ( $\Sigma$ ), Coefficient of Relationship (r), Alpha Level ( $\alpha$ ), Degree of Freedom (df) and t-test of Significance of Simple Linear Correlation between two Variables

V	n	$\Sigma$	r	$\alpha$	df	t <sub>cal</sub>	t <sub>tab</sub>	Decision
X	288	10740	0.33	0.05	286	6.975	1.96	Reject Ho <sub>2</sub>
Y	288	15189						

Table 2 shows the result for the test of the significance of the coefficient of relationship between use of dialogue as conflict management technique and teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Orlu education zone 1 of Imo State. The result indicates the degree of freedom as 286 and the t-calculated value of 6.975 is greater than the t-tabulated value of 1.96. Since the-calculated value is greater than the t-tabulated value, the researcher therefore rejected the null hypothesis; thus, concluding that that there is a low positive and significant relationship between use of dialogue as conflict management technique and teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The study indicated that there is a low positive and significant relationship between principals' use of arbitration as conflict management technique and teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools. This indicates that there is a direct link between principals' use of arbitration as conflict management technique and teachers' job satisfaction. That is to say that the variables may have influence on each other. If the administrators diligently perform apply the use of arbitration strategy in managing conflict, there will be improved teachers' job satisfaction like in diligently delivering of instruction in the class. This imply that an increase in the use of arbitration strategy will lead to an increase in teachers' job satisfaction

The findings of this study support the findings of Inang (2016) and Tshuma, Ndlovu and Bhebhe (2016), who in their study revealed a significant relationship between mediation, avoidance, collaboration, and teachers' job performance. Based on this Adeyemi (2009), recommended that principals should inculcate the idea of setting up of committees to resolve conflicts. Ibanga, Abdullahi, & Zakariya'u, (2023) revealed that conflict management technique in terms of use of arbitration related with teachers' satisfaction in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The result was further strengthened by the fact that many teachers indicated that the school principals use interaction to settle disputes amongst the staff; third parties are also used to settle

disputes between staff. One of the problems on the use of this strategy was based on the fact that almost all the respondents indicated that there was no conflict management committee in almost all the schools.

The findings of research question two revealed a significant relationship between dialogue conflict management strategy and secondary school teachers' job satisfaction. There was a low positive relationship between the two variables, implying that an increase in the application of dialogue conflict management strategy in resolving teachers' conflicts, will lead to an increase in teachers' job effectiveness. It was also discovered through the findings of this study that many teachers are brought face to face to express their views, they were willing to listen to other parties' view concerning the issue on ground, they were also willing to change their view in order to settle the matter amicably.

From existing literature, the findings of Arop and Bassey (2017) supported this finding. It was revealed that there was a significant influence of administrators use of dialogue and domination on secondary school students' rights to fair hearing, dignity of human person, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association except in the recognition and protection of students' rights to freedom of religion. It also supports the position held by the findings of Oshionebo and Ashang (2017), whose study favoured the use of dialogue for principal-teacher conflict resolution among other administrative strategies such as dominance, compromise, smoothing, synergy, culture of civility, mediation, negotiation, and communication. The findings therefore strengthened the fact that the non-use of dialogue could cause high rate of indiscipline among teachers and students which could obstruct instructional delivery thereby posing as threat to teachers' job satisfaction in public senior secondary schools in Orlu Education Zone 1 of Imo State.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and implications of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Principals should ensure that they setup conflict management committee (CMC) in their schools that will serve as the body responsible for managing teachers' conflict. Staff in this committee should be adequately trained on how to handle conflicts and other related matters.
- ii. Teachers in conflict should always be brought to interact face to face and explain their feelings in order to ensure that their differences, disparities, and positions are well understood. This will enable them resolve their issues amicably through proper dialogue.

### **Conclusion**

The study has unveiled a significant correlation between principals' adeptness in conflict management techniques and teachers' job satisfaction within secondary schools. Effective conflict resolution strategies, as implemented by principals, have a direct impact on the overall work environment, fostering a positive and harmonious atmosphere.

The findings suggest that when principals possess the necessary skills to address conflicts promptly and equitably, teachers experience reduced job stress, increased morale, and a



heightened sense of job satisfaction. This, in turn, positively influences teacher retention, leading to a more stable and experienced teaching workforce.

Therefore, it is crucial for school administrators and policymakers to recognize the importance of equipping principals with robust conflict management training. By investing in such training, they can empower principals to create a more conducive work environment, enhance teacher well-being, and ultimately improve student learning outcomes.

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