



Conflict Management Styles and School Performance: Evidence from Secondary School Teachers in South-South Nigeria

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Abstract

The study empirically examined the relationship between conflict management styles and performance of secondary schools in South-South geographical zone of Nigeria from the viewpoint of teachers. The conflict management styles examined include avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising and collaborating conflict management styles. Cross-sectional survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprises all the teachers in secondary schools in the South-South Geographical Zone of Nigeria. 384 teachers were randomly selected in the different states and copies of questionnaire administered to them. Out of the 385 copies of questionnaire administered to teachers of the selected secondary schools, 345 copies were completed and used for data analyses. The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 24) software. All hypotheses were tested at 5% level of significance. The finding revealed that avoiding, accommodating, compromising and collaborating conflict management styles significantly impact secondary school performance in South-South Nigeria. However, there is no significant relationship between competing conflict management style and performance of secondary schools in South-South Nigeria. The study recommends that schools should invest in teacher training and professional development programmes to provide them with effective conflict management skills. This could include conflict resolution workshops, seminars, and courses that emphasize teamwork and constructive communication.

Keywords: Conflict management, Performance, Secondary school, South-South zone, Teachers.

Introduction

Secondary schools play a fundamental role in shaping individuals by providing formal education, imparting essential knowledge and skills, and fostering socio-economic advancement (Abulencia, 2021; Okeke-James, Igboke, Anyanwu, & Obineme, 2020). However, concerns about the declining quality of secondary education in Nigeria have been widely documented (Okeke, Adepoju, & Adetarami, 2024). Reports indicate that many secondary school graduates struggle with basic literacy skills, particularly in writing and effective communication, which significantly affects their academic and professional prospects.

Several factors have been identified as contributors to the deterioration of secondary school education in Nigeria. Among these are inadequate physical infrastructure, insufficient learning resources, low teacher motivation, insecurity, and a generally hostile school environment (Obeze, 2023). Another critical but often overlooked factor is ineffective conflict management within schools, particularly among administrators. Poorly managed conflicts disrupt the

learning environment, lower teacher morale, and hinder student academic progress (Obizue, Chukwudebelu, & Onuoha, 2020). These conflicts may arise among students, between students and teachers, among teachers, between teachers and school administrators, and even between educators and parents. If left unresolved, they create a negative school climate that discourages teacher engagement and contributes to declining student enrollment, as parents may perceive such schools as unstable or unfit for learning (Maxwell & Deo, 2024; Dike, 2020; Abdulazeez, 2022).

While numerous studies have assessed the relationship between conflict management and organisational performance, most have focused on industries such as oil and gas industry Achi & Ezekiel-Hart, (2024), ICT industry Rudziah (2024), manufacturing (Oluwasegun and Adebayo (2014), and healthcare Kuazaqui, (2023); Binyanya, (2021), banking industry Agajelu (2024). The educational sector, particularly secondary schools in Nigeria, has received comparatively little attention in this regard. Given the persistent challenges facing the sector, an

in-depth investigation into the role of conflict management in school performance is essential. This study aims to assess the impact of different conflict management styles, avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising, and collaborating on the performance of secondary schools in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone. By understanding the effectiveness of these strategies, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence on how conflict resolution can enhance the overall quality of education and foster a more conducive learning environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nature and Types of Conflict in Secondary Schools

Conflict is an inevitable feature of organisations, resulting from the clash of incompatible goals, interests or values between individuals or groups. It is a social process that arises due to the diversity of organisational members, who have distinct backgrounds, perspectives, and communication styles (Ikemefuna, Kibikiwa, & Zoakah, 2023). Consequently, conflicts are bound to occur within secondary schools and other organisations. To effectively address these conflicts, it becomes essential to comprehend their nature and underlying causes. This understanding helps in creating strategies and interventions that can promote positive resolution and foster a harmonious and productive organisational environment (Egerová & Rotenbornová, 2021).

School conflict can be depicted as a discord between individuals or groups within the school community, arising from differences in ideas, interests, principles, and values (Valente, Afonso, & Németh, 2022). Even though the parties involved may feel excluded, it is important to note that their interests may not actually be excluded (Omodan & Skosana, 2023; Parashar, & Sarma, 2020). The most common conflicts in schools tend to occur between students, as well as between students and teachers (Onyinyechi & Wichendu, 2021). These conflicts can be classified based on their causes and the parties involved. According to Valente (2022), conflicts among teachers typically stem from various factors such as inadequate communication, personal interests, past conflicts, power dynamics, or differences in political and ideological beliefs. Further research also suggests that the majority of conflicts arise from basic miscommunication, misunderstandings, unintended interpretations, inconsequential differences, ineffective decision-making, ambiguous roles and responsibilities, unrealistic expectations, varying standards, and changing economic circumstances (Omodan & Skosana, 2023; Jones, 2021; Adewuyi, Salami, & Dogara, 2021).

Onolemhemhen and Akpede (2022) have identified some noteworthy factors that contribute to conflict in the Nigerian secondary education system. Principals' administrative ineptitude, the theft and misuse of

school funds, staff and student indiscipline, personality issues, role conflicts, and the influence of youthful exuberance are a few of these. In addition, conflicts between students can arise from misunderstandings, physical altercations, group rivalries, instances of discrimination, and incidents of bullying. These factors contribute to the overall conflict landscape in Nigerian secondary schools. Disputes between parents, teachers, and administrators can arise from incidents involving students or conflicts between teachers. These conflicts can be triggered by issues such as the loss of educational materials, problems in the school cafeteria or similar areas, teacher shortages, inadequate pedagogical support from teachers, assessment criteria and decisions, as well as failure to fulfill administrative and bureaucratic requirements set by the management. (Oloore, 2023).

Conflict Management Styles

Conflict management is the act of diagnosing and dealing with conflicts that occur within a company or between people or groups (Zakiah, 2023). It involves understanding the conflict, finding out the reasons behind it, and creating plans to resolve the issues and achieve a solution that benefits everyone involved. Reducing conflict's detrimental impacts is the aim of conflict management as well as to encourage positive results, such as better communication, increased teamwork, and stronger connections (Ronquillo, Ellis, & Toney-Butler, 2023).

Avoiding conflict management style: This is characterised by individuals or organisations choosing to ignore or avoid conflicts rather than addressing them directly (Hocker, Berry, & Wilmot, 2021). In other words, it involves evading confrontation, suppressing emotions, and maintaining a superficial harmony. This approach frequently results in withdrawal since the person utilizing it is unable to address both his or her own problems as well as the worries of the other party (Maiti & Choi, 2021). This approach is frequently taken when engaging the opposing side seems to have more negative consequences than beneficial effects (Filsecker et al., 2020). While avoiding conflicts may seem like a convenient approach in the short term, it can have detrimental effects on individuals and organisations in the long run (Adilo, 2019). One of the main drawbacks of this style is that it does not address the underlying issues causing the conflict. By avoiding conflicts, the root causes remain unresolved, leading to a build-up of tension and potential escalation of the conflict later on. This can result in increased animosity, decreased trust, and a toxic work or school environment (Ronquillo et al, 2023).

Accommodating conflict management style: This style has to do with a low assertiveness coupled with a higher degree of cooperativeness (Binyanya, 2021). The accommodating conflict management style is characterised by individuals or organisations giving precedence to the needs and concerns of others over

their own. It involves a willingness to collaborate, cooperate, and find common ground in order to maintain relationships and harmony (Hocker, Berry, & Wilmot, 2021). One of the main advantages of this style is that it promotes goodwill and fosters positive relationships (Anyakie, 2018). By accommodating the needs and concerns of others, individuals or organisations demonstrate empathy, understanding, and a willingness to compromise (Maore, Mmbwanga, & Were, 2021). This helps to build trust, strengthen relationships, and create an accommodating and harmonious environment. In the context of secondary schools, accommodating conflict management style can promote a positive school climate and culture, enhancing overall performance. While accommodating conflicts may seem like a selfless approach, it can have both positive and negative implications. When individuals consistently prioritize the needs of others over their own, their own concerns and interests may be neglected. This can result in feelings of frustration, resentment, and a lack of personal fulfilment.

Collaborating conflict management style: The style is characterised by employees or organisations working together to find mutually beneficial solutions to conflicts (Tabassum, 2020). It involves active participation, open communication, and a willingness to understand and integrate different perspectives. The collaborating style is often considered the most constructive and effective approach to conflict resolution (Yusuf, Musa, & Abubakar, 2024). One advantage of this style is that it encourages creativity and innovation (Hocker, et al, 2021). By synthesising diverse viewpoints and ideas, individuals can tap into a broader range of possibilities and develop more comprehensive solutions.

Competing conflict management style: The style is also known as the assertive or aggressive style, and it is considered a high concern for personal goals and a low concern for the goals and needs of others involved in the conflict (Maiti, & Choi, 2021). The style is often associated with a win-lose mentality, where one group seeks to dominate and attain their desired outcome at the expense of others. In the context of secondary schools, the competing style can be detrimental to the overall educational environment due to the fact that it can create power struggles among staff members, hinder cooperation between teachers and students, and impede the development of a positive and supportive learning environment. To effectively manage conflicts using the competing style, it is important to consider the long-term consequences and seek opportunities for compromise or collaboration whenever possible. It may also be helpful to engage in active listening, empathy, and assertive communication to ensure that all groups feel heard and understood (Yusuf et al, 2024).

Compromising conflict management style: This strategy is often used when confronting the opposition seems to have more unfavourable results than favourable ones (Parashar & Sarma, 2020; Onyinyechi, & Wichendu, 2021). This style involves seeking a solution that partly satisfies the needs and goals of all parties involved in the conflict. It requires a willingness to sacrifice some of one's own desires in order to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. The compromising style can be beneficial in situations where maintaining relationships and finding a middle ground are important. It allows for a fair distribution of resources, promotes cooperation, and helps to prevent the escalation of conflicts (Maiti & Choi, 2021), and it is particularly useful when time constraints or external pressures necessitate a quick resolution.

Concept of School Performance

Performance in these secondary schools context refers to the measurement and evaluation of how well these educational institutions are achieving their goals and objectives (Ahmed, & Tariq, 2020). It encompasses various aspects, including student enrolment, staff turnover, leadership effectiveness, school climate, and stakeholder satisfaction.

School enrolment: This refers to the total number of students registered in a secondary school. It is an important proxy for measuring the performance of secondary schools as it indicates the level of demand and popularity of the school among students and parents (Ihugba & Okoroafor, 2024). Conflict management styles can impact school enrolment by influencing the school's reputation and perceived quality of education. Schools that effectively manage conflicts, such as by promoting open communication and resolving issues promptly, are more likely to attract and retain students.

Employee turnover: This denotes the rate at which employees exit an organisation and are replaced by new hires (Chukwu, Uzochukwu, & Adanso, 2024). High turnover can be detrimental to a teacher's performance as it disrupts continuity, affects staff morale, and increases recruitment and training costs. Conflict management styles play a significant role in employee turnover because schools that adopt collaborative and cooperative conflict management styles, for example mediation and problem-solving, are more likely to create a positive work environment, reduce conflicts, and retain talented staff.

Staff satisfaction: This measures the level of contentment and fulfilment among the school's employees (Omoz-Oarhe, Yusuf, & Shuaibu, 2022). It is an essential proxy for school performance as satisfied staff members tend to be motivated, productive, and engaged in their work. Conflict management styles can impact staff satisfaction by promoting a wholesome and supportive work environment. Schools that encourage open communication, respect diverse perspectives, and provide opportunities for staff to resolve conflicts

constructively are more likely to have higher levels of staff satisfaction.

Leadership effectiveness: The concept refers to the ability of school managers to guide, inspire, and lead the school community towards achieving its goals (Opatunde, & Oredein, 2023). Effective leadership is vital for the overall performance of a secondary school. Conflict management styles influence leadership effectiveness by shaping the leader's approach to handling conflicts. Leaders who adopt a collaborative and inclusive conflict management style, such as involving stakeholders in decision-making and seeking win-win solutions, are more likely to gain trust, build resilient relationships, and effectively lead the school community.

School climate/culture: It refers to the overall atmosphere, values, and norms within an institution (Yusuf & Amzat, 2020). It encompasses factors such as the level of trust, communication, respect, and shared purpose among students, staff, and parents. A positive school climate/culture is associated with improved academic performance, student engagement, and overall well-being (Wuletu, Hussein, & Bareke, 2024). Conflict management styles significantly impact school climate/culture. Schools that prioritize constructive conflict resolution, promote empathy and understanding, and foster a sense of belonging are more likely to cultivate a positive and inclusive school climate/culture.

Theoretical Review

This study is built on the social exchange theory propounded by the sociologist George C. Homans in 1958. The theory is based on five assumptions. First, rationality, which implies that individuals are assumed to be rational in their behaviour and actions. Secondly, self-interest, which implies that people are inspired by self-interest and seek to boost their rewards while minimising their costs. Thirdly, interdependence, which implies that individuals rely on each other to achieve their goals. Fourthly, comparison level, which means that individuals have a comparison level, which is a standard against which they evaluate the outcomes of their relationships. This idea holds that people interact with others and form connections when they believe the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. In social relationships, the idea highlights the significance of reciprocity, trust, and mutual dependency.

Any conflict management styles that prioritize constructive and collaborative approaches, such as problem-solving or compromise, can contribute to positive social exchanges between stakeholders in secondary schools. When conflicts are managed effectively, it enhances trust, cooperation, and reciprocity among students, teachers, administrators, and parents. This positive social exchange can lead a sense of mutual support, ultimately enhancing schools' performance. On the other hand, conflict management styles that are destructive or avoidant,

such as competition or withdrawal, can lead to negative social exchanges and strained relationships among stakeholders. This can result in decreased trust, increased animosity, and a lack of cooperation, which can hinder organisational performance in secondary schools.

Methodology

The study utilised the cross-sectional survey research. This is because the data needed on variables were collected from the sampled respondents at a specific point in time using questionnaire. Cross-sectional investigations are relatively cheap and prone to minimal bias (Wang & Cheng, 2020). The time horizon for collecting data on the variables of interest from the sampled respondents ranged from July to September, 2024.

355 and 384 principals and teachers

The population of the study comprised all the 3087 secondary schools in the South-South Geographical Zone of Nigeria. The zone is made up of six states, namely, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers states. The population is gotten from the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education of the states that constitute the South-South zone. Out of the 739 copies of questionnaire administered to principals and teachers of the selected secondary schools, 665 copies were validly completed and utilised for data analyses.

The sampling method adopted for this study is a blend of simple random sampling and stratified sampling, involving the division of the population into homogeneous subgroups and random selection of samples from each stratum. Using both stratified and simple random sampling techniques jointly provides increased precision, enhanced representation, efficient resource allocation, flexibility in analysis, and increased generalizability. In this case, the strata were federal government colleges, state government secondary schools, and privately secondary schools. By ensuring representations, stratified sampling helps to capture the diversity and variations within the population. It assisted in obtaining a sample that accurately reflects the characteristics and the diversity of the population, hence enhancing the generalisability of the finding of the study.

The study employed structured survey questionnaire as data pooling instrument. The instrument items were drawn from extant studies. The questionnaire was partitioned into three sections. Section A amassed data on demographic variables, such as age, gender, education level, marital status, and years of experience. Section B gathered data about the different conflict management styles, namely avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising, and collaborating. Section C obtained information on the dependent variables, namely School performance. A structured questionnaire developed by Rahim and Magner (1995) was adopted and used to collect information on the independent variables. The instrument comprises 28 items which is cast on a 5-

point Likert scale, varying from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD), (a higher value represents greater use of a conflict style). A structured questionnaire created and validated in conjunction with the project supervisor and experts in the Department of Business Administration, was used to collect data about school performance, the dependent variable. The questionnaire contains 15 items cast on a 5-point Likert scale, varying from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD).

Descriptive statistics was first completed for all the variables of interest. The descriptive analysis was used to determine the teachers and principals' perceptions on the variables of interest while the correlation analysis was used to detect if there is

Table 1: Questionnaire distribution and retrieval

S/N	State	Questionnaire		Response Rate
		Administered	Retrieval	
1	Akwa-Ibom	41	40	97.6
2	Cross-River	82	65	79.3
3	Delta	81	74	91.4
4	Edo	73	73	100.0
5	Rivers	63	59	93.7
6	Bayelsa	44	34	77.3
Total		384	345	89.8

Table 1 shows that 384 copies of the questionnaire were administered to teachers. However, 345 copies were validly filled them. The response rates for the different states are: Akwa-Ibom State (Teachers – 97.6%), Bayelsa State (Teachers – 77.3%), Cross-

auto-correlation among the variables. Multiple regression analysis and independent sample t-test were used to attest relationship among the research variables. All tests were achieved at a 5% level of significance using SPSS software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description of respondents' demographic information

This section contains the summary of questionnaire administration and respondents' demographic information such as age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, and working experience . The results are presented in Table 1 below:

Rivers State (Teachers – 79.3%), Delta State (Teachers – 91.4%), Edo State (Teachers – 100%), and Rivers State (Teachers – 93.7%). The overall response rate for teachers is 89.8%.

Table 2: Respondents' demographic information

Demographics	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	179	51.9
	Female	166	48.1
	Total	345	100.0
Age	35 & Below	104	30.1
	36 – 45	112	32.5
	46 – 55	111	32.2
	Above 55	18	5.2
	Total	345	100.0
Educational Qualification	NCE & Equivalent	70	20.3
	First Degree	172	49.9
	Postgraduate	103	29.9

Demographics	Category	Frequency	Percent
	Total	345	100.0
Working Experience	1 – 10	104	30.1
	11 – 20	86	24.9
	21 – 30	109	31.6
	Above 30	46	13.3
	Total	345	100.0
Marital Status	Married	154	44.6
	Single	155	44.9
	Widow/er	36	10.4
	Total	345	100.0

Table 2 shows that 179 of the teachers are male which accounts for 51.9% while 166 (48.1%) of the teachers are female. This shows that more male teachers participated in completing the research instrument. Table 2 also shows that for respondents that are teachers, 104 (30.1%) of them are 35 years and below, 112 (32.5%) are between 36 and 45 years old, 111 (32.2%) are between 46 and 55 years old while 18 (5.2%) are above 55 years old. 70 (20.3%) respondents had NCE and its equivalent as their highest qualification. 172 (49.9%) of the respondents had first degree while 103 (29.9%) of the respondents had postgraduate qualifications. From Table 2, majority of the respondents have worked between twenty-one and thirty years which account for 31.6% of the total respondents, while 24.9% have

worked for eleven to twenty years. Respondents who have worked for between one and ten years account for 30.1%. Respondents who have worked for more than thirty years are 46 which amounts to 13.3% of the total respondents. Table 2 shows that 154 of the teachers are married which accounts for 44.6% while 155 (44.9%) of the teachers are single. Only 36 (10.4%) of the respondents are widows or widowers.

Model Estimation and Interpretation

Pearson's correlation coefficient and multivariate regression analyses were used to approximate the relationship between the variables of interests. These statistical tools are used to establish the relationship between the dependent and independent variables and test the stated hypotheses. The results are shown as follows:

Table 3: Pearson's sorrelation coefficient

Variables	SSPERF	AVCM	ACCM	CMPT	CMCM	COLM
SSPERF	1					
AVCM	.434**	1				
ACCM	.332**	.575**	1			
CMPT	-.054	-.072	-.174**	1		
CMCM	.460**	.700**	.655**	-.014	1	
COLM	.512**	.702**	.677**	-.192**	.731**	1

Table 3 displays the Pearson's correlation coefficients for each pair of variables. The Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) should not be greater than 0.80; otherwise, it may be assumed that multi-collinearity exists for independent variables that have a correlation coefficient greater than 0.80 (Bryman & Cramer, 1997). Results in Table 3 showed that none of the variables are higher than 0.80, ruling out the possibility of multi-collinearity in the model.

Table 3 shows that secondary school performance (SSPERF) is positively and significantly related to AVCM [$r = 0.434$, $p < 0.05$], ACCM [$r = 0.332$, $p < 0.05$], CMCM [$r = 0.460$, $p < 0.05$], and COLM [$r =$

0.512 , $p < 0.05$]. However, the results show that there negative and non-statistically significant relationship between secondary school performance (SSPERF) and CMPT [$r = -0.054$, $p > 0.05$].

Table 4: Estimated model of the relationship between conflict management styles and secondary school performance

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Hypothesis Testing
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	2.338	0.161	-	14.568	0.000	
AVCM	0.153	0.054	0.215	2.820	0.005	Reject H ₀₁
ACCM	0.167	0.045	0.296	3.677	0.000	Reject H ₀₂
CMPT	0.002	0.035	0.003	0.069	0.945	Do Not Reject H ₀₃
CMCM	0.099	0.046	0.158	2.163	0.031	Reject H ₀₄
COLM	0.293	0.051	0.473	5.790	0.000	Reject H ₀₅

R² = 0.310; Adj R² = 0.299; F-Statistic = 30.400; F-Statistic (Prob) = 0.000; Durbin-Watson = 1.736; Number of Observation = 345
Dependent Variable: School Performance (SSPERF)

Table 4 shows that secondary school performance (SSPERF) is positively and significantly related to AVCM [$\beta = 0.153$, $t = 2.820$, $p = 0.005$], ACCM [$\beta = 0.167$, $t = 3.677$, $p = 0.000$], CMCM [$\beta = 0.099$, $t = 2.163$, $p = 0.031$], and COLM [$\beta = 0.293$, $t = 5.790$, $p = 0.000$]. However, the results show that there is a positive but non-statistically significant relationship between secondary school performance (SSPERF) and CMPT [$\beta = 0.002$, $t = 0.069$, $p = 0.945$]. The R^2 of 0.310 indicates that the independent variables account for 31% of the variations in the dependent variable. The Adjusted R^2 of 0.299 suggests that the independent variables jointly explained 29.9% of the variation in the dependent variable. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.736 exposes the absence of first order serial correlation. The F-statistic of 30.4 is significant at $p = 0.000$ inferring that the overall regression model explains a considerable percentage of the variability in the dependent variable.

Discussion of Findings

Firstly, the study found that there is a positive and significant relationship between avoiding conflict management style and performance of schools (secondary) in South-South Nigeria. This finding disagrees with the outcome of the works of Adetunji and Adetunji (2018), Ekechukwu and Ifeanyichukwu (2021), Kalkan et al (2020), Owan (2018) that showed avoidance conflict management style impact performance. This study reiterates that conflict avoidance in schools can have a negative impact on the overall effectiveness of educational institutions. When disagreements and concerns go unresolved, they tend to persist and fester, disrupting the peaceful learning environment that schools aim to create. Persistent avoidance of conflict can present itself in a variety of ways. It may result in a persistent culture of quiet and avoidance, in which people stop from discussing concerns openly.

Secondly, the study found that there is a significant relationship between accommodating conflict management style and performance of secondary schools in South-South Nigeria. Accommodating conflict management is a management approach that prioritizes relationship maintenance over dispute resolution (Yusuf, Musa, & Abubakar, 2024). This indicates that, in the context of secondary schools in Nigeria, accommodating style entails a proclivity to give in or compromise during confrontations in order to prevent hurting relationships and maintain a pleasant school atmosphere. The discovery of a substantial association between accommodating conflict management style and school achievement

shows that this approach to conflict resolution has major consequences.

Moreover, the study revealed that there is no significant relationship between competing conflict management style and performance of secondary schools in South-South Nigeria. This research outcome is supported by the outcomes of Brandebo (2020), Marshall, Roache and Moody-Marshall, (2020) that found that a substantial dependence on competing conflict management styles in a school setting can have far-reaching effects, particularly in terms of eroding relationships among members of the school community. As observed by Marshall et al. (2020), individual mistrust may arise as a result of the competitive nature of this strategy. In an environment where everyone is looking out for themselves, colleagues and students may become suspicious of one another's motivations thereby weakening the sense of belonging and shared purpose that should ideally define a school community.

Furthermore, the study found that compromising conflict management style does significantly impact the performance of secondary schools in South-South Nigeria. The works of Omene, (2021), Soomro, Saraih and Ahmad (2023), Valente and Lourenço (2020) that found that compromise conflict management style that entails finding common ground and establishing agreements via mutual compromises plays a significant role in overall school achievement support the outcome of this study. The compromise strategy places an emphasis on finding common ground, which may lead to constructive problem-solving in schools. When disagreements are resolved by compromise, it is common for both sides to give up something in order to achieve an agreement.

Lastly, there is a significant relationship between collaborating conflict management style and performance of secondary schools in South-South Nigeria. This research outcome is supported by the outcomes of Chandolia and Anastasiou (2020), Ebeguki et al. (2019), Larasati and Raharja (2020) and John-Eke and Akintokunbo (2020) that found that collaboration encourages open conversation, trust, and a sense of togetherness among school stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, students, and parents, and promotes a healthy school culture. When school stakeholders resolve issues collectively, it develops a sense of togetherness and shared responsibility. Collaboration in conflict resolution has the potential to improve teacher-student relationships. When principals include teachers and students in conflict resolution, trust and mutual respect are fostered (Yusuf, Musa, & Abubakar, 2024; Maxwell & Deo, 2024).

Therefore, by incorporating all stakeholders in the conflict resolution process, secondary schools can have access to a greater range of ideas and perspectives that may result in further innovation and growth of teaching approaches, curriculum, and educational procedures as a whole.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Poor understanding of conflict management has had a negative impact on school administration and performance. Due to lack clear-cut strategies for dealing with conflicts, most school administrators relied on trial-and-error approach to resolve them. Conflicts among teachers, between teachers and principals, or even among students have had detrimental effects on the overall functioning and performance of secondary schools in Nigeria. In line with this, this study shed light on the complex link between conflict management styles used within educational institutions and their subsequent influence on school performance. The study investigated conflict management styles in secondary schools in the South-South geographical zone of Nigeria which is made up of six states, namely, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers states. The study concludes that the implementation of appropriate conflict management strategies will remain pivotal in achieving excellence performance in secondary schools in South-South Nigeria.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Schools should invest in teacher training and professional development programmes to provide them with effective conflict management skills. This could include conflict resolution workshops, seminars, and courses that emphasize teamwork and constructive communication.
- The non-significant relationship between competing conflict management style and performance of secondary schools in South-South Nigeria suggests that educators and administrators should to take a more comprehensive approach to school development. Rather than concentrating on conflict resolution techniques, efforts should be widened to incorporate a broader range of aspects such as curriculum quality, teacher training, parent engagement, and student support networks to improve school performance.

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