



## AN INVESTIGATION OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES OF RURAL AND URBAN SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

The study investigated the conflict management styles of rural and urban secondary school principals in Ondo State. The study was designed to find out whether school location and principals experience are related to conflict management styles. Descriptive survey designed was adopted for the study. The population for the study consisted of all secondary principals in Ondo state. There are 480 secondary principals in Ondo state. Simple Random sampling Techniques was used to select 150 principals in rural schools and 150 principals in urban schools. A research instrument titled 'Principals Conflict Management Styles Questionnaire (PMSQ) was used for the study. Content and face validation were done by two experts in the department of Educational Management and the instrument was found suitable for the study. A test – retest reliability and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to estimate the reliability and found reliable at  $r=0.76$ . The t- test statistical tool was used to analyze the data. Hypotheses were tested at a significant level of 0.05. The study revealed that there is no significant difference in the conflict management styles of the principals in the rural and the urban areas, in Ondo State secondary schools ( $r_{cal} 0.838$ ,  $r_{tab} 1.96$ ). It also confirmed that there is a significant difference in the conflict management styles between the experienced and less experienced principals in Ondo State secondary schools ( $r_{cal} 2.42$ ,  $tab 1.96$ ). Hence, the possible conclusion was that experience has a significant influence in the management of conflict in secondary schools. Recommendations were made based on the findings among which include: school principals both in Rural and Urban areas should be given enough orientation and Training on how to manage conflict. Also, government should consider experience as one of the major factors to be used in the appointment of school principals.

**Key Words:** management styles, experience principals and less-experience administrator.

### Introduction

Conflict could be viewed as all forms of disagreements between employers and employees in the organization. Conflict is natural and normal. It is not always inimical to human organizations including the school system. Coffey, Athos and Raymond (1975) see conflict as the tension and energy tension and energy including opposition of person or forces to the achievement of goals. According to the study of Coffey et al (1975), for one to achieve ones goals, there must be conflict. George and Jones (2006) described conflict as discord that emanates where objectives, purposes or values of difference individuals or group are incompatible and those individuals block one another in attempt to achieved their own objectives. as to how certain objectives could be achieved. George and Jones (2006) described conflict as a discord that emanate when objectives, purpose or values of different individuals or group are incompatible and those individuals block one another in attempt to achieve their own objectives.

Conflict is inevitable in all human organization especially, organizations own by the developing nations. For example, The Director General of UNESCO, (2013) revealed that 42% of the world's total numbers of primary school age children who are not enrolled in school live in conflict affected countries (35 countries from 1999 – 2008, 15 of them in sub-Saharan Africa)

Conflict is unavoidable in organizations. Adeyemi (2009) saw conflict as the appearance of differences in operation and interest. Afonja (2001) opined that conflict is part of an organizational life with each department trying to take or have at its disposal the use of organizational scarce resources. However, some people did not embrace conflict in organization. For example, Blake and Monton(1964)regarded it as a concept that is bad and should be suppressed. Olu-okotomi and Abosede(2003)found out that out of 304 teachers sample in secondary in Osun state 168(53.3%) gave positive responses on the awareness of conflict in their schools while 87(28.6%)gave negative responses on the awareness. Adekola (2007) observed that location of school planning involving the identification of learning needs and determination of even distribution of size and spacing of educational facilities.

School organization cannot be exempted from conflict either urban or rural. Though there is the possibility that conflict in urban schools could be managed effectively because it has been observed by Ehinola(1998)that one of the major causes of conflict is lack of sufficient facilities, and most schools in urban cities are adequately provided with educational facilities at the expenses of schools in rural communities. Sharrat (1983) indicated that school climate distinguished it from others school, thus influence performance of student. Also, Omoyemi (1983) from his studies on school location in developing countries particularly in Ondo State and generally in Nigeria. Majority of schools are located in and around the urban cities. 70% of secondary schools in Ondo State are located in urban cities.

Conflict is either good or bad. Imhabekhai (2001) says that conflict exist in different level and degree beginning with minor discomfort. It either provides opportunities for good or bad result. Babatope (2009) says conflict goes with change and Conflict can take both formal and informal form and it is prevalent in human society. Alabi (2010) affirmed

that one of the major causes of conflict in Nigeria is competition for resources. Conflict is important to administration and if it well managed it could result to positive contributions and innovations. Control of conflict is a problem faced by human organizations, school system inclusive. Conflict could arise between superior and subordinate. It has been observed in secondary school by Ehinola(1998), that female teachers do not like to teach higher classes where male teachers are sent to lower classes. Also some female teachers feel too lazy to teach all subject periods on the time-table for a day. Conflict could also arises when an administrator failed to perform any of his roles either administrative or professional, such as failure to plan for new programme for his school as well as failure in assisting his teachers in the development of existing subjects, failure to provide instructional materials and equipment, failure to give support to the staff within the limits of available resources are also source of conflict. It could arise when administrator doesn't care about the welfare of staff and students or showing non-challant attitude in maintaining of the school facilities. Conflict is unavoidable, the most important thing is the effective management of it when it happens. Conflict management styles evolve the leadership conception of the school administrator. As the Educational leader and the Accounting officer in the school, he is the leader of both staff and students, he is looked upon for good conflict management style. He must therefore utilize the type of conflict management style and inspiration that will result to growth of the system.

Principals should takes into consideration his school environment before choosing conflict management style to be used.

Principals used different management styles such as force style, democratic style and negotiation style in treating conflict. Ibukun (2004) identified strategies of conflict management among which are:

1. Prevention and Avoidance: An organization through administrative procedures can put in place many strategies in order to prevent conflict such as regular payment of salaries, allowances and additional incentives such as loan with little or no interest rate.
2. Problem solving; many points are not entertained and accommodated but resolved.
3. Changing the structure of the organization; through transfers, changing of divisional heads and exchange of personal.

Secondary schools administrators can use any of these strategies in resolving conflicts in their schools. Though in Ondo State it has been observed that administrator has their personal traits which may affect their conflict management style in respect of orientation or training given them. Some may be using agreement or democratic style while some may go for command or force style. In school system, conflict could either functional or dysfunctional effects depending on whether the resolution of the conflict results in increased capacity utilization of productivity or otherwise. Each principal should be thinking on how conflict could be resolved in such a way that it will increase and improve productivity in their schools. The positive effects of conflict in school system tends to welcome tolerance, understanding and unity.

Experiences is important in all human organizations, especially school system. experience is needed in order to determine the requirement for principalship in secondary schools. In Nigeria and most of the developed nations, principals have been drawn from the rank of teachers. This practice provide the principal ship with pool of candidates experience. According to (National Centre For Educational Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey 1990-1991 )About half of all principals in 1990 -1991 school year came to their position with other administrative experiences.

Chris (1980) says that some principals of secondary schools, whose years of experience are high use negotiating or Bureaucratic styles in treating conflict. In choice of conflict resolving style, it is imperative for an principal to recognize certain issues like stress, tension or anxiety in group member in order for him to know the style to be used in resolving conflict.

## Statement of the Problem

Many citizens are much concerned about the level of conflict in the school system, especially between principals and member of staff. Some were of the view that conflict is inimical to productivity and staff involved in it have been regarded as non-conformist. Conflict is unavoidable but strategies to be put in place for effective management is more important. Hence, the problem to which attention will be directed in this study is to know the influence of location on the management of conflict among secondary school principals in Ondo State and also to know the place of experience in the management of conflict among secondary school principals.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out the influence of location and experience in the management of conflict among secondary school principals in Ondo State. The study will also examine whether rural and urban administrators differ in term of conflict management styles.

## Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between conflict management style of principals in the urban and rural schools.
2. There is no significant difference between conflict management style of experienced and less experienced

## Research Method

### Design

Descriptive research design was adopted to carry out the study. The researcher collected information that describe the conflict management of principals in rural and urban schools. Also information were collected in respect of principals' experience.

### Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all secondary school administrators in Ondo State, Nigeria. There are 480 secondary schools in Ondo state. The sample for this study consisted of 300 respondents in which 150 principals were selected from urban schools and 150 principals from rural schools. Another 180 and 120 principals were selected as experienced and less experienced principals, in which 60 experienced principals from rural schools and 120 experienced from urban schools were selected while 90 less experienced principals from rural schools and 30 less experienced principals from urban schools were selected.

### Instrumentation

An instrument titled Principals Conflict Management Questionnaire (PCMQ) was used for the study. The instrument sought information on various conflict management styles used by principals in their location either urban or rural schools and influence of experienced in the management of conflict. The instrument was validated and found reliable at  $r = 0.76$

### Results

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the conflict management style of administrators in the urban and rural schools.

Table 1: Summary of t-test on conflict management style of urban and rural schools administrators.

Group	N	X	SD	t-cal	t-table
Urban	150	80	51.94	0.8385	1.96
Rural	150	84	26.42		

$P > 0.05$

Table 1 shows that the t-cal (0.8385) is less than t-table (1.96) at  $P > 0.05$  level of significant. Hence, the hypothesis is accepted. This shows that there was no significant difference in the conflict management style of administrators in Urban and Rural school. Thus not much difference is often witnessed in the conflict management style of those in urban and those in rural schools in Ondo State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the conflict management style of experienced and less experienced school Administrators.

Table 2: Summary of t-test on conflict management style of experienced and less-experienced school Administrators

Group	N	X	SD	t-cal	t-table
Experienced	180	60	20.02	2.42	1.96
Less-Experienced	120	46.8	19.61		

Table 2 shows that the t-cal 2.42 is greater than t-table (1.96) at  $\leq P. 0.05$  level of significance. Hence, this hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there are differences in the conflict management style between experienced and less experienced administrator. Thus the saying that experience is the best teacher.

### Discussion and Findings

The finding of the study revealed that there is no significant difference between conflict management style of principals in Urban and rural schools with (t-cal 0.8385, t-table 1.96) The result shows that there is no variation in their management styles. It was revealed that most often principals in both location used modification strategies, democratic principles, traditional and administration re-structuring in the management of conflict. it implies that location of schools is not significantly related to how administrator manage conflict.

Also in hypothesis two, the finding revealed that there is no significant difference between the conflict management style of experienced and less-experienced schools' principals with (t-cal 2.42, t-tab 1.96) The results show that. There is variation in the conflict-management style between experienced and less-experienced and principals in Ondo state secondary schools. It implies that less-experienced administrators might be using force or command, authority and traditional styles in resolving conflict in their schools. while the experienced principals might be using agreement, third party intervention and conscious appeal to subordinate. Experience is very significant in the management of conflict in the school system. The finding of this study corroborates Rice (2003) which indicates that teacher quality- experience is the most important school-related factor influencing students achievement. In the management of conflict experience cannot be under estimated. Thus the saying that experience is the best teacher most especially in the management of conflict. Hence, year spent on a job is of important in the management of conflict.

### Conclusion

The study investigated the influence of location and experience on the management of conflict among secondary schools principals in Ondo State.

The findings show that there is no significant difference between the conflict management style of principals in the urban and rural schools and it also recorded significant difference in the conflict management style between experience and less experienced principals. It implies that conflict resolution could be an illusion without taking experience into consideration. The possible conclusion was that experience has a significant impact in the management of conflict in secondary schools. Then, the need to place high emphasis on experience before an principals could be selected, appointed and posted to schools in Ondo State.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study; it therefore recommended that:

Schools principals both in rural and urban schools should be given enough orientation and training on how to manage conflict effectively.

Schools principals and government should not see conflict as inimical for production but the positive and innovative contributions of conflict to the educational system should be considered.

Government should immediately promulgate a policy that any principals whose experienced is less than 10 years should be relieved of his principalship.

Principals should be encouraged to change from scientific style of conflict management to democratic and administrative re-structuring styles.

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