

INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS' CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND DECISION-MAKING STRATEGIES ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN OYO STATE

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Abstract

This research investigated the influence of principals' conflict resolution and decision-making strategies on the academic performance of secondary school students in Oyo State. The study employed a descriptive

survey research design. The population for this investigation included all 969 principals and 11,732 teachers across 969 senior secondary schools within Oyo State. The sample comprised 45 principals and 450 teachers selected from 45 public secondary

schools in Oyo State, utilizing a multi-stage sampling procedure. Two sets of instruments, namely the “Principals’ Conflict Resolution and Decision-Making Strategies Questionnaire (PCRDMSQ) and an Inventory of Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination results, were employed for the study. These instruments were validated by experts in Educational Management as well as in Test and Measurement to ascertain their appropriateness, thereby ensuring both face and content validity. The test-retest method was utilized to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.80 for the PCRDMSQ. The research hypotheses were analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. The findings indicated that the connection between principals’ conflict resolution strategy and the academic performance of students in the state under investigation was moderate. Furthermore, the correlation between principals’ decision-making and students’ academic performance was found to be low. It was recommended that principals should strive to amicably resolve all conflicts within the school environment and actively involve teachers and students in the decision-making processes to foster a positive workplace attitude, enhance job productivity, increase

student commitment to learning, and improve overall academic performance.

Keywords: principals; Conflict resolution, Decision making, academic performance.

Introduction

Etymologically, the term education, as elucidated by Murray (2023), is derived from the Latin verb EDUCERE, which translates as to draw out’ or ‘to lead out’. This etymology indicates that humans possess inherent qualities or potentialities that are intrinsically embedded within their being. Nonetheless, for such qualities to be useful to both the individual and society at large, there exists a requisite process of leading or eliciting these qualities, analogous to the extraction of water from a well for human use. From this vantage point, education is conceptualized as the systematic process through which the innate abilities and potentialities of an individual are nurtured to their fullest extent, thereby rendering the individual beneficial to both themselves and the broader community, which makes the secondary level of education very important to citizens in Nigeria.

Secondary education occupies a distinctive and pivotal role within the Nigerian educational framework, primarily due to the fact that this educational tier significantly

influences the academic and professional trajectories of students. One of the principals aims of secondary education is to equip students for constructive existence within the societal milieu” (Imhangbe & Asemhe, 2025). However, it appears that “secondary institutions are falling short of expectations in fulfilling their mandated responsibilities. Despite the critical importance and widespread acceptance of secondary education, the academic performance of students at this level has been markedly subpar (Kolawole & Gegeleso, 2023).

It is indeed disheartening to acknowledge that this crucial educational stage is beset by a plethora of challenges. Among the salient issues that underscore the lackluster academic performance is the dismal results exhibited by students in the Senior School Certificate Examination. The inadequate performance in the assessments administered by the West African Examination Council has become a source of significant concern for parents and various stakeholders within the educational sector, especially in light of the substantial resources allocated by both parents and government towards the education of these learners.

Reflecting upon historical data, Sadiq, Ocheido, Meseko, Olofinniyi, Agada, and Ochai (2024) reported that the performance

of secondary school students in external examinations overseen by the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) has been discouraging, which has led to widespread dissatisfaction among the public. Reports regarding the academic performance of candidates in the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) conducted by the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) in Nigeria revealed unsatisfactory outcomes in 2011. Similarly, during the May/June 2012 West African Senior School Certificate Examination, of the 1,672,224 candidates who participated, only 649,156 candidates, equivalent to 38.81%, achieved credit level passes and above in subjects including English Language and Mathematics across the 36 States of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory (Abdul-Lateef & Salaam, 2023). In 2013, the percentage of candidates obtaining five credits and above in subjects such as English Language and Mathematics was recorded at 36.57%, while figures of 31.28% and 39% were noted in 2014 and 2015 respectively (Gabriel, 2024). In Oyo State, the proportion of students achieving credit level passes in five subjects, including English Language and Mathematics, in the WAEC Examination was documented at 11.92% in 2009, 13.40% in 2010, 16.97% in 2011, 21.35% in 2012,

21.7% in 2013, and 19.19% in 2014, across all public secondary schools..In the year 2015, the ratio of candidates who achieved five or more credits, inclusive of English Language and Mathematics, stood at 21.61% (Oyo State Ministry of Education, 2023). In the results published by the West Africa Examination Council for 2016, Oyo State was positioned 26th among the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. The continuous subpar academic performance of students”, as evidenced by the West Africa Examination Council results, suggests that a significant proportion of students will not have the opportunity to secure admission into their preferred higher education institutions. Given the documented decline in academic performance within public secondary schools, one may ponder whether the elevated failure rates among students serve as an indicator of deficiencies in conflict resolution and management, as well as decision-making strategies employed within these educational institutions. In essence, the “inadequacy of conflict management and decision-making approaches may contribute to the observed lackluster performance of students. The school principal, serving as the administrative leader, bears considerable responsibility for effectively managing conflict and making decisions within the

educational environment.

As the primary executive of a school, the principal is entrusted with overseeing the daily operations of the institution and ensuring that all stakeholders within the school community are aligned with the institution's objectives. A critical responsibility of school leaders is to provide leadership that fosters a collective vision for the school's strategic direction and to facilitate changes that guarantee the institution's success in achieving its goals. Consequently, the school principal fulfils essential roles, including conflict resolution and decision-making strategies. A failure to execute these roles effectively may adversely affect the school environment and, subsequently, the academic performance of students. In carrying out these responsibilities, the school leader (principal) is anticipated to manage conflict and make decisions in a strategic manner to fulfil the school's objectives.

Conflict can be conceptualised as a state of tension existing between two or more social entities (individuals, groups, or large organisations). Given the high degree of interdependence among duties and the variations in individual role expectations, conflicts can emerge from diverse circumstances and situations within the

school system; conflict is an inherent part of change and, therefore, is unavoidable. The nature and types of conflicts encountered in an organization can differ significantly from one institution to another (Odionyeme & Wichendu, 2021).

The researcher has noted that prevalent forms of conflict in educational settings often involve disputes between students and school authorities. Additional forms of conflict can include interpersonal disagreements among staff members, as well as conflicts involving students. A students-teacher conflict may arise when a teacher disciplines a student or imposes a punishment, leading students to retaliate by enlisting family members or other individuals to confront the teacher. Furthermore, teacher-teacher conflicts can occur as a result of disagreements between two educators. It is common for educators to find themselves at odds with the school principal regarding both personal matters and official policies. Similarly, Joaquina (2025) has identified various forms of conflict within the educational environment, including disagreements among students and staff, conflicts between students, disputes involving the principal, and tensions between the school and the community. Consequently, conflict can be understood as the dynamic interaction among interdependent individuals

who perceive their goals as irreconcilable and experience obstruction from one another in the pursuit of these objectives.

Conflict is an inherent aspect of the educational setting due to the diverse perspectives held by principals, teachers, non-teaching staff, and students, each of whom comes from different backgrounds and possesses unique experiences". Such disparities can potentially harm the school environment if not effectively managed. Therefore, the implementation of conflict resolution strategies by school principals is of paramount importance. Observational studies indicate that in certain schools, principals have accused teachers of neglecting their responsibilities, while teachers have, in turn, critiqued principals for being ineffective and authoritarian. Additionally, students often raise concerns regarding their welfare and academic matters in relation to school authorities. Neglecting the needs of students may lead to diminished academic outcomes, as evidenced by reported instances of "protests, strikes, and school closures stemming from conflicts, all of which negatively influence students' academic performance.

Secondary school principals and teachers encounter a plethora of challenges in both instructional and administrative dimensions,

which consistently obstruct the achievement of educational objectives. The efficacy of a competent principal seems contingent upon their capacity to make sound decisions in collaboration with their subordinates. Teachers and students are integral to school management, and their engagement in the decision-making process is crucial for the attainment of school goals. Mohammed (2025) observed that when principals employ managerial strategies that incorporate teacher and student participation in school governance, it results in elevated morale, thereby enhancing students' academic performance.

A secondary school principal cannot thrive as an effective administrator unless they foster an environment that encourages subordinates to collaborate harmoniously with them, thereby securing their goodwill and active engagement. It appears that when students perceive themselves as significant contributors to the school system, they are more inclined to support the achievement of school objectives, which, in turn, positively influences their academic performance. There is an imperative for collaborative decision-making involving all components of the school system. A deficiency in participation during the decision-making process may complicate the realization of the

school's objectives.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined how principals' conflict resolution and decision-making strategies influence secondary school students' academic performance in Oyo State. Specifically, the study examined the link between conflict resolution, decision-making, and students' academic performance.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were also formulated to pilot the study.

1. There is no significant relationship between conflict resolution strategy and the academic performance of students.
2. There is no significant relationship between decision-making strategy and the academic performance of students.

Methodology

The research design employed in this investigation was of the descriptive survey variety. The study's population comprised 969 school principals and 11,732 teachers from 969 senior secondary institutions within Oyo State, Nigeria, during the study's time

frame. The sample, which included 45 principals and 450 teachers, aimed at evaluating their school leaders' strategies for managing conflict and making decisions. Participants were selected from 45 public secondary schools within Oyo State. In the initial stage, a simple random sampling method was utilized to identify three local government areas from each senatorial district. In the subsequent stage, a simple random sampling approach was again applied to choose five public secondary schools from each of the nine previously identified local government areas". Finally, a purposive random sampling method was used to select one principal, coupled with a simple random sampling strategy to sample 10 teachers from each of the 45 public secondary schools previously chosen.

For data collection in this study, two instruments were employed. The first instrument is designated as the "Principal Conflict Resolution Strategy Questionnaire (PCRSQ) and Decision-Making Strategy Questionnaire (DMSQ)." The second instrument consisted of a Proforma concerning Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination Results for the May/June sessions spanning 2021/2022 to 2023/2024. The face and content validity of the instrument was ensured by specialists to

confirm the relevance and adequacy of content in accurately measuring the intended constructs. To assess reliability, the test-retest method was utilized, and the two sets of responses were correlated and analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.80, this was deemed sufficiently high to affirm the instrument's reliability and applicability for the study. Both descriptive (mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistical such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation methodologies were employed to analyze the collected data, with hypotheses being tested at a significance level of 0.05.

Results

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between principals' conflict resolution strategy and students' academic performance.

To test the hypothesis, scores relating to principals' conflict resolution strategy and students' academic performance were computed, connecting "Principals' Conflict Resolution Strategy Questionnaire (PCRSQ) and a Proforma on Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination results respectively. These set of scores were subsequently subjected to statistical analysis involving Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented

in Table 1.

Table 1: *Relationship between Conflict resolution strategy and students' academic performance*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>ρ</i>
Conflict Resolution Strategy		13.97	0.71		
Students' academic Performance	45	1.19	0.55	0.409*	0.288

* $P < 0.05$

Table 1 shows that r_{cal} (0.409) is greater than r_{table} (0.288) at the 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there was a significant relationship between conflict resolution strategy and students' academic performance. The relationship between conflict resolution strategy and students' academic performance was average. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between decision-making strategy and students' academic performance.

Scores on decision making and students' academic performance were computed using Principals' Decision-Making Strategies Questionnaire (PDMSQ) and Proforma on Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination results, respectively. These scores were subjected to statistical analysis involving Pearson Product-Moment Correlation at a 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 2

Table 2: *Relationship between decision-making strategy and students' academic performance*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>ρ</i>
Decision-Making Strategy		14.19	1.05		
Students' Academic Performance	45	1.19	0.55	0.774*	0.288

* $\rho < 0.05$

The result in Table 2 shows that r_{cal} (0.774) is greater than r_{table} (0.288) at the 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there was a significant relationship between decision-making strategy and students' academic performance. The correlation between decision-making strategy and students' academic performance was low. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion

There exists a notable correlation between conflict resolution strategy and the academic performance of students. It implies that if strategies such as consensus, participatory, dialogue and mediation are given serious attention; they are good enough to enhance excellent academic performance of students. What can be responsible for this finding may be the fact that both government and school principals realize that teachers will perform their duties as expected if necessary, strategies are put in place. This suggests that effective conflict resolution is crucial for achieving educational objectives. Unaddressed conflicts within schools can

potentially incite violence and disorder, thereby impeding the advancement of public secondary institutions. This observation aligns with the findings of Richard, Charles, and Daniel (2020), as well as Makuru, Mwawasi, and Kirigia (2025), who identified a positive linear association between conflict resolution strategies and the academic success of students.

There is a significant correlation between decision-making processes and students' academic performance. This indicates that students tend to excel academically when sound decisions are made at various administrative levels. The underlying reason for this phenomenon may be attributed to educators' proficiency in analyzing, interpreting, and utilizing data to facilitate informed decision-making across diverse educational domains, including professional development and student learning, which consequently enhances students' academic outcomes. This conclusion is congruent with the research conducted by Richardson (2024) and Yves (2024), which emphasized the

pivotal role of school leaders in fostering a culture of sound decision-making within educational institutions, highlighting its strong correlation with students' academic achievement. It could be inferred that when school personnel and other stakeholders are part of decision-making process, there is greater opportunity for them to comply and function very well in the management of school business and by implication student academic performance will be undoubtedly enhanced.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In light of the findings from this research, it was concluded that the relationship between principals' conflict resolution strategy and the academic performance of secondary school students was moderate, while the relationship between principals' decision-making strategy and academic performance was above average. Both conflict resolution and decision-making emerged as significant factors influencing the academic performance of secondary school students in Oyo State. Given the implications of these findings for ensuring high-quality educational outcomes in secondary schools, it is recommended that principals prioritize the amicable resolution of conflicts within the school environment and actively engage teachers and students in the decision-making

processes, fostering a positive workplace attitude, enhancing job productivity, promoting student commitment to learning, and ultimately improving academic performance.

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