INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCEMENTS IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
IJAEA

ARBITRATION CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR JOB SATISFACTION IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

[1]Bosah Ifeoma P.
ip.bosah@unizik.edu.ng
&
[2]Agulefo Ijeoma U.
agulefoijeoma@gmail.com
[1&2]Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Corresponding Author: Bosah Ifeoma. P; Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Email: ip.bosah@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

The study examined extent of use of arbitration conflict management strategy for job satisfaction in public primary schools in Anambra State. The study employed descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 10,369 public primary school teachers in the 21 Local Government Education Authorities, (LGEA) of Anambra State. A sample of 385 primary school teachers was selected using multi-stage sampling techniques. Data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Head-teachers' Conflict Management Strategies" (QHCMS). Overall reliability co-efficient value of 0.83 was calculated for the instrument. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and t-test. The results revealed that the arbitration conflict management strategy was adopted by head-teachers for promoting job satisfaction in public primary schools in Anambra State. Also, there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on arbitration as a conflict management strategy adopted by school head-teachers for promoting job satisfaction in public primary schools in Anambra State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that, educational authorities, such as Local Education Authorities or the Ministry of Education, should develop and implement comprehensive training programs focused on arbitration conflict management for head-teachers.

Key Words: Arbitration, Conflict management Strategy, Job Satisfaction, Primary Schools

Author Biographies

I. P Bosah, Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University

Dr. Ifeoma Patience Bosah is from Anambra State, Nigeria. She is an Associate Professor in the Early Childhood and Primary Education Department, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. She has published many articles in National and International Journals.
Email: ip.bosah@unizik.edu.ng

I. U Agulefo, Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

Ijeoma U. Agulefo is a postgraduate student in the department of early childhood and primary education at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. She is actively involved in advancing the field of early childhood education and is a member of the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Nigeria (ACEN). Through her academic pursuits and professional affiliations, Ijeoma is committed to contributing to the development and improvement of early childhood education in Nigeria. Email: agulefoijeoma@gmail.com

Introduction

Conflict is an inevitable feature of organizational life. It is a natural phenomenon that must always occur in any organization and in the school setting, conflict is defined as the disagreement between two members or groups arising from the fact that they must share school scarce resources or work activities and or from the fact that they have different status, goals, values and perceptions (MacNeil & Topping, 2017). Conflict in the school may emanate from the interactions between members (pupils, staff, management and the community) and across the organization as members strive to achieve the goals and objectives of education resulting in: pupil/pupil conflict, pupil/staff conflict, staff/staff conflict, head-teacher/staff conflict and school/community conflict (MacNeil & Topping, 2017). It is important to note that poorly managed conflicts have damaging consequences on pupils, teachers and relevant educational stakeholders in primary schools. Agu & Obiukwu (2021) gave the following as some of the consequences of conflict on education:

longer-term disruption of attendance of teachers and pupils; lowering of the quality of teachers; dwindling recruitment of staff, leading to teacher shortages; persistent demotivation and distraction of teachers and pupils by fear or trauma thereby reducing the quality of education provision and pupils' ability to learn and this was also the opinion of Ihuarulam (2018) that the consequences of conflict on the school organization have always been regrettable.

In spite of the government policies put in place to minimize incidents of conflict in the primary school system, Nigerian educational institutions have continued to report increased cases of conflict. Between 2010 and 2019, the number of conflicts in public primary schools alone increased tremendously (Okoye & Okeke-Okonkwo, 2020). It is reported that 10% of head-teachers in Anambra State went on transfer and 2% left headship all together because of conflict (Okonkwo, 2020). The report further stated that school boards had either rejected the head-teachers that were transferred or the school-heads had faced frequent unrest among pupils in their schools. Managing conflict therefore is an important element for effectiveness in the school system. Conflict, like any other key business process, must be managed (Scannell, 2017). If primary school is to be managed effectively for sustainability and economic development in Nigeria, then the arising conflict should be effectively managed. There is the need for school administrator to employ some conflict management strategies. Cowan & Rossen (2016) consider positive conflict management as a cornerstone to school planning. Hence, school planning may not be effective without recourse to conflict management. According to Gainey (2015), conflict management is a necessary tool to reduce adverse consequences of a conflict situation. Conflict management proposes strategies and processes for preparing for, preventing, responding to, managing, recovering from, and learning from conflict events.

One of the conflict management strategies that head-teachers may adopt is the arbitration conflict management strategy. Arbitration is a conflict management strategy in which a neutral individual supports disputants in discussing difficult problems, allowing them to express their rage in a free, open, and healing manner. 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. According to Cahn & Abigail (2017), arbitration conflict management is a process where a neutral third party who has been chosen by the disputing parties listens to them and makes a decision on the conflicting matter with no room for appeal. It is, therefore, considered the most powerful type of third-party intervention as the third party's decision cannot be appealed. The arbitrator gives the decision after listening to both parties who are allowed not only to adduce oral evidence but present documentary evidence where necessary (Pitchforth, 2019). Operationally, arbitration is a procedure in which a dispute is submitted, by mutual agreement of parties to a conflict, to one or more arbitrators who make a binding decision on the dispute. In choosing arbitration, the parties opt for a private dispute resolution procedure.

Studies have shown that arbitration has been employed in conflict management with promising results. Inang (2016) examined head teachers' conflict management strategies and primary school teachers' job performance in Calabar-South local government area of Cross River State, and found that there is a positively strong relationship between arbitration and teachers' job performance in primary schools. Based on these, it was recommended that head-teachers/head teachers should be trained on the best strategy to successful conflict resolution. In a similar study, Adeyemi (2019) examined head-teachers' management of conflict in public primary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria and revealed that conflict have not been effectively managed by head-teachers of schools because of their inability to effectively utilize the arbitration strategies for resolving conflict.

Application of arbitration conflict management strategies may minimize the disruptive influence of conflict in primary schools and improve teacher job satisfaction. Gamlath & Kaluarachchi (2018) see job satisfaction as the rate at which employees like or dislike their work and the extent to which their expectations concerning work have been fulfilled. Job satisfaction is generally acknowledged as a necessary ingredient for personal fulfillment in carrying out one's duties. Job satisfaction is also expressed as those factors among staff that cause organizational behaviours and change the staff mood at work (Eslami & Gharakhani, 2018). According to Butler (2020), gender is a performative act that is constructed through repetitive actions and behaviours. Butler argues that gender is not an inherent trait but rather a social construct that is continually produced and reproduced through everyday practices and interactions. She emphasizes the idea that gender is fluid and contingent, shaped by cultural norms, expectations, and power dynamics. For Connell (2017), gender is a system of social relations that organize and structure power dynamics between men and women. Research suggests that there are gender differences in how individuals approach and manage conflicts, as well as how they perceive job satisfaction. In terms of conflict management, Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, (2021) have shown that women tend to employ more collaborative and accommodating strategies, focusing on maintaining relationships and seeking mutually beneficial solutions and on the other hand, men may lean towards more competitive or assertive approaches, prioritizing their own goals and interests (Carli, 2021). There is dearth of research whether head-teachers employ arbitration strategy in managing conflicts in primary school in Nigeria. Moreover, it is not known whether gender play moderating influence in the utilization of arbitration conflict management strategy in the primary schools. Hence, this study aimed to determine arbitration conflict management strategy for teacher job satisfaction in primary schools in Anambra State.

Study Objective

The main purpose of the study is to determine the extent to which head-teachers adopt arbitration strategy for teacher job satisfaction in public primary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question

To what extent do head-teachers adopt arbitration strategy for teacher job satisfaction in public primary schools in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.5 alpha level:

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on arbitration as a conflict management strategy for promoting job satisfaction in public primary schools in Anambra State.

Methods

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The study was carried out in primary schools in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 10,369 public primary school teachers in the 21 Local Government Education Authorities, (LGEA), Anambra State. The sample size for this study was 385 primary school teachers estimated using Taro Yamane formula.

Instruments and Data Analysis

Data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Head-teachers' Conflict Management Strategies" (QHCMS) adapted from Onyeme (2022). A total of 342 copies of questionnaire were successfully retrieved for analysis. This represents 88.83% of the total number of questionnaire distributed. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and determine the closeness or wideness of the respondents' mean ratings; and t-test of independence for the hypotheses.

Results

Research Question: To what extent do head-teachers adopt arbitration strategy for teacher job satisfaction in public primary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on extent of adoption of arbitration conflict management strategies by head-teachers for promoting job satisfaction, N=342

Arbitration conflict management strategies	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1. Defines clear guidelines and expectations for the arbitration process	3.51	.22	Satisfied
2. Ensures that all parties have an opportunity to express their perspectives and grievances.	3.35	.29	Satisfied
3. Collects relevant information and evidence related to the conflict.	3.47	.27	Satisfied
4. Encourages open and constructive communication between the parties involved in the conflict.	3.43	.28	Satisfied

5.	Brainstorms potential solutions or compromises that could address the underlying issues of the conflict.	3.48	.20	Satisfied
6.	Acts as a mediator to facilitate negotiations between the conflicting parties.	3.50	.23	Satisfied
7.	Assesses the feasibility and effectiveness of proposed solutions.	3.49	.20	Satisfied
8.	Documents the agreed-upon resolution in a formal written agreement or contract.	3.53	.23	Satisfied
9.	Supports the implementation of the agreed-upon resolution and monitoring progress.	3.35	.30	Satisfied
10.	Conducts follow-up meetings or evaluations to assess the effectiveness of the resolution	3.37	.28	Satisfied
	Cluster Mean	3.45	.25	Satisfied

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of teachers on the arbitration conflict management strategies adopted by head-teachers for promoting job satisfaction in public primary schools in Anambra State. All the items were rated above the mean cut-off of 2.50. They are rated from 3.35 to 3.53. The grand mean of 3.45 indicates that the arbitration conflict management strategies are adopted by head-teachers for promoting job satisfaction in public primary schools in Anambra State to a high extent. The standard deviation of .25 indicates that the teachers' responses on arbitration conflict management strategies are relatively homogenous.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on arbitration as a conflict management strategy for promoting job satisfaction in public primary schools in Anambra State.

Table 2: T-test of significance difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on arbitration as a conflict management strategy adopted by school head-teachers for promoting job satisfaction in public primary schools in Anambra State

Independent Samples Test

	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	.210	.14	1.53	341.	.142
Female	.210	.14	1.53	2	.143

Hartley test for equal variance: F = 1.389, Sig. = 0.3065

Table 2 shows the t-test of significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on arbitration as a conflict management strategies adopted by school head-teachers for promoting job satisfaction in public primary schools in Anambra State. Since the p-value is greater than the alpha value of 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected. There is no significant difference in the in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on arbitration as a conflict management strategies adopted by school head-teachers for promoting job satisfaction in public primary schools in Anambra State. Any observed difference is due to chance.

Discussion

The findings suggest that teachers are satisfied with their head teachers as far as arbitration conflict management strategy is concerned. Head-teachers define clear guidelines and expectations; ensures that all parties have an opportunity to express their perspectives and grievances; collect relevant information and evidence related to the conflict, and encourage open and constructive communication between the parties involved in the conflict. Furthermore, head-teachers brainstorm potential solutions or compromises that could address the underlying issues of the

conflict; acts as mediator to facilitate negotiations between the conflicting parties; and assesses the feasibility and effectiveness of proposed solutions. They also document the agreed-upon resolution in a formal written agreement or contract; support the implementation of the agreed-upon resolution and monitoring progress; and conduct follow-up meetings or evaluations to assess the effectiveness of the resolution. The findings are consistent with Abia & Ekpoattai (2014) who observed that arbitration is widely accepted as a means of conflict resolution, and that arbitration is a mechanism whereby the elders in the community play a major role in maintaining peace. The study noted that, the judgment or award is normally binding on the parties, that arbitration does not encourage win and lose character of adjudicatory process which works against future harmony between parties thereby making it favorable to parties to conflict. The findings of this study also agreed with Inang (2016) who examined head teachers' conflict management resolution strategies and primary school teachers' job performance in Calabar-south local government area of Cross River State and found that there is a positively strong relationship between arbitration and teachers' job performance in primary schools. In other words, teachers are satisfied with arbitration as strategy which motivates job performance.

Likewise, the finding is in line with Adeyemi (2019) who examined head-teachers' management of conflict in public primary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria and revealed the inability of head-teachers to employ arbitration conflict management strategy which led to discontent in the primary school system in the area. It also revealed that male and female teachers have no significant difference in their preference for arbitration conflict management strategy. The consistencies of findings suggest that arbitration could be a very effective conflict management strategy. It also indicates that teachers are satisfied with the strategy in resolving conflicts.

Conclusion

The study examined extent of use of arbitration conflict management strategies by head-teachers for teacher job satisfaction in primary schools in Anambra State. The findings indicate that head-teachers employed arbitration to a high extent. Also, both male and female teachers equally agreed that head teachers employed the strategy. Both male and female teachers showed satisfaction with arbitration.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

- Educational authorities, such as Local Education Authorities or the Ministry of Education, should develop and implement comprehensive training programs focused on conflict management for head-teachers.
- School administrators, led by the head-teacher, should foster a culture of open and transparent communication where teachers feel safe to express their concerns and opinions.
- Teachers should actively participate in the forums and provide constructive feedback to help improve communication processes.
- Head-teachers should actively involve teachers in the conflict resolution process, ensuring their voices are heard and considered.

- Head-teachers should facilitate collaborative problem-solving sessions and encourage open dialogue among teachers.

References

Adeyemi, T. O. (2019). Principals' management of conflicts in public secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria: A critical survey. *African Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, 1*(2), 90 – 99

Agu, P. N. & Obiukwu W. S. (2021). Relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and students' academic performance, *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research, 65,* 335-344 http://dx.doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2016.65.19

Butler, J. (2020). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York, NY: Routledge

Carli, L. L. (2021). Gender and social influence, *Journal of Social Issues, 57*(4), 725–741

Connell, R. W. (2017). *Gender and power: Society, the person, and sexual politics.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Cowan, F. & Rossen, D. M. (2016). Principals' administrative strategies and students' academic performance in Nigerian secondary schools, *Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research, 2*(1), 271-277.

Eagly, A. H., & Johannesen-Schmidt, M. C. (2021). The leadership styles of women and men, *Journal of Social Issues, 57*(4), 781–797.

Eslami, L. K. & Ghanakhani, G. (2018). The effect of leadership style, job satisfaction and employee-supervisor relationship on job performance and organizational commitment, *The Journal of Applied Business Research, 32*(3), 935-946

Gainey, D. (2015). The Role of the Head Teachers in School Plant Management and Maintenance, In Fagbamiye E.O., Babaloja J.B, Fabunmi M & Ayemi A.O. *Management of Primary and Secondary Education in Nigeria* (pp. 93 – 100.). Ibadan: NAEAP.

Gamlath, V. C. & Kaluarachch, B. (2018). The relationship between the students' achievement of Turkish language class and the central exam score. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 143*, 721 – 725.

Ihuarulam, M. O. (2018). Management strategies of conflict between academic and non-academic staff of Federal Universities in South East, Nigeria, *PGD thesis, Department of Educational Foundations (Administration and Planning), University of Nigeria, Nsukka.*

Inang, M. E. (2016). The head teachers' conflict management resolution strategies and primary school teachers' job performance in Calabar-south local government area of Cross River State, (Unpublished B.Ed. Research Project), *Department of Educational Administration and planning, University of Calabar*

MacNeil, W., & Topping, K. (2017). Crisis management in schools: Evidence-based prevention. *Journal of Educational Enquiry*, *7*(1), 64-94.

Okoye, S. & Okeke-Okonkwo, L. N. (2020). Tripartite cooperation in funding and administration of secondary schools in Enugu State, *Journal of Educational Administration, Management and Planning, 2(*1), 71-81.

Pitchforth, R. (2019). Compromising, In P. Spiller (Ed.), *Dispute resolution in New Zealand Melbourne,* Australia: Oxford University Press.

Scannell, M. (2017). *The big book of conflict resolution games: Quick, effective activities to improve communication, trust, and collaboration.* New York, America: The McGraw Hill Companies, Inc.