

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS: ITS IMPORTANCE, STRATEGIES AND PROCEDURES

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Abstract- *This study examined conflict management among secondary school students, teachers, and administrators. The paper identified conflict management in secondary schools as an opportunity for growth and learning rather than as a disruptive occurrence. It also mentioned types of conflicts that arose in secondary schools, such as interpersonal, bullying, academic, and cultural diversity conflicts. The paper therefore suggested some strategies that could be used to manage conflict, including identification of conflicts, mediation and negotiation, and restorative justice practices. It also highlighted procedures through which conflict could be reduced in Nigerian secondary schools, such as acknowledging the conflict, defining problems as emanating, meeting on neutral ground, allowing everybody to have a say, and agreeing on a solution. In conclusion, the paper further suggested that conflict management should be adopted in the secondary school curriculum in order to reduce the breakdown of educational activities.*

Keywords: *Conflict, management, secondary schools, curriculum, implementation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Conflict management in secondary schools refers to the strategies, practices, and procedures implemented to address and resolve conflicts that arise among students, between students and teachers, or within the school community as a whole. Secondary schools are dynamic environments where diverse individuals with varying backgrounds, perspectives, and interests come together, creating fertile ground for conflicts to emerge. These conflicts can range from interpersonal disagreements and bullying to academic disputes and disciplinary issues (Ajayi, 2017). Effective conflict management is crucial in fostering a safe, inclusive, and conducive learning environment. It promotes positive relationships, enhances communication skills,

and teaches students essential conflict resolution skills that can be applied throughout their lives.

The significance of conflict management in the context of curriculum implementation in sociology of education lies in its ability to enhance the educational experience and promote social development among students. According to Jegede (2016) sociology of education examines the social and cultural influences on education, including the dynamics of power, inequality, and social structures within educational institutions. By integrating conflict management into the curriculum, students not only gain a theoretical understanding of sociological concepts but also develop practical skills to navigate and resolve conflicts that arise in educational settings. Conflict management equips students with the ability to critically analyze and address social conflicts, promoting empathy, tolerance, and effective communication. It empowers students to become active participants in their learning process, fostering a sense of agency and social responsibility. Moreover, conflict management in the sociology of education curriculum creates opportunities for dialogue, perspective-taking, and the examination of power dynamics, encouraging students to challenge and transform societal norms and structures.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The suitable theoretical framework for this topic is Social Identity Theory. Social Identity Theory, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, explores how individuals' sense of self and group identity influence their behavior and interactions with others. This theory posits that people strive to maintain a positive social identity by categorizing themselves into social groups and seeking positive differentiation from other groups. In the context of conflict management in schools, Social Identity Theory can provide insights into how conflicts may arise due to

differences in social identities, such as ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic status. It can help analyze how these identities shape individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors during conflicts.

Applying Social Identity Theory to the present can shed light on how conflicts may be influenced by students' social identities and group dynamics within the school community. It can help understand how conflicts can escalate or de-escalate based on the interplay between different social groups and the need for positive differentiation. The theory can also provide insights into strategies for managing conflicts by promoting intergroup cooperation, fostering a shared sense of identity, and reducing intergroup biases and prejudices.

By using Social Identity Theory as a theoretical framework, the study can explore how conflicts are influenced by social identities within the specific context of secondary schools in Pankshin Local Government Area. It can help identify the underlying social dynamics and power structures that contribute to conflicts and inform the development of effective conflict management procedures. Moreover, the theory can guide the analysis of the implications for curriculum implementation in sociology of education by emphasizing the importance of addressing social identities and promoting inclusive practices that mitigate conflicts and promote positive intergroup relations..

III. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Conflict management in secondary schools is a crucial aspect of creating a positive and supportive educational environment. Conflict is an inevitable part of human interactions, and schools are no exception. However, effective conflict management strategies are essential to prevent conflicts from escalating and disrupting the learning environment. Conflict management refers to the processes and techniques used to address, resolve, and prevent conflicts in schools (Ige & Oluwole, 2018). It involves fostering open communication, promoting empathy and understanding, and providing students with the necessary skills to manage conflicts constructively.

One key aspect of conflict management in secondary schools is establishing a proactive and supportive school culture. This involves creating an environment where conflicts are viewed as opportunities for growth and learning rather than as disruptive or negative occurrences. A proactive approach involves implementing conflict resolution programs, peer mediation initiatives, and restorative justice practices. By fostering a culture that values open dialogue, respect, and cooperation, schools can create an atmosphere where conflicts are addressed promptly and constructively.

Conflict management in secondary schools also requires effective communication and active listening skills. According to Adu (2014) teachers and school administrators should encourage students to express their concerns, opinions, and emotions in a respectful manner. By actively listening to students and acknowledging their perspectives, educators can validate their experiences and help them feel heard and understood. Effective communication skills also involve teaching students how to express themselves assertively, without resorting to aggression or passive behavior, and encouraging them to seek mutually beneficial solutions when conflicts arise.

Another important aspect of conflict management in secondary schools is the implementation of comprehensive conflict resolution strategies. These strategies may include mediation, negotiation, and problem-solving techniques. Mediation involves a neutral third party facilitating a conversation between conflicting parties to help them find common ground and reach a resolution. Negotiation focuses on finding compromises and mutually agreeable solutions. Problem-solving techniques encourage students to work collaboratively to identify the underlying causes of conflicts and generate creative solutions.

Conflict management in secondary schools also requires the development of social-emotional skills in students. These skills include self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and perspective-taking. According to Ige and Oluwole (2018) by teaching students these skills, schools empower them to manage conflicts effectively, understand the impact

of their actions on others, and develop empathy towards their peers. Social-emotional learning programs can provide students with the necessary tools to navigate conflicts and build positive relationships.

In addition to addressing conflicts when they arise, conflict management in secondary schools also involves preventive measures. This includes fostering a positive school climate, implementing clear and fair policies, and promoting inclusive practices. According to Jegede (2016) creating an environment that values diversity, promotes respect, and encourages collaboration, schools can reduce the occurrence of conflicts. Preventive measures also involve providing students with conflict resolution skills and teaching them appropriate ways to express themselves and handle disagreements.

IV. TYPES OF CONFLICTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

In secondary schools, various types of conflicts can arise among students, between students and teachers, or even among staff members. Understanding the different types of conflicts that can occur is important for effectively managing and resolving them. According to Adetoro (2014) the following are some of the common types of conflicts that can arise in secondary schools:

1. **Interpersonal conflicts:** Interpersonal conflicts occur between individuals and involve personal differences, misunderstandings, or clashes of personalities. These conflicts can arise due to disagreements over values, beliefs, or behaviors. For example, conflicts may arise between students who have different opinions on social issues or students who have incompatible personalities.
2. **Bullying conflicts:** Bullying conflicts involve instances of repeated, intentional aggression, harassment, or exclusion targeted at an individual or a group. Bullying can manifest in various forms, such as physical, verbal, or cyberbullying. These conflicts can have a significant impact on the well-being and academic performance of the targeted individuals.
3. **Academic conflicts:** Academic conflicts can arise when students have disagreements or conflicts related to academic matters, such as group projects, grading, or competition for academic achievements. Academic conflicts may occur between students themselves or between students and teachers. Examples of academic conflicts include disputes over unfair grading, disagreement on group project responsibilities, or conflicts arising from intense competition for academic success.
4. **Authority conflicts:** Authority conflicts occur when students challenge or resist the authority or decisions of teachers or school administrators. These conflicts may arise due to conflicts over discipline, rules, or decisions made by the school. Students may question or resist disciplinary actions, policies, or decisions they perceive as unfair or unjust.
5. **Cultural or diversity conflicts:** Secondary schools often consist of students from diverse cultural backgrounds, and conflicts can arise due to cultural differences, prejudice, or stereotypes. These conflicts may involve misunderstandings, biases, or discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, or other cultural factors. Cultural or diversity conflicts require sensitivity, education, and efforts to promote inclusivity and understanding among students.
6. **Role conflicts:** Role conflicts occur when there is a discrepancy or clash between the expected roles and responsibilities of individuals within the school setting. For example, conflicts may arise when students have conflicting roles, such as being a student leader and a friend, or when teachers face conflicts between their roles as educators and their roles as disciplinarians.
7. **Organizational conflicts:** Organizational conflicts can occur between different groups or factions within the school community. These conflicts may arise due to disagreements over policies, procedures, resource allocation, or goals. For example, conflicts may arise between teachers and administrators regarding curriculum decisions or conflicts between different departments within the school.

V. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CONFLICTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Conflicts in secondary schools can arise from a variety of factors, and understanding these contributing factors is crucial for effectively addressing and preventing conflicts. The following are some of the key factors that can contribute to conflicts in secondary schools:

1. **Communication breakdown:** Poor communication or miscommunication is a significant factor contributing to conflicts in schools. When there is a lack of clear and effective communication between students, teachers, and administrators, misunderstandings can occur, leading to conflicts (Adu, 2014). Communication breakdowns can arise from differences in language, cultural backgrounds, or communication styles, as well as from inadequate channels or platforms for communication.
2. **Peer pressure and social dynamics:** Peer pressure and the complex social dynamics among students can contribute to conflicts in secondary schools. Students may feel pressured to conform to certain behaviors, beliefs, or group expectations, which can create tensions and conflicts (Agbonkhese, 2015). Cliques, social hierarchies, and bullying can also exacerbate conflicts and create an environment where students feel excluded or marginalized.
3. **Competition and academic pressure:** Intense academic competition and high expectations placed on students can lead to conflicts. When students feel pressured to excel academically or when competition for grades, awards, or college admissions increases, conflicts may arise (Ede and Igbo, 2015). Academic pressure can result in stress, resentment, and unhealthy rivalries among students, leading to conflicts and strained relationships.
4. **Differences in values and beliefs:** Conflicts can arise when students hold different values, beliefs, or cultural norms. Diversity within the school community, while valuable, can also create tensions and conflicts when students have contrasting perspectives. Conflicts may emerge from disagreements on sensitive topics, religious beliefs, cultural practices, or social issues (Dada

& Olufemi, 2016).. It is important for schools to foster an inclusive environment that promotes respect and understanding of diverse viewpoints.

5. **Discipline and rule enforcement:** Conflicts can emerge when there are disagreements or perceived unfairness in discipline practices or rule enforcement. Students may challenge disciplinary actions, question the consistency of rules, or feel that punishments are unjust (Alani, 2015). Conflicts can also arise when there is a lack of clarity or consistency in disciplinary procedures, leading to confusion and disputes.
6. **Lack of resources or overcrowding:** In schools where resources are limited or overcrowding is an issue, conflicts can arise due to competition for resources or space. When students feel that their needs are not adequately met or that resources are unfairly distributed, conflicts may occur. Limited access to extracurricular activities, facilities, or support services can also contribute to conflicts and tensions among students.
7. **Ineffective conflict resolution strategies:** When schools lack effective conflict resolution strategies or when conflicts are not addressed promptly and constructively, tensions can escalate, leading to further conflicts. Inadequate training or support for teachers and staff in managing conflicts can hinder the resolution process. Additionally, a punitive disciplinary approach that focuses on punishment rather than mediation and restorative practices can exacerbate conflicts.

VI. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

1. Identification and prevention of conflicts

Conflict management procedures in secondary schools involve a multifaceted approach to identify and prevent conflicts, ensuring a harmonious and conducive learning environment for students. The first step is the identification of conflicts, which entails recognizing the early warning signs and adopting proactive measures to address potential issues before they escalate. Early warning signs may include increased tension among students, frequent disruptive behavior, or a deterioration in interpersonal relationships. According to Akintunde and Oyekunle

(2016) being vigilant and observant, educators and administrators detect these signs and intervene early, thereby minimizing the impact of conflicts on the school community.

To prevent conflicts, secondary schools strive to create a positive school climate and culture. This involves fostering an environment that promotes respect, inclusivity, and cooperation among students, teachers, and staff. A positive school climate encompasses several key elements, such as clear and consistently enforced behavioral expectations, supportive relationships between students and teachers, and a sense of belonging and connectedness within the school community (Ajayi, 2017). By establishing these foundations, schools can reduce the occurrence of conflicts by preemptively addressing the underlying factors that contribute to them, such as social isolation, bullying, or academic pressures.

Creating a positive school culture involves implementing various strategies. For example, schools can organize team-building activities, collaborative projects, and extracurricular programs that encourage positive interactions and strengthen relationships among students. Additionally, promoting open and effective communication channels, both formal and informal, allows students to express their concerns and seek assistance when needed. Conflict resolution skills can also be explicitly taught through social-emotional learning programs, empowering students with the tools to manage conflicts constructively.

Furthermore, an inclusive and supportive approach to diversity is crucial in preventing conflicts related to discrimination or prejudice. Schools can promote cultural sensitivity, foster understanding of diverse perspectives, and celebrate the contributions of different identities and backgrounds. By creating an environment where all students feel valued and respected, conflicts arising from misunderstandings or biases can be minimized.

Therefore, effective conflict management procedures in secondary schools require the identification and prevention of conflicts. This involves recognizing early warning signs and implementing proactive measures to address potential issues. Additionally, creating a positive school climate

and culture is instrumental in preventing conflicts by promoting respect, inclusivity, and cooperation among students. These strategies collectively contribute to the development of a safe and supportive learning environment that minimizes conflicts and maximizes students' academic and social growth.

2 Resolution and intervention strategies

Conflict management procedures in secondary schools entail a range of resolution and intervention strategies to address conflicts effectively and promote reconciliation within the school community. These strategies include mediation and negotiation techniques, restorative justice practices, and the involvement of various stakeholders.

Mediation and negotiation techniques:

Mediation involves a neutral third party facilitating a structured dialogue between conflicting individuals or groups, with the goal of reaching a mutually acceptable resolution. Mediators help to clarify issues, encourage empathy and understanding, and guide the parties towards finding common ground. Negotiation, on the other hand, focuses on finding compromises and mutually beneficial solutions through direct communication between the conflicting parties. These techniques empower students to take ownership of the conflict resolution process, fostering communication skills, empathy, and problem-solving abilities.

Restorative justice practices: Restorative justice approaches emphasize repairing the harm caused by conflicts and rebuilding relationships. This involves bringing together the individuals involved in the conflict, along with affected parties, to engage in a facilitated dialogue. The focus is on understanding the impact of the conflict, taking responsibility, and collectively deciding on appropriate actions to address the harm caused. Restorative justice practices encourage accountability, empathy, and community-building, fostering a sense of healing and reconciliation.

Involving stakeholders: Conflict resolution in secondary schools is most effective when all relevant stakeholders are engaged in the process. This includes students, parents, teachers, and administrators. By involving stakeholders, conflicts can be comprehensively addressed, and solutions can

be developed collaboratively. Each stakeholder brings a unique perspective and expertise, contributing to a more holistic understanding of the conflict and potential resolution strategies. Involving stakeholders also enhances transparency, accountability, and trust within the school community.

VII. CONCLUSION

Conflict management be regarded as one of the management tools that can be used in addressing conflicts among secondary school students, teachers and administrators. Based on its importance, strategies and procedures, it is imperative to adopt the tool for peace to rain in Nigerian secondary schools. through its adoption, it is believed that bullying conflict, academic conflict, communication breakdown, competition and academic pressure will be reduced. It will then help to maintain harmony, peace and orderliness in Nigerian secondary schools.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are proposed:

1. Government should develop a comprehensive curriculum that includes conflict management as a core component. Incorporate lessons, activities, and discussions that promote conflict resolution skills, empathy, and understanding of diverse perspectives.
2. School authorities should offer training and professional development programs for teachers focused on conflict management strategies and techniques. This training should equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to effectively manage conflicts in the classroom, promote positive communication, and create a supportive learning environment.
3. Government must develop clear and well-defined conflict resolution procedures that are widely communicated to all stakeholders, including students, teachers, administrators, and parents. These procedures should outline steps for reporting conflicts, mediation processes, and consequences for inappropriate behavior.
4. Teachers should promote a school culture that values respect, inclusivity, and open communication. Schools should actively work to create an environment where students feel safe expressing their opinions and concerns. Encourage dialogue and discussion that

encourages understanding and empathy among students from different backgrounds and perspectives. Emphasize the importance of respectful communication and teach conflict resolution skills that promote collaboration and mutual understanding.

5. Teachers should implement support systems within schools to assist students in managing conflicts. This can include counseling services, peer mediation programs, or mentorship initiatives. These support systems can provide students with a safe space to express their feelings, seek guidance, and develop strategies for effectively resolving conflicts.

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