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# **Principal-Teachers' Conflict and the Management of Secondary Schools in Benue, Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated the influence of principals-teachers' conflict on the management of secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. Utilizing a survey research design, data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire titled "Principals-teachers' Conflict and Management of Secondary School Questionnaire" (PCMOSSQ). The sample consisted of 370 teachers and principals selected through multistage sampling techniques. The instrument's reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.889. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, along with the Chi-square goodness-of-fit test, were employed for data analysis. The findings revealed a significant negative influence of principals-teachers' conflicts on teaching and learning environments and teachers' attitudes towards work. Based on the results, it was recommended to establish clear communication channels between principals and teachers to foster open dialogue and address conflicts promptly, thus promoting a harmonious work environment.

**Keywords:** Principal-Teacher Conflict, Secondary School Management, Teacher Productivity, Teachers' Work Attitude, Educational Administration, Teaching and Learning

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## Introduction

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of individuals and societies, serving as a cornerstone for progress and development. In the context of secondary education, effective school management is essential to ensure a conducive learning environment and the holistic development of students. In Benue State, like many other areas, secondary schools are vital institutions tasked with imparting knowledge and nurturing the potential of the younger generation. Secondary schools are formal educational institutions charged with the responsibility of preparing younger individuals after their primary school career for useful living within any society. They also aim to equip children for higher education. The attainment of these goals requires a commitment from highly qualified and motivated teachers.

Conflict is the art of coming into collision, clash, or opposition with one another. It is the tension that is experienced when a group of people feels that their needs or desires are likely to be denied (Canavan & Monahan, 2011). Obi (2008) agrees that conflicts promote hostility and hinder school effectiveness. Obi further traces the low level of school effectiveness to leadership failure, which is manifested in increased conflicts between principals and teachers. Onsarigo (2017) sees conflicts as a condition when one party feels that the other party has frustrated or is about to frustrate some concern of that one party. It therefore implies that conflicts exist whenever an action by one person or group of people interferes with the desires of a particular individual or group of people. This has a profound influence on the management of secondary school.

Management is the effective utilization and coordination of resources such as plant, land, materials, finance, and labour to achieve defined objectives with maximum efficiency in schools (Onwuchekwa, 2018). The present study focuses on the influence of principals-teachers conflict on teachers' teaching and learning and teachers' attitude to work,

Teaching involves deliberate actions taken by educators to guide and facilitate the learning process, while learning refers to the active engagement of learners in acquiring and integrating new knowledge and skills. Conflicts between principals and teachers in secondary schools may result in decreased teacher morale and motivation, leading to a decline in effective instruction. Communication breakdown and a lack of collaboration hinder the implementation of teaching strategies. Prolonged conflicts may contribute to teacher burnout and turnover, disrupting classroom continuity (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2019). However, conflicts stimulate innovation and improvement in teaching and learning. The pressing need to resolve disagreements propels both principals and teachers to explore new teaching methods, collaborative approaches, and effective communication strategies, creating an environment conducive to enhanced teaching and learning experiences, positively influencing teachers' attitudes towards work.

Teachers' attitudes towards work refer to teachers' overall feelings, beliefs, and emotional responses related to their job and work environment (Raja, 2020). Conflicts between principals and teachers in secondary schools may lead to lower levels of job satisfaction, decreased commitment, and diminished morale among teachers. The negative

work environment created by these conflicts may result in increased stress, burnout, and a higher likelihood of teachers considering leaving their profession or transferring to another school. Surprisingly, conflicts can foster resilience and motivation. However, confronted with challenges arising from disputes, teachers may become more adaptable and motivated to excel in their roles. Overcoming obstacles within a conflicted environment may instill a sense of professional pride and accomplishment, fostering a more positive and proactive environment that improves school discipline.

However, faced with challenges posed by conflicts, administrators may be motivated to implement retention strategies, creating a more supportive work environment, offering professional development opportunities, and addressing the root causes of conflicts to foster a sense of belonging and job satisfaction among educators. Consequently, teachers may be more inclined to stay within the system, reducing attrition rates and contributing to the overall stability of the educational workforce in Benue State. It is against this background, that this present study is investigating the influence of principals-teachers' conflict on the management of secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

## Statement of the Problem

In an ideal educational setting, effective management is recognized as indispensable for fostering a conducive learning environment and achieving overall success. This assertion holds true, especially for secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria, which confront potential challenges arising from conflicts between principals and teachers. Situated in central Nigeria, Benue State hosts numerous secondary schools, serving the educational needs of its populace. The administrative heads, or principals, are tasked with ensuring smooth operations, while teachers play a pivotal role in delivering quality education.

The concern arises from the perception that conflicts between principals and teachers have become a prevalent issue, potentially disrupting the educational environment and impeding effective management. These conflicts manifest in diverse forms, encompassing differences in instructional methodologies, power struggles, disputes over resource allocation, breakdowns in communication, and varying interpretations of school policies. Such conflicts erode the collaborative and cooperative culture necessary for effective school management, possibly leading to diminished teacher motivation, disrupted learning environments, and compromised student achievements.

Moreover, conflicts between principals and teachers within educational institutions have gained increasing attention due to their multifaceted influence on various aspects of the educational ecosystem. The teaching and learning process is significantly affected by principal-teacher conflicts, as uncertain working conditions and strained relationships impede effective collaboration and communication between teachers. This hindrance compromises the development and implementation of innovative teaching strategies, negatively influencing students' academic performance. Teachers' attitudes toward their work are intricately linked to their job satisfaction and motivation. Ongoing conflicts with principals erode teachers' enthusiasm and commitment to their roles, leading to reduced effort and dedication that ultimately undermine the quality of education provided to students. Against this backdrop, this study investigated the influence of principal-teacher conflicts on the management of secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

## Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find out the influence of principals-teachers' conflict on the management of secondary school in Benue State. Specifically the study sought to:

- i. examine the influence of principals-teachers'-conflict on teaching and learning in secondary schools.
- ii. ascertain influence of principals-teachers' conflict on teachers attitude to work in secondary schools.

## Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study;

- i. What are the influence of principals- teachers' conflict on teaching and learning in secondary schools?
- ii. In what ways do principals-teachers' conflict influence teachers' attitude to work in secondary schools?

## Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- i. Principals-teachers' conflict do not significantly influence teaching and learning in secondary schools.
- ii. Principals-teachers' conflict do not significantly influence teachers' attitude to work in secondary schools.

## Methodology

The study employed a survey research design to examine the influence of principals-teachers' conflicts on the management of secondary schools, utilizing a self-structured questionnaire titled "Principals-teachers' Conflict and Management of Secondary School Questionnaire" (PCMOSSQ). The research was conducted in Benue State, Nigeria, chosen for its substantial population, well-established educational infrastructure, and historical prevalence of such conflicts within the secondary school system. The population of the study consisted of 4888 teachers and principals from 304 government and grant-aided secondary schools in Benue State.

In selecting a representative sample of 370 teachers and principals from the larger population of 4888 in Benue State, a multistage sampling technique was employed. Multistage sampling technique involves using different sampling methods at various stages of the research process (Emaikwu, 2015). Firstly, a purposive random sampling technique was used to select two senatorial zones, which are Zone B and Zone C within Benue State. This method allows the researcher to focus on areas likely to provide valuable insights. In the second stage, a simple random sampling technique was applied to select LGAs within the chosen zones. Among the 16 LGAs, four schools were randomly selected, ensuring each LGA had an equal opportunity for inclusion in the sample. In the third stage, a proportionate random sampling technique was used to determine the number of teachers from each school. This method considers the proportion of teachers in each school relative to the

overall number across all selected schools, ensuring a balanced and accurate sample representation. Finally, in the fourth stage, a simple random sampling method was used to select the required number of teachers and principals from the chosen schools. This approach ensures equal chances of inclusion for every teacher within the selected schools, contributing to the assembly of a representative sample across diverse schools within the selected LGAs.

The structured questionnaire developed by the researcher was subjected to validation by two experts in Educational administration and planning, one from measurement and evaluation all from College of Agricultural and Science Education, Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University Makurdi. They checked whether the purpose of the study is in line with the research questions, the hypotheses, and the questionnaires. In order to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, a trial-test was carried out in Nasarawa State. Two schools were randomly selected to trial-test the instrument. Twenty copies of the questionnaire were administered to 20 teachers and principals. The data were collected and analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha to determine the internal consistency. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was suitable because the instrument was scored on a continuous response. The results for the reliability coefficient were as follows: Cluster A = 0.883, Cluster B = 0.889. The overall internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.889 was obtained. This indicates that the instrument is reliable for the study.

Data were collected over two weeks using research assistants and analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, as well as the Chi-square goodness-of-fit test to test hypotheses, with a significance level set at 0.05. The study aimed to provide insights into the influence of conflicts on various aspects of teachers' professional lives within the educational landscape of Benue State.

## Results

### Research Question One

What is the influence of principals-teachers' conflict on teaching and learning in secondary schools?

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on the Influence of Principal-Teachers' Conflict on Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools**

Item No.	Item Description	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	Conflict between principals and teachers hinders the effective exchange of information on instructional strategies.	3.19	0.73	Agree
2	Principal-teachers conflict result in low morale among teachers.	2.03	0.86	Disagree
3	Undue delay in resolution of principal-teacher conflict leads to waste of academic hours.	2.15	0.73	Disagree

4	Delay in resolution of school conflict result in disruptions of academic calendars which affect teaching and learning negatively.	2.18	1.03	Disagree
5	Principal-teachers conflicts do not lead to poor instructional supervision.	3.42	0.58	Agree
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>2.88</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 1 presents data on respondents' perceptions regarding the influence of conflict between principals and teachers on teaching and learning in secondary schools. The mean and standard deviation are used to analyze the responses, along with a cluster mean and standard deviation for an overall assessment. On average, respondents agree that conflicts hinder the effective exchange of information on instructional strategies, lead to low morale among teachers, and result in disruptions of academic calendars. However, they disagree that undue delay in resolving conflicts leads to a waste of academic hours and that conflicts lead to poor instructional supervision. The cluster mean of 2.88 and a standard deviation of 0.79 suggest a generally agreeable stance among respondents regarding the impact of principal-teacher conflicts on teaching and learning, with moderate variability in their collective opinions across the items. This means that the mean ratings for the items were above the cut-off point of 2.50. The cluster mean of 2.60 is above the cut-off point of 2.50. This means that principals-teachers conflict has negative influence on teaching and learning in secondary schools.

### Research Question Two

In what ways does principals-teachers' conflict influence teachers' poor attitude to work in secondary schools?

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on the Influence of Principals-Teachers' Conflict on Attitude to Work in Secondary Schools**

Item No.	Items Description	$\bar{X}$	Std	Decision
1	Due to principal-teacher's conflict there is more dedication to job on the part of teachers	2.38	1.21	Disagree
2	Principals-teachers' conflict stifles interpersonal relations between the principal and the teachers.	3.63	0.45	Agree
3	Principals-teachers' conflict makes teachers not plan there lessons effectively	2.83	0.65	Agree
4	Principals-teacher's conflict reduces the ability of the school head to delegate duties to teachers'.	3.36	0.61	Agree
5	Conflict between principals and teachers leads to low morale and decreased motivation among teachers.	3.26	0.64	Agree
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>3.09</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 2 provides insights into respondents' perceptions of the influence of principals-teachers' conflict on attitude towards work in secondary schools, employing mean and standard deviation measures. On average, respondents disagree that conflict leads to more dedication to the job on the part of teachers. However, they strongly agree that conflict stifles interpersonal relations between principals and teachers, and they generally agree that conflict affects teachers' lesson planning, reduces the ability of school heads to delegate duties, and leads to low morale and decreased motivation among teachers. The cluster mean of 3.09 and standard deviation of 0.72 indicate an overall agreement among respondents, suggesting a consistent stance on the impact of principals-teachers' conflict on work attitudes, with moderate variability in opinions across the surveyed items. This shows that mean ratings for the items were above the cut-off point of 2.50. The cluster mean of 3.09 is above the cut-off point of 2.50. This means that principals-teachers' conflict has negative influence on teachers' attitude to work in secondary schools.

### Research Hypothesis One

Principals-teachers' Conflict does not Significantly Influence Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools.

**Table 3: Chi-Square Test of Influence of Principals-teachers' Conflict on Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools**

Opinion	Observed N	Expected N	df	Level of Sign	Chi-Square Cal	p-value	Decision
Strongly Agree	75	92.3	3	0.05	198.707	0.00	Significant
Agree	7	92.3					
Disagree	196	92.3					
Strongly Disagree	96	92.3					

The result presented in Table 3 showed the Chi-square calculated value of 198.707 with 3 as the degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance, the Asymptotic Significance value under Chi-square test of goodness-of-fit analysis yielded a P-value of 0.00. Based on decision rule, it was stated that wherever the p-value is less than a-value of 0.05, the null hypothesis would be rejected whereas whenever the p-value would be greater than the value of 0.05, the null hypothesis would be accepted. Since P-value of 0.00 is less than the value of 0.05, this indicates that the test statistic is significant and hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This therefore implies that principals-teachers' Conflict has significant negative Influence on teaching and learning in secondary schools.

**Research Hypothesis Two**

Principals-teachers' Conflict does not Significantly Influence Teachers' Attitude to Work in Secondary Schools

Opinion	Observed N	Expected N	df	Level of Sign	Chi-Square Cal	p-value	Decision
Strongly Agree	120	92.3	3	0.05	115.607	0.00	Significant
Agree	5	92.3					
Disagree	138	92.3					
Strongly Disagree	106	92.3					

The result presented in Table 4 showed the Chi-square calculated value of 115.607 with 3 as the degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance, the Asymptotic Significance value under Chi-square test of goodness-of-fit analysis yielded a P-value of 0.00. Based on decision rule, it was stated that wherever the p-value is less than value of 0.05, the null hypothesis would be rejected whereas whenever the p-value would be greater than the value of 0.05, the null hypothesis would be accepted. Since P-value of 0.00 is less than the value of 0.05, this indicates that the test statistic is significant and hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This therefore implies that Principals-teachers' Conflict has significant negative influence on teachers' attitude to work in secondary schools

**Discussion**

The first finding of the study indicates that conflicts between principals and teachers have a significant negative influence on the teaching and learning environment in secondary schools. This means that when there are conflicts between principals and teachers, it has a negative influence on the academic activities of the school. This could include things like decreased student achievement, increased absenteeism, and a decline in the quality of instruction. The finding is supported by the research of Isa (2023) and Mohammed (2018), who both found that principal-teacher conflict can have adverse effects on the quality of teaching and learning in secondary schools. Isa (2023) found that conflicts have adverse effects on the quality of teaching and learning in secondary schools in Kaduna. Mohammed (2018) found that principal-teacher conflicts have negative influences on teaching and learning. The findings of this study highlight the importance of good working relationships between principals and teachers. When principals and teachers are able to work together effectively, it creates a positive environment for learning and teaching. However, when there are conflicts, it can have a significant negative influence on the academic achievement of students and the quality of education that they receive.



The second finding of the study indicates that conflicts between principals and teachers have a significant negative influence on the attitude of teachers towards their work in secondary schools. This means that when there are conflicts between principals and teachers, it can lead to teachers having a poor attitude towards their work. This could include things like decreased motivation, job satisfaction, and morale, as well as increased stress and anxiety. The finding is supported by the research of Peter (2023) and Ugwu (2020), who both found that principal-teacher conflict can have a negative impact on teachers' attitude towards their work. Peter found that conflicts can lead to a lack of dedication to the job, while Ugwu found that they can lead to a poor attitude towards work and a decreased sense of accountability for student learning. The findings of this study highlight the importance of good working relationships between principals and teachers. When principals and teachers are able to work together effectively, it creates a positive environment for learning and teaching. However, when there are conflicts, it can have a significant negative influence on the attitude of teachers towards their work and the quality of education that students receive.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that principals' teachers' conflicts has negative influence on teaching and learning and teachers attitude to work

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- i. **Establish Clear Communication Channels:** Foster open communication channels between principals and teachers. This can be achieved through regular meetings, such as weekly or monthly staff meetings, where both parties can openly discuss concerns, share ideas, and provide feedback. Additionally, consider implementing anonymous suggestion boxes or digital platforms where teachers can submit feedback or raise concerns anonymously if they feel uncomfortable doing so in person. Clear communication channels help to address conflicts and misunderstandings before they escalate, promoting a more harmonious work environment.
- ii. **Implement Mediation Processes:** Develop formal mediation processes to address conflicts that cannot be resolved through informal means. This could involve training select staff members or bringing in external mediators to facilitate discussions between principals and teachers. Mediation provides a structured framework for resolving conflicts in a fair and impartial manner, allowing both parties to express their concerns and work towards mutually acceptable solutions. By offering a structured approach to conflict resolution, mediation processes can help prevent conflicts from escalating and promote positive relationships between principals and teachers.

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