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# **Principals' Administrative Strategies For Effective Management Of Conflicts In Public Senior Secondary Schools In Rivers State**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study examined administrative strategies for effective conflict management in public secondary schools in Rivers state. Three (3) research questions were posed and three (3) hypotheses formulated for the study while analytic descriptive survey design was adopted. The population for the study comprised eight hundred and fifty-eight (858) Principals (Principals, vice Principal administration and vice principals' academics) in 286 public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. The sample for the study was 319 representing 37.2% of the population which were selected using simple random sampling technique and stratified into male (256) and female (63) principals, urban (211) and rural (108). The instrument employed to collate data was a self-constructed questionnaire titled "Principals' Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (PCMSQ)", comprising 10-items, structured after the modified 4-point Likert scale model. The instrument was validated by the supervisor, two experts in the department of educational management and three experts in measurement and evaluation. The reliability index of .80 was established with Cronbach alpha Coefficient. Mean and standard deviation statistics were used to answer three research questions while z-test was used to test three null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed that with effective communication and avoidance strategy, conflicts can be managed effectively in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. It was concluded that effective communication and avoidance strategies are viable strategies which can be in managing conflicts in public secondary schools in Rivers State. From the findings, it was recommended that principals who want to manage conflict successfully in public secondary schools in Rivers State should develop proper channel which will enhance effective communication and should adopt avoidance strategy in some issues in order to avert altercation among subordinates in school.

**Keywords:** Administrative Strategies, Effective Management and Conflicts.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Conflict is a phenomenon that occurs virtually in every field of human endeavour; it is seen in every stage of life, institution, organization, families and communities. It is as old as man, meaning that conflict has long existed since the inception of man in Eden. In every organization where humans interact to achieve a standard goal, it is certain that conflict must crop up and these conflicts could arise owing to incompatibility of ideas or communication gap existing in an establishment. In the organization, incompatibility arises when perception about a matter of interest differs and as such lead to conflict. Several factors add to conflict in an establishment; it could be communication failure, struggle for inadequate resources, goal incompatibility, supremacy and political affairs.

The school is an institution with bureaucratic chain and line of authority. It is composed of different individual with divergent view and behavioural idiosyncrasies interacting or synergizing along to attain educational goal and as such is not free of conflict. Adeyemi (2009) discovers that conflict occur from time to time in Nigerian school system, he maintains that conflict is an art of coming into collision, clash or be in opposition with one another.

Conflict has become endemic within the school system in Rivers state. These conflicts in school produce dysfunctional effect such as riots, protest, loss of lives and destruction of school plants by aggrieved students in public secondary schools. It has resulted to acrimony of various magnitudes between workers and reduced teachers' productivity and the joy associated with working and retarded the rate of academic activities. What bothers the researcher is the geometric rise of conflicts and the resultant effects which have paralysed educational goal attainment in the state.

Effective Communication is a technique which is devoid of hitches in communication between top management and their subordinates. It entails providing necessary and prompt information to workers on issues, administrators adopting the right communication skill, not using abusive words, not attacking, not threatening or making accusation.

Avoidance is a method in which one tries to circumvent conflict; it entails allowing the conflicting issues to end on its own so as to prevent the issues that may spring up at the time of confronting the issue.

Thus, the problem of this study is to explore how conflicts can be managed effectively using the effective communication and avoidance strategies and ways to ameliorate, avert and reduce the dysfunctional result of conflicts in public secondary schools in Rivers State and foster cooperation among the interacting employees and students.

### **Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this study was to examine administrative strategies for effective management of conflicts in public secondary schools in Rivers State. Distinctively, the study sought to:

- 1) Identify administrative strategies that enhance principals' effective conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- 2) Ascertain ways effective communication by principals can enhance effective conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- 3) Examine ways avoidance strategy by principals can enhance effective conflict management in public senior secondary schools in River's state.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided in the study;

- 1) What are the administrative strategies that enhance principals' effective conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
- 2) In what ways can effective communication by principals' enhance effective conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.?
- 3) In what ways can avoidance strategy by principals enhance effective conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the administrative strategies that enhance effective conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
- H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on ways effective communications by principals can enhance effective conflict management in public secondary schools in Rivers State.
- H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals in urban and rural areas on ways avoidance strategy by principals can enhance effective conflict management in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

## **Conceptual Review**

### **Concept of Conflict**

Conflict is defined in numerous ways by different scholars as a state of disagreement. It is the anxiety amid social entities that spring up owing to incompatibility of real and required responses (Ebong, 2013). Hoy and Miskel (2008) posit that conflict could crop up at the period an institution witness's power tussle. Legitimate power creates room for commitment and compliance, while illegitimate power generates conflict and alienation. Nkwonta (2014) defines it as disagreement between persons with diverse ideas or beliefs. It is a resentment in which parties concerned perceives danger on their aspiration, comfort or concern. He maintains that it is a breakdown in the standard mechanism of decision making in which persons or groups encounter difficulty in choosing or selecting an alternative action.

### **Conflict Management and Administrative Strategies**

Management involves the ways of coordinating available resources through planning, organizing and leading for the accomplishment of mapped out goals (Ebong, 2013). It is a universal process to all forms of groups, be it business enterprise or social setting as school system, which makes effort to achieve stipulated objectives. Lazarus (2013) sees conflict management as effort to regulate conflict through numerous measures. To this, it therefore means that with conflict management, a cooperative environment can be achieved which will promote opportunities. According to Akanji cited in Lazarus (2013) constructively managed conflicts catalyses a positive performance while inadequately managed conflicts creates an atmosphere of pandemonium and tension in the ambient which leads to disruption of the whole group and polarization, lower efficiency on job performance, mental and physical injury, increases malice and hostility.

Ehikhamhen (2018) in her study identifies the following; avoidance strategy and effective communication strategy as administrative strategies which can be employed in managing conflict in secondary school. Ebong (2013) in her analogy outlines avoiding as administrative strategy which when effectively employed will bring about conflict management in academic ambient. In the same vein, Andrew (2016) in his study outlines avoidance approach as one of the administrative strategies which principals adopt to effectively manage conflict in secondary school.

### **Effective Communication Strategy**

This is a major technique principal or administrators employ to deal with conflict in school. Graham and Lebron cited in Onogri (2009) posit that organizations have employ communication strategy to resolve conflict, this is actualized or achieved by total eradication of lacuna in communication and promoting trust among workers.

Communication is a rational process which involves initiating messages using symbols, signs to express meaning, create similar understanding and influence actions. It is a way by which information is shared among persons through a common method of code, symbols or actions (Onyeike, 2013). Appelbaum *et al* in Ongori (2009) posits that groups in trying to actualize a unifying goal encounter problems, and one way to resolve or ameliorate the issue is via communication. It is important to state that no positive action can occur in organization where barrier exist in communication. Principals must develop the right channel that will aid effective communication for propitious running of the school.

Meyer in Angela (2014) describes effective communication as veritable strategy by which conflict is resolve, because it makes every member understand the communication that could result to problem solving. Communication is essential in the daily routine or activities of the school, hence principals control conflict in academic ambient by providing the right and adequate information to all. It is crucial to state that the dissemination of accurate and appropriate information in moment of conflict is a veritable tool for conflict control in the school. According to Munshi and Sharma (2014) communication will keep employees well informed, give a high productivity rate and discourages the spread of misinformation. According to Eze (2020) when there is breakdown in communication, it affects the organization negatively. Staff morale will be low, as such causes a decrease in output.

### **Avoidance Strategy**

This strategy is referred to as withdrawing style; it has low fierceness and cooperation. Andrew (2016) posits that it is frequently applied by people who fear conflict to escape from conflict situation. This strategy is referred to as withdrawing style, it has low fierceness and cooperation. According to Ebong (2013), avoidance

style or strategy is both unassertive and uncooperative as the administrator ignores conflicts, hoping it will remedy itself. Problems are simply put on hold, when conflicts are considered, the procedure is used to suppress it and secrecy is adopted to avoid confrontation.

Victor cited in Andrew (2016) asserts that this style is always good in scenarios or circumstances when the likelihood of winning or once disruption would be very costly. Avoiding strategy is good when handling trivial issues, to scale back tensions, or when one possesses lesser power. Avoiding style does not place emphases on personality and others; it is likened to withdrawing, buck passing, or sidestepping situations. An avoiding person does not please his or her own concern or the concern of others. This style could be employed when the probable negative effect of taking the opposite party prevails over the gains of conflict resolution. It could be employed to handle minor issues. Andrew (2016) asserts that this style is inappropriate once the obligation of the party to make decisions, or when disputants are unwilling to wait or instant action is required. It is good to say that avoiding conflicts implies the disputant avoiding communicating about or confronting the issue with the mindset that it will end.

In the school settings, the principal may adopt avoidance strategy or techniques to resolve intra and inter conflict within the defined social system. Example, the principal is aware a teacher is not keeping up to the rules of the job by not keeping records of scores of continuous assessment, thereby delaying computation of students' results. The subject teacher informs the principal about the deficiency. The principal in his wisdom puts finding out the state of computation on hold till the end of third term when final results for promotion are expected to be out. Then the principal uses the school rules or ethics regulation to ratify the conflict.

Thomas in Ebong (2013) proffer that the efficacy of the strategy depends on this: - when the matter is trivial, when the cost outweighs the gains of resolution, once obtaining additional information is imperative, once the persons will solve the matter properly, and once the affair is an indicator or sign of warning rather than cause. The principal must understand that in employing avoidance strategy, the person does not please his or her own concern and the concern of the other group since conflict could re-emerge because it was merely suppressed for peace at the early stage.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on structural functional system theory. Structural functional system theory was propounded by Everett Rogers in 1864. The theory elucidates that furnishing information in an establishment in a moment of crisis or conflict is essential to effective conflict management. Rogers consented to the opinion that for optimal conflict management the lacuna or hitch in communication should be eliminated at the point of conflict from the top to the interacting groups or units in an institution. The theory also stated that lacuna in communication flow in an establishment might result to conflicting ideas that may result to conflict in the system.

The theory is essential to the study since the school is an organization that is not free from conflict and as such should adopt this approach in period of conflict. Schools communicate accordingly with its host community through some information media processes which include conferences, special reports, bulletin and public lectures and it also creates awareness to all and sundry on recent happenings in the institution. Hence it is pertinent to say that networks of school environment ought to be educated in the course of any conflict incidents and there must be ease in passage of information from school authorities to teachers, non-teachers, and to students and this will cutback conflict occurrence in institution of learning. With proper communication, administrators can make policies, implement violence prevention programmes and take measure to safeguard the academic ambient as to avoid impending conflict situation.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The design for the study was analytic descriptive survey and the population of the study was 858 Principals (Principals, vice Principal administration and vice principals academics) in 286 public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. The sample for the study was 319 representing 37.2% of the population. The simple random sampling technique was employed to select the sample. The instrument of the study was a validated 10-item instrument titled "Principals Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (PCMSQ)", structured by the researcher in the modified 4-points Likert scale model and a reliability index of 0.80 was obtained using

the Cronbach alpha method. Mean and standard deviation statistics were used to answer three research questions while z-test was used to test three null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

**Research Question 1:** *What are the administrative strategies that enhance principals’ effective conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?*

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of male and female principals on administrative strategies that enhance principals effective conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.**

S/N	Items	Male Principals		Female Principals		Mean Set	Remarks
		$\bar{X}_1$	SD <sub>1</sub>	$\bar{X}_2$	SD <sub>2</sub>		
1.	Avoidance strategy is an administrative strategy that enhances effective conflict management.	3.24	.74	3.28	.85	3.26	Agreed
2.	Effective communication is an administrative Strategy that enhance effective conflict management.	3.31	.82	3.06	.98	3.19	Agreed
3.	Avoidance and Effective communication strategy are administrative strategies that enhance effective conflict management.	3.11	.74	3.29	.93	3.20	Agreed
4.	Avoidance strategy when employed effective can enhance effective conflict management.	3.46	.71	3.00	.96	3.23	Agreed
5.	Effective communication when employed effective can enhances effective conflict management.	3.31	.95	2.05	1.19	2.68	Agreed
	<b>Aggregate Mean</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>.79</b>	<b>2.94</b>	<b>.98</b>	<b>3.11</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

<b>Legend</b>	<b>Scale</b>
$\bar{X}_1$ =Mean: Male Principals	1.00—2.49= Disagree
SD1= Standard Deviation 1	2.50---4.00= Agree
$\bar{X}_2$ = Mean: Female Principals	
SD2= Standard Deviation 2	

Table 1 above shows that in item 1, male principals have mean of 3.24 while female principals have mean of 3.28, which means that both respondents agreed that avoidance strategy is an administrative strategy that enhance effective conflict management. In item 2, male principals have mean of 3.31 while female principals have mean of 3.06 which reveals that both respondents agreed that effective communication is an administrative strategy that enhance effective conflict management. In item 3, the mean of the male principals is 3.11 while that of female principals is 3.29 which reveal that both respondents agreed that Avoidance and effective communication are administrative strategies that enhance effective conflict management. In item 4, male principals have mean of 3.46 while female principals have mean of 3.00 which shows that both respondents agreed that avoidance strategy when employed effectively can enhance effective conflict management. In item 5, male principals have mean of 3.31 and female principals have mean of 2.05 which reveals that male principals agreed that effective communication when employed effectively can enhance effective conflict management while female principals disagreed.

In summary, with the aggregate mean of respondents greater than the criterion mean of 2.50; both respondents agreed that avoidance strategy and effective communication are administrative strategy enhance principals’ effective conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Research Question 2:** *In what ways can effective communication by principals enhance effective conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Rivers state?*

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of male and female principals on ways effective communication by principals can enhance effective conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State**

S/N	Items	Male Principals		Female Principals		Mean Set	Remarks
		$\bar{X}_1$	SD <sub>1</sub>	$\bar{X}_2$	SD <sub>2</sub>		
6.	Allowing free flow of information will help principals to manage conflicts	3.38	.73	2.87	1.04	3.13	Agreed
7.	Principals maintain cordial relations with their subordinates by providing the right channel of communication and distributing of circulars on changes in curriculum to teachers.	3.46	.68	2.21	1.06	2.84	Agreed
8.	Informing subordinates on appropriate sanctions and penalties for faulting the school rules can help in managing conflicts in school.	2.43	1.06	2.90	1.03	2.67	Agreed
9.	Principals using the right communication skill, not using abusive statement, not attacking, not threatening and not making accusation can help in managing conflicts in schools.	3.29	.81	3.27	.79	3.28	Agreed
10.	Disseminating information to parents and guidance on impending dangers that may erupt from students behavior can help principals in managing conflicts	3.46	.78	2.24	1.10	2.85	Agreed
	<b>Aggregate Mean</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>.81</b>	<b>2.70</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>2.95</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

**Legend**

$\bar{X}_1$ =Mean: Male Principals  
SD1= Standard Deviation 1  
 $\bar{X}_2$ = Mean: Female Principals  
SD2= Standard Deviation 2

**Scale**

1.00—2.49= Disagree  
2.50---4.00= Agree

Table 2 shows that in item 6, male principals have mean of 3.38 while female principals have mean of 2.87 which connotes that both principals accepted that principals allowing free flow of information can assist in managing conflicts in public secondary schools in Rivers state. In item 7, male principals have mean of 3.46 while female principals have mean of 2.21 which implies that male principals agreed that principals maintain cordial relation with their subordinates by providing the right channel of communication and dispensing of circulars on changes in curriculum to teachers, while female principals disagreed. In item 8, male principals have mean of 2.43 while female principals have mean of 2.90 which indicates that male principals disagreed that informing subordinates on appropriate sanctions and penalties for faulting the school rules can assist in managing conflicts in school while female principals agreed. In item 9, male principals possess mean of 3.29 while female principals have mean of 3.27 which implies that both principals consented that principals using the right skill, not using abusive statement, not attacking, not threatening, and not making accusation can assist in managing conflicts in schools. In item 10, male principals have mean of 3.46 while female principals have mean of 2.24 which signifies that male principals consented that disseminating information to parents and

guidance on impending dangers that may erupt from students' behaviour can support administrators in managing conflicts while female principals disagreed.

In summary, with the aggregate mean of respondents greater than the criterion mean of 2.50; both respondents concurred that effective communication by principals can enhance effective conflict management public senior secondary schools in Rivers state through allowing free flow of information, by principals maintaining cordial relations with their subordinates by providing the right channel of communication and distributing of circulars on changes in curriculum to teachers, and by principals using the right communication skill, not using abusive statement, not attacking, not threatening and not making accusation.

**Research Question 3:** *In what ways can avoidance strategy by principals enhance effective conflict management in public secondary schools in Rivers state?*

**Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of Principals in Urban and Rural Areas on ways Avoidance Strategy by Principals enhance effective conflict management in Public senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.**

S/N	Items	Principals in Urban		Principals in Rural		Mean Set	Remarks
		$\bar{X}_1$	SD <sub>1</sub>	$\bar{X}_2$	SD <sub>2</sub>		
11.	Giving more time to tackle conflicts can help principals in managing conflicts.	3.38	.67	2.87	1.03	3.13	Agreed
12.	Principals' not confronting issues can help in managing conflict constructively in schools.	3.43	.78	2.31	1.12	2.87	Agreed
13.	Principals allowing issues to end or resolve on Its own without issuing a statement can help in managing conflicts in school.	2.37	1.12	2.42	1.18	2.40	Disagreed
14.	Avoidance strategy help principals in managing conflicts in schools by allowing them keep away from issues that lead to conflict.	3.29	.85	2.22	1.10	2.76	Agreed
15.	Principals making fair decisions without taking side can help in managing conflicts.	3.46	.66	2.97	1.09	3.22	Agreed
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>		<b>3.19</b>	<b>.82</b>	<b>2.56</b>	<b>1.10</b>	<b>2.88</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

Legend	Scale
$\bar{X}_1$ =Mean: Principals in Urban	1.00—2.49= Disagree
SD1= Standard Deviation 1	2.50---4.00= Agree
$\bar{X}_2$ = Mean: Principals in Rural	
SD2= Standard Deviation 2	

Table 3 shows that in item 11, principals in urban area have mean of 3.38 while principals in rural area have mean of 2.87 which implies that both respondents agreed that giving more time to tackle conflicts can help principals in managing conflicts in public secondary schools in the state. In item 12, principals in urban area have mean of 3.43 while principals in rural area have mean of 2.31 which connotes that principals in urban area agreed that principals not confronting issues can support in handling conflict profitably in school while principals in rural area disagreed. In item 13, principals in urban area have mean of 2.37 while principals in suburb have mean of 2.42 which suggests that both respondents disagreed that principals allowing issues to end or resolve on its own without issuing a statement can help out in managing conflicts in school. In item 14, principals in urban area have mean of 3.29 while principals in suburb have mean of 2.22 which shows that principals in urban district agreed that avoidance strategy help principals in managing conflicts in academic

ambient by allowing them keep away from issues that lead to conflicts while principals in suburb area disagreed. In item 15, principals in metropolis have mean of 3.46 while principals in suburb have mean of 2.97 which shows that both respondents agreed that principals making fair decisions without taking side can support in managing conflicts.

In summary, with the aggregate mean score of respondents larger than the criterion mean of 2.50; both principals agreed on that avoidance strategy by principals can enhance effective conflict management in public secondary schools in the state by giving more time to tackle conflicts, not confronting issues and making fair decisions without taking side.

**Hypotheses Testing**

The null hypotheses for the survey were established using the z-test analysis.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the administrative strategies that enhance principals’ effective conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Table 3: Summary of z-test analysis of the difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the administrative strategies that enhance effective conflicts management in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.**

Principals	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Level of Sig	z-Cal	z-Critical	df	Result	Decision
Male	256	3.29	0.79	0.05	2.63	1.96	317	Sig.	Reject
Female	63	2.94	0.98						

**Legend**

N= Number of Principals

z-Cal = z-Calculated value

$\bar{X}$  =Mean

z-Crit =z-Critical value

SD= Standard Deviation

df= Degree of Freedom

The table above shows that the z-calculated (2.63) value is larger than the z-critical (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance with 317 degrees of freedom. From the decision rule ( $z\text{-cal}_{2.63} > z\text{-crit}_{1.96}$ ) the null hypotheses is not accepted, which reveals that there is significant difference in the mean scores of male and female principals on the administrative strategies that enhance effective conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on ways effective communication by principals can enhance effective conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Table 4: Summary of z-test analysis of the difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on ways effective communication by principals can enhance effective conflict management in public secondary schools in Rivers State.**

Principals	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Level of Sig	z-Cal	z-Critical	df	Result	Decision
Male	256	3.21	0.81	0.05	3.76	1.96	317	Sig.	Reject
Female	63	2.70	1.00						

**Legend**

N= Number of Principals

z-Cal = z-Calculated value

$\bar{X}$  =Mean

z-Crit =z-Critical value

SD= Standard Deviation

df= Degree of Freedom

The table above shows that the z-calculated (3.76) value is larger than the z-critical (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance with 317 degrees of freedom. From the decision rule ( $z\text{-cal}_{3.76} > z\text{-crit}_{1.96}$ ) the null hypotheses is not



accepted, which reveals that there is significant difference in the mean scores of male and female principals on how effective communication can enhance effective conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of principals in urban and rural areas on ways avoidance strategy by principals can enhance effective conflict management in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Table 5: Summary of z-test analysis of the difference between the mean ratings of principals in urban and rural areas on ways avoidance strategy can be employed by principals in effective management of conflicts in public secondary schools in Rivers State.**

Principals	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Level of Sig	z-Cal	z-Critical	df	Result	Decision
Urban	211	3.19	0.82	0.05	4.59	1.96	317	Sig.	Reject
Rural	108	2.56	1.30						

**Legend**

N= Number of Principals

$\bar{X}$  =Mean

SD= Standard Deviation

z-Cal = z-Calculated value

z-Crit =z-Critical value

df= Degree of Freedom

The table above indicates that the z-calculated (4.59) value is greater than z-critical (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance with 317 degrees of freedom. From the decision rule, ( $z\text{-cal}_{4.59} > z\text{-crit}_{1.96}$ ) the null hypothesis is not accepted, which suggests that there is significant difference in the mean of principals in metropolitan area and those in suburb areas on ways avoidance strategy by principals can enhance effective conflict management in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

**Administrative strategies that enhance principals’ effective conflict management in public senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.**

The first findings of the study (2022) is that avoidance and effective communication are administrative strategies that enhances principals’ effective conflict management in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

These findings agree with Ehikhamhen (2018) who identified avoidance strategy and effective communication strategy as administrative strategies that can be employed in managing conflict in secondary school. Furthermore, it supports Ebong (2013) who succinctly outlines avoidance strategy as administrative strategy which when effectively employed will bring about conflict management in academic ambient.

The reasons for this trend could be that most principals who responded to the questionnaire have in one time or the other adopted these strategies in time of conflict and it yielded positive results.

**Ways Effective Communication by Principals can enhance Effective conflict Management in Public senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State**

The second findings of the study (2022) is that effective communication can enhance effective conflict management in school through allowing free flow of information, providing the correct means of communication and distributing of circulars on changes in curriculum to teachers, maintaining cordial relation with their subordinates, informing subordinates on appropriate sanctions and penalties for faulting the school rules, employing the right communication skill, not using abusive statements, not attacking, not threatening and not making accusations and disseminating information to parents and guidance on impending dangers that may erupt from students’ behaviour. In the same manner, a similar finding from the hypotheses testing revealed that there is significant difference in the mean of principals on the ways effective communication can enhance effective conflict management in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

These findings correspond with Adeyemi (2009) who pinpoint that allowing information pass freely in the school is a veritable tool employed in managing conflict in school. The findings agreed with Meyer in Angela

(2014) who posits that communication is the greatest techniques of managing conflict in academic ambient as it builds awareness to people on communication that may upshot to problem solving. The basis for this may perhaps be in the light that most principals who completed to the instrument may have employed this style or approach in managing conflicts in their various schools this connotes that principals can employ their communication skill to manage conflicts in schools.

### **Ways Avoidance Strategy can enhance Effective conflict Management in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State**

The third finding of the work (2022) is that avoidance strategy by principals can enhance effective conflict management in public secondary schools in Rivers State by giving more time to tackle conflicts, not confronting issues, allowing issues to end or resolve on its own without issuing a statement, keeping away from issues that may possibly lead to conflicts and making fair decision without taking side. In line with this, a corresponding finding from the hypotheses testing also revealed that there is significant difference in the mean of principals in metropolitan and suburb area on ways avoidance strategy can be utilized by principals in effective conflict management in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

These findings were in line with the findings of Ebong (2013) who outlines that avoidance strategy can be employed in managing skirmishes in schools. It also agrees with Victor in Andrew (2016) who opines that it is always good in scenarios or circumstance when no likelihood of winning or once disruption would be very costly. Furthermore, it is in tandem with Andrew (2016) who in his study succinctly argued that the style is inappropriate once the obligation of the party to make decisions, or when disputants are unwilling to wait or instant action is required. A plausible clarification for this development may perhaps be that these principals must have applied this technique in managing conflicts. This illustrates that bulk of public schools employ avoidance strategy in handling conflicts and maintaining decorum

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of the study it was concluded that effective communication and avoidance strategies are viable strategies which can be employed by administrators in effective conflict management in schools.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the results and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Administrators of public secondary schools in Rivers State should develop proper channel, skills, and ways either by organizing seminars, talks or symposium which will promote or enhance effective communication and eliminate lacuna in institution of learning so as to effectively manage conflicts.
2. Principals should adopt avoidance strategy in some issues so as to avert or avoid altercation among subordinates.
3. Principals must understand the peculiarity of conflict that has occurred or about to occur and know the best strategy to adopt or use in any conflict situation in school because not all the strategies can yield equal satisfaction when applied. This therefore means that every conflict in academic ambient has a working or best strategy suitable for it.
4. Administrators must be proactive to maintain decorum in school and alleviate issues that may result to acrimony in order to avert the detrimental effect of conflict in school.

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