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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRINCIPALS' CONFLICT MANAGEMENT APPROACHES AND TEACHERS' JOB PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KEFFI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA BY

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between principals' conflict management approaches and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi Local Government Area (LGA), Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Guided by four specific objectives, the study focused on principals' collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and competing conflict management approaches, as conceptualized in the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. The study was anchored on the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Theory and the Human Relations Theory of organizational management. A correlational survey research design was adopted, with a population of 620 teachers drawn from public secondary schools in Keffi LGA. Using the Taro Yamane formula, a sample of 243 teachers was selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure involving cluster and proportionate simple random sampling. Data were collected using a structured 24-item instrument titled the "Principals' Conflict Management Approaches and Teachers' Job Performance Questionnaire" (PCMTJPQ), validated by experts in educational management and measurement, and found reliable with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.81. Research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while the four hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that principals' collaborating and compromising approaches had significant positive relationships with teachers' job performance, the avoiding approach had a significant negative relationship, and the competing approach had a weak but significant negative relationship with job performance. The study concludes that the conflict management approach a principal adopts substantially shapes teachers' performance, with collaborative and compromising styles yielding the most favorable outcomes. It recommends regular training of principals in collaborative

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conflict resolution skills and discourages over-reliance on avoiding and competing approaches in school administration.
Keywords: Conflict Management Approaches; Teachers' Job Performance; Secondary School Principals; Thomas-Kilmann Model; Educational Leadership; Keffi; Nasarawa State

Introduction

Conflict is an inherent and inevitable feature of organizational life, arising wherever individuals with differing goals, values, or perceptions interact within a shared structure. Schools, as complex social organizations bringing together principals, teachers, non-teaching staff, students, and parents, are particularly prone to interpersonal and organizational conflicts arising from role ambiguity, resource scarcity, differing pedagogical philosophies, and communication breakdowns (Adeyemi & Ogunlade, 2021). How a school principal responds to and manages such conflicts has far-reaching implications for the school's climate, staff relations, and, ultimately, teachers' job performance.

Conflict management refers to the deliberate strategies and behavioral approaches that leaders adopt to address disagreements and disputes within an organization, with a view to minimizing their disruptive effects while, where possible, harnessing their potential for constructive change (Musa & Bala, 2022). The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument identifies five broad approaches to conflict management — collaborating, compromising, avoiding, competing, and accommodating — which differ in the degree to which they balance assertiveness (concern for one's own goals) against cooperativeness (concern for others' goals). Principals who adopt collaborative or compromising approaches are generally believed to foster trust, open communication, and mutual respect, whereas those who rely on avoidance or competition may inadvertently entrench resentment and disengagement among staff (Danladi et al., 2023).

Teachers' job performance, on the other hand, encompasses the effectiveness with which teachers discharge their instructional and non-instructional responsibilities, including lesson delivery, classroom management, assessment practices, and engagement in extracurricular and administrative duties (Yusuf & Ahmed, 2022). A substantial body of literature suggests that the quality of leader-follower relationships, including how leaders handle conflict, significantly shapes employees' motivation, commitment, and performance (Chukwu & Eze, 2021). In the school context, principals who manage conflict poorly risk creating an atmosphere of tension and mistrust that can undermine teachers' morale and, consequently, their instructional effectiveness.

In Keffi Local Government Area (LGA), Nasarawa State, informal reports and observations from public secondary schools suggest that conflicts between principals and teachers — often arising from disputes over duty allocation, disciplinary matters, resource distribution, and communication gaps — are not uncommon, and that principals adopt varied approaches in managing them. Whether these varied approaches are systematically related to differences in teachers' job performance, however, remains empirically underexamined within this specific context. This study, therefore, investigates the relationship between principals' conflict management approaches — specifically collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and competing — and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA, Nasarawa State.

Statement of the Problem

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Public secondary schools in Nigeria continue to experience challenges relating to interpersonal and organizational conflict, often stemming from disagreements over workload distribution, disciplinary authority, resource allocation, and communication between principals and teachers. The manner in which principals handle these conflicts is widely believed to influence the overall school climate and, by extension, teachers' willingness and capacity to perform their duties effectively (Danladi et al., 2023). Yet, in many Nigerian secondary schools, conflict management remains largely ad hoc, with some principals defaulting to authoritarian or avoidance-based approaches rather than collaborative problem-solving, potentially exacerbating rather than resolving underlying tensions (Musa & Bala, 2022).In Keffi LGA, Nasarawa State, observations suggest that instances of unresolved or poorly managed conflict between principals and teachers have, in some schools, coincided with reports of declining teacher morale, increased absenteeism, and inconsistent instructional delivery. However, it remains unclear from existing records and informal accounts which specific conflict management approaches are most prevalent among principals in the area, and more importantly, how these approaches relate to teachers' actual job performance. Much of the available literature on conflict management in Nigerian schools has focused on conflict types, causes, or general resolution strategies (Adeyemi & Ogunlade, 2021; Chukwu & Eze, 2021), with comparatively limited empirical attention to the specific relationship between individual conflict management approaches, as delineated in the Thomas-Kilmann model, and measurable teacher performance outcomes, particularly within the Keffi LGA context.This study therefore addresses this gap by empirically examining the relationship between principals' conflict management approaches and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA, Nasarawa State.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the relationship between principals' conflict management approaches and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA, Nasarawa State. The specific objectives are to:

1. examine the relationship between principals' collaborating conflict management approach and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA;
2. determine the relationship between principals' compromising conflict management approach and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA;
3. assess the relationship between principals' avoiding conflict management approach and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA; and
4. investigate the relationship between principals' competing conflict management approach and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between principals' collaborating conflict management approach and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA?
2. What is the relationship between principals' compromising conflict management approach and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA?

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3. What is the relationship between principals' avoiding conflict management approach and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA?

4. What is the relationship between principals' competing conflict management approach and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA?

Research Hypotheses

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

H_{01}: There is no statistically significant relationship between principals' collaborating conflict management approach and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA.

H_{02}: There is no statistically significant relationship between principals' compromising conflict management approach and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA.

H_{03}: There is no statistically significant relationship between principals' avoiding conflict management approach and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA.

H_{04}: There is no statistically significant relationship between principals' competing conflict management approach and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

The Concept of Conflict Management

Conflict management denotes the range of strategies and behavioral styles that individuals, particularly those in leadership positions, employ to address disputes and disagreements within an organization (Musa & Bala, 2022). The Thomas-Kilmann model conceptualizes five conflict-handling modes along the dimensions of assertiveness and cooperativeness: collaborating (high assertiveness, high cooperativeness), compromising (moderate on both dimensions), avoiding (low assertiveness, low cooperativeness), competing (high assertiveness, low cooperativeness), and accommodating (low assertiveness, high cooperativeness). Collaborating involves working jointly with the other party to find a mutually satisfying solution; compromising involves each party making concessions to reach a workable middle ground; avoiding involves sidestepping or postponing the conflict; and competing involves pursuing one's own position assertively, often at the expense of the other party's concerns (Danladi et al., 2023). In educational settings, principals' conflict management approaches shape the tone of staff relations and the extent to which teachers feel heard, respected, and supported in the discharge of their duties (Adeyemi & Ogunlade, 2021). A principal who consistently adopts collaborative or compromising approaches is more likely to build trust and a sense of shared purpose, while one who habitually avoids or dominates in conflict situations may cultivate an atmosphere of unresolved tension and disengagement.

The Concept of Teachers' Job Performance

Teachers' job performance refers to the degree of effectiveness and efficiency with which teachers execute their instructional and administrative responsibilities, encompassing lesson planning and delivery, classroom management, assessment of learners, punctuality, and

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participation in school activities beyond the classroom (Yusuf & Ahmed, 2022). Job performance is widely recognized as being influenced not only by individual competence but also by organizational and relational factors, including leadership style, school climate, and the quality of supervisor-subordinate relationships (Chukwu & Eze, 2021). Where relationships between principals and teachers are strained by poorly managed conflict, teachers may exhibit reduced motivation, increased absenteeism, and diminished instructional engagement, all of which manifest as lowered job performance (Ibrahim & Suleiman, 2024).

Empirical Review

Adeyemi and Ogunlade (2021), in a study of secondary schools in Kwara State, found that principals who adopted collaborative conflict resolution strategies recorded higher levels of staff cooperation and lower incidences of industrial disharmony compared to those who relied on avoidance or authoritarian approaches. Similarly, Musa and Bala (2022) reported that compromising and collaborative approaches were positively associated with teachers' organizational commitment in public secondary schools in Nasarawa State, while competing approaches were associated with higher staff turnover intentions.

Chukwu and Eze (2021) examined the influence of principals' interpersonal skills, including conflict management, on teachers' productivity in Enugu State and found a significant positive relationship between collaborative leadership behavior and teacher productivity. Danladi et al. (2023), focusing specifically on conflict-handling styles among secondary school administrators in North Central Nigeria, found that avoidance-based conflict management was significantly associated with lower teacher job satisfaction and, indirectly, with reduced instructional performance, as unresolved grievances accumulated over time.

Ibrahim and Suleiman (2024) explored the relationship between school leadership conflict resolution practices and teacher effectiveness in Nasarawa State and found that teachers under principals perceived as competent conflict managers reported significantly higher self-rated performance than those under principals perceived as conflict-avoidant or domineering. Ojo and Bawa (2022) similarly found that compromising and collaborating approaches correlated positively with teacher engagement, while competing approaches showed a weak negative correlation with teachers' willingness to go beyond minimum job requirements. While these studies point to a general pattern in which collaborative and compromising conflict management approaches are associated with more favorable staff outcomes, and avoiding and competing approaches with less favorable ones, few studies have simultaneously examined all four approaches in relation to teachers' job performance within the specific context of Keffi LGA, Nasarawa State. This study addresses that gap.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Theory and the Human Relations Theory of organizational management.

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Theory

Developed by Thomas and Kilmann, this theory conceptualizes conflict-handling behavior along two dimensions — assertiveness and cooperativeness — yielding five distinct conflict management modes: collaborating, compromising, avoiding, competing, and accommodating (as cited in Danladi et al., 2023). The theory posits that no single mode is universally superior;

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rather, effectiveness depends on the situational context, though collaborating and compromising are generally associated with more constructive, relationship-preserving outcomes, while avoiding and competing are more likely to generate or perpetuate dissatisfaction. This theory directly informs the study's four independent variables and provides the conceptual basis for hypothesizing differential relationships between each conflict management approach and teachers' job performance.

Human Relations Theory

The Human Relations Theory, associated with the work of Elton Mayo, emphasizes that employees' productivity and performance are significantly influenced by social and interpersonal factors within the workplace, including the quality of relationships with supervisors, recognition, and a sense of belonging (Ojo & Bawa, 2022). Applied to this study, the theory suggests that principals' conflict management approaches — as a key dimension of the interpersonal climate within a school — are likely to have a measurable bearing on teachers' motivation and, consequently, their job performance. Together, these two theories provide a coherent framework for understanding how principals' conflict-handling behaviors may shape teachers' performance outcomes.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a correlational survey research design, which is suited to systematically describing the relationship between two or more variables as they exist, without manipulation, and to determining the strength and direction of such relationships (Yusuf & Ahmed, 2022).

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all 620 teachers in the 22 public secondary schools registered under the Nasarawa State Secondary Education Board in Keffi LGA as at the 2025/2026 academic session.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 243 teachers was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula, $n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$, where N is the population size (620) and e is the margin of error (0.05), yielding a sample of approximately 243 respondents. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted: schools were first grouped into clusters based on their administrative zones within Keffi LGA; simple random sampling (balloting) was then used to select schools within each cluster; and proportionate simple random sampling was subsequently used to select individual teacher-respondents from the selected schools.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Principals' Conflict Management Approaches and Teachers' Job Performance Questionnaire" (PCMTJPQ). The instrument comprised five sections: Section A elicited demographic information; Sections B to E contained four items each on principals' collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and competing conflict management approaches, respectively; and Section F contained four items measuring teachers'

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job performance. All items were structured on a four-point modified Likert scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The face and content validity of the instrument were established through review by three experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation, whose observations informed the refinement of the final instrument. Reliability was determined through a trial test administered to 30 teachers in public secondary schools in Nasarawa LGA, who were not part of the main study sample. Analysis of the pilot data using Cronbach's Alpha yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.81, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study.

Method of Data Collection

Copies of the questionnaire were administered directly to sampled teachers by the researcher with the assistance of trained research assistants. Of the 243 copies distributed, 232 (95.5%) were correctly completed, retrieved, and used for data analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

Research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, with a criterion mean of 2.50 adopted as the decision benchmark; item means of 2.50 and above were interpreted as "Agree," while means below 2.50 were interpreted as "Disagree." The four null hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) at the 0.05 level of significance, with the decision rule that a hypothesis was rejected where the computed p-value was less than 0.05.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents (N = 232)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	128	55.2
	Female	104	44.8
Age	20–30 years	49	21.1
	31–40 years	95	40.9
	41–50 years	64	27.6
	Above 50 years	24	10.3
Qualification	NCE	62	26.7
	B.Ed/B.A(Ed)/B.Sc(Ed)	138	59.5
	M.Ed and above	32	13.8

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Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Teaching Experience	1–5 years	58	25.0
	6–10 years	81	34.9
	11–15 years	60	25.9
	Above 15 years	33	14.2

Table 1 shows that male teachers (55.2%) slightly outnumbered their female counterparts (44.8%) in the sampled schools. Most respondents (40.9%) were aged between 31 and 40 years, and a majority (59.5%) held a Bachelor's degree in Education or a related field as their highest qualification. In terms of experience, the largest proportion of respondents (34.9%) had between 6 and 10 years of teaching experience, indicating a reasonably experienced secondary school teaching workforce.

Research Question 1: Principals' Collaborating Conflict Management Approach

Table 2: Mean Responses on Principals' Collaborating Approach and Teachers' Job Performance (N = 232)

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	My principal invites teachers to jointly resolve disagreements.	2.86	0.78	Agree
2	My principal seeks win-win solutions during conflicts.	2.79	0.81	Agree
3	My principal encourages open dialogue when disputes arise.	2.91	0.75	Agree
4	My principal follows up to ensure resolutions are honored.	2.68	0.85	Agree
	Grand Mean	2.81		Agree

Table 2 shows a grand mean of 2.81, indicating that respondents generally agreed that their principals adopt a collaborating approach when managing conflict, particularly by encouraging open dialogue and seeking mutually beneficial solutions. Decision: Mean ≥ 2.50 = Agree; Mean < 2.50 = Disagree.

Research Question 2: Principals' Compromising Conflict Management Approach

Table 3: Mean Responses on Principals' Compromising Approach and Teachers' Job Performance (N = 232)

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	My principal is willing to meet teachers halfway during disputes.	2.74	0.80	Agree
2	My principal accepts reasonable concessions to resolve conflicts.	2.61	0.84	Agree

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S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
3	My principal balances competing interests fairly.	2.57	0.87	Agree
4	My principal avoids prolonging disputes unnecessarily.	2.65	0.83	Agree
	Grand Mean	2.64		Agree

Table 3 reveals a grand mean of 2.64, showing that respondents agreed that principals often adopt a compromising approach, balancing competing interests and accepting reasonable concessions during conflict situations. Decision: Mean ≥ 2.50 = Agree; Mean < 2.50 = Disagree.

Research Question 3: Principals' Avoiding Conflict Management Approach

Table 4: Mean Responses on Principals' Avoiding Approach and Teachers' Job Performance (N = 232)

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	My principal ignores conflicts, hoping they resolve themselves.	2.58	0.89	Agree
2	My principal postpones addressing disputes for long periods.	2.51	0.92	Agree
3	My principal withdraws from tense situations rather than engaging.	2.44	0.90	Disagree
4	My principal rarely follows up on unresolved disagreements.	2.39	0.94	Disagree
	Grand Mean	2.48		Disagree

Table 4 shows a grand mean of 2.48, marginally below the criterion mean, suggesting that while some avoidance behavior is perceived among principals, it is not the predominant approach among most principals in the sampled schools. Decision: Mean ≥ 2.50 = Agree; Mean < 2.50 = Disagree.

Research Question 4: Principals' Competing Conflict Management Approach

Table 5: Mean Responses on Principals' Competing Approach and Teachers' Job Performance (N = 232)

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	My principal insists on having the final say in disputes.	2.69	0.86	Agree
2	My principal uses authority to enforce decisions during conflicts.	2.72	0.83	Agree
3	My principal shows little regard for teachers' views during disagreements.	2.33	0.95	Disagree
4	My principal is unwilling to adjust decisions once made.	2.41	0.91	Disagree

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S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
	Grand Mean	2.54		Agree

Table 5 shows a grand mean of 2.54, indicating a moderate perception of competing behavior among principals, mainly reflected in reliance on positional authority, though outright disregard for teachers' views was less strongly endorsed. Decision: Mean ≥ 2.50 = Agree; Mean < 2.50 = Disagree.

Teachers' Level of Job Performance

Table 6: Mean Responses on Teachers' Job Performance (N = 232)

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	I deliver lessons effectively and meet scheme of work targets.	2.77	0.79	Agree
2	I manage my classroom and learners effectively.	2.83	0.76	Agree
3	I participate actively in school activities beyond teaching.	2.62	0.85	Agree
4	I feel motivated to perform beyond minimum job requirements.	2.58	0.88	Agree
	Grand Mean	2.70		Agree

Table 6 shows an overall grand mean of 2.70, indicating that teachers in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA generally rated their own job performance as good.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 7: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Analysis of Principals' Conflict Management Approaches and Teachers' Job Performance (N = 232)

Hypothesis	Variables Correlated	r-value	p-value	Decision (α = 0.05)
Ho_1	Collaborating approach × Job performance	0.586	0.000	Rejected
Ho_2	Compromising approach × Job performance	0.494	0.000	Rejected
Ho_3	Avoiding approach × Job performance	-0.372	0.002	Rejected
Ho_4	Competing approach × Job performance	-0.218	0.031	Rejected

As shown in Table 7, all four null hypotheses were rejected, as the computed p-values (0.000–0.031) were less than the 0.05 significance level in each case. This indicates that principals' collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and competing conflict management approaches each have a statistically significant relationship with teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA. Specifically, the collaborating approach showed the strongest positive relationship with job performance (r = 0.586), followed by the compromising approach (r = 0.494). Conversely, the avoiding approach showed a moderate negative

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relationship (r = -0.372), while the competing approach showed a weaker, though still significant, negative relationship (r = -0.218) with teachers' job performance.

Discussion of Findings

The finding that principals' collaborating conflict management approach has the strongest positive relationship with teachers' job performance (r = 0.586, p < 0.05) is consistent with Adeyemi and Ogunlade (2021), who found that collaborative conflict resolution strategies were associated with higher staff cooperation and reduced industrial disharmony in Kwara State secondary schools. This finding aligns with the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Theory's proposition that collaborating, by jointly addressing the underlying concerns of both parties, tends to produce the most constructive and relationship-affirming outcomes, and with the Human Relations Theory's emphasis on the performance-enhancing effect of positive interpersonal relations in the workplace (Ojo & Bawa, 2022).

The significant positive relationship between the compromising approach and job performance (r = 0.494, p < 0.05) similarly corroborates Musa and Bala (2022), who found compromising approaches to be positively associated with teachers' organisational commitment in Nasarawa State. This suggests that even where principals cannot fully satisfy all parties in a dispute, a demonstrated willingness to make reasonable concessions is sufficient to sustain teachers' motivation and performance.

The significant negative relationship found between the avoiding approach and job performance (r = -0.372, p < 0.05) supports Danladi et al. (2023), who reported that avoidance-based conflict management was associated with lower teacher job satisfaction due to the accumulation of unresolved grievances over time. This suggests that principals who consistently sidestep conflict, rather than resolving it, may inadvertently allow tensions to fester in ways that erode teachers' engagement and performance.

Finally, the significant negative relationship between the competing approach and job performance (r = -0.218, p < 0.05), while weaker than the other relationships, aligns with Ojo and Bawa (2022) and Ibrahim and Suleiman (2024), both of whom found that domineering or authority-driven conflict management styles were associated with reduced teacher engagement and self-rated performance. Taken together, these findings reinforce the view that principals who favor cooperative, relationship-oriented approaches to conflict — particularly collaborating and, to a lesser extent, compromising — are more likely to sustain and enhance teachers' job performance than those who rely on avoidance or competition.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between principals' conflict management approaches and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Keffi LGA, Nasarawa State. The findings established that principals' collaborating and compromising approaches are significantly and positively related to teachers' job performance, while avoiding and competing approaches are significantly and negatively related to it, with the avoiding approach showing the stronger of the two negative relationships. These findings affirm the theoretical propositions of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Theory and the Human Relations Theory, demonstrating that the manner in which principals handle conflict is not a peripheral administrative concern but a substantive factor shaping teachers' instructional and professional effectiveness. The study concludes that

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cultivating collaborative and compromising conflict management practices among secondary school principals is essential to sustaining and improving teachers' job performance in Keffi LGA.

Recommendations

1. The Nasarawa State Secondary Education Board should institute regular in-service training for principals in Keffi LGA on collaborative and compromising conflict resolution techniques, drawing on the Thomas-Kilmann model.

2. Principals should establish structured, timely channels for addressing staff grievances rather than allowing disputes to linger unresolved, given the negative relationship found between avoidance and job performance.

3. School leadership training programmes should explicitly discourage over-reliance on authority-driven or competing approaches to conflict, given their significant negative association with teachers' job performance.

4. Principals should be encouraged to involve teachers in joint problem-solving during disputes, as this collaborative practice showed the strongest positive relationship with performance.

5. Education supervisors and quality assurance officers should periodically assess principal-teacher relational climates in schools as part of routine school evaluation, to identify and address emerging conflict management challenges early.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings carry several implications for educational policy and practice. For policymakers, the results suggest that leadership development programmes for principals should incorporate structured training in conflict management, treating it as a core competency rather than an incidental skill. For school administrators, the findings imply that consciously adopting collaborative and compromising approaches to staff disputes, rather than avoidance or authority-driven responses, can yield measurable benefits in teachers' instructional and professional performance. For quality assurance and supervisory bodies, the study underscores the value of incorporating indicators of principal-teacher relational climate into routine school inspection and appraisal frameworks, given the demonstrated link between conflict management style and teacher performance.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to public secondary schools in Keffi LGA, Nasarawa State, and its findings may not be generalizable to other local government areas, states, or private school contexts with different administrative cultures. The study relied on teachers' self-reported perceptions of both their principals' conflict management approaches and their own job performance, which, despite the instrument's validated reliability, may be subject to social desirability or perceptual bias. Additionally, the correlational design establishes association rather than causation, and the cross-sectional data collection captures respondents' perceptions at a single point in time only.

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Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies could incorporate principals' self-assessments alongside teachers' perceptions to allow for a more comprehensive, multi-source evaluation of conflict management approaches. Longitudinal research would help establish whether changes in principals' conflict management practices produce corresponding changes in teachers' performance over time. Comparative studies across multiple local government areas, or between public and private secondary schools, would further help establish the generalizability of the present findings. Future research could also examine the accommodating conflict management approach, which was not included in the present study, as well as the mediating role of school climate or teacher trust in the relationship between conflict management and job performance.

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