Influence of Principals' Conflict Resolution Skills on Teachers' Commitment in Public Secondary Schools in Ogun State

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Abstract

This study investigated the Influence of principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Ogun State. A descriptive research design was employed. The population for the study consisted of 3,109 teachers. A sample of six hundred and forty-five (645) respondents was selected. Three (03) instruments were used for data collection, namely: demographic data form, organizational commitment scale (r = .91), and Rahim organizational conflict inventory – II (r = .96). Findings showed that there was a significant influence of principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment (R = .253; R2 = .064; Adj. R2= 063; F (1,636) = 43.508; P< .05). Also, principals' gender significantly moderated the influence of principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment. Male principals have a significant moderating influence of principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment (R =.376; R2 =.141; R2(adj) =.139; F (1,406) =66.563; P<.05). Also, female principals do not have a significant moderating influence of principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment (R =.048; R2 =.002; R2(adj) =-.002; F (1,230) =.525; P>.05). Based on these findings, it was recommended that regular seminars should be organized to educate principals on conflict resolution strategies. Also, the Ministry of Education should organize extensive in-service development programs and/or encourage the principals to go for short courses in educational management with specific emphasis on leadership skills and styles and conflict management in schools irrespective of their gender.

Keywords: conflict resolution skills, job commitment, gender, public secondary schools.

1. Introduction

Committed teachers do not only act as role models for their students but also for their colleagues in that their commitment has a direct impact on their students and also on their colleagues (Yildiz & Celik, 2017). Therefore, in the recent educational climate of continuous reform and high demand for accountability, some teachers are able to find space to maneuver within an increasingly restricting work environment and are creating space and ways to maintain their professional commitment while others are overwhelmed by the demands of teaching which they see as burdensome and also requiring great personal investment (Day, 2004).

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Researchers have also observed that it is not uncommon to hear people remark that the present-day teachers are not as good or committed as their yesteryear counterparts. Despite several efforts of the government and other stakeholders in the education sector to enhance the professional advancement of teachers in order to increase their commitment, not much seems to have been achieved (Adeyemo, 2001). Furthermore, the issue of principals' conflict resolution skills in a certain situation may depend upon gender, level of education, experience, personality, etc. Therefore, this study intends to investigate the influence of principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in the Ijebu division of Ogun State. This study will be of importance to teachers who are the main agents of social change, through education, to undergo more strains in the discharge of their sacred duties in order to improve their commitment to teaching.

2. Literature Review

Teachers' commitment is an issue of prime importance, especially to the school management and stakeholders in the education industry. Teachers' commitment has become a topic of interest in education discourse since 1980. This word combination has been interchangeably used to mean quality teachers or dedicated teachers (AbdRazak, Darmawan, & Keeves, 2010).

Becker (1999) defined commitment as the investment in a particular career, in this case, teaching. Lortie (1995) regards commitment as the willingness an individual enacts in investing personal resources to the teaching task. Nias (1991) looks at teacher commitment like an organizational commitment, which is conceptualised as being multidimensional. Joffress and Haughey (2001) wrote that teachers' commitment is a crucial factor to an effective school, teacher satisfaction, and retention. They claimed that a low level of teachers' commitment results into decreased students' achievement tests.

The commitment of secondary school teachers in the Ogun State as reflected in students' performances shows that the commitment of teachers to academic work is below expectation due to a number of factors such as incessant industrial conflicts between teachers and the state government (Bawalla, 2020). Adeyemo (2001), however, observed that it is not uncommon to hear people remark that present-day teachers are not as good or committed as their yesteryear counterparts. Also, Elliott and Creswell (2001) argued that teachers' commitment and engagement have been identified as one of the most critical factors in the success and future of education as it contributes to teachers' work performance, absenteeism, burnout, and turnover as well as having an important influence on students' achievement.

Some teachers see their commitment as part of their professional identity. It defines them and their work and they gain satisfaction and a lot of enjoyment from it (Elliott & Crosswell, 2001). What Drucker (2002) referred to as the current knowledge economy has necessitated a re-conceptualization of the nature of both teaching and learning. Being addressed as "knowledge workers" has seen some teachers continue to flourish in spite of the current challenges, while others are overwhelmed by the new demands of teaching. This latter group of teachers considers the requirements of teaching to be burdensome, requiring great personal investment, and view it as a job with the capacity to colonize their personal lives (Nias, 1989).

Truman and Raggl (2008) claimed that teachers' commitment takes three forms, with the most important one being professional commitment. They asserted that a professionally committed teacher rates their teaching abilities very highly and are committed to their professional advancement.

Day, Elliot, and Kington (2005) argued that there are different forms of commitment to teaching. According to them, the nature and intensity of commitment to teaching depends on factors derived from personal and professional lives. Commitment is a word they use to distinguish those who are caring, dedicated, and who take their job seriously from those who put their own interest first. Professionally committed teachers take their job seriously and they get enjoyment from it (Elliott & Croswell, 2001). Tyree (1996) observed that teachers who are committed are those who see their students' welfare; they care for, respond to, and meet

students' needs. They strive to improve their practice and look at pedagogies and research. They also talk and listen to their children, the time they work as a team with others and their head of school (the principal), are appropriately prepared for their lessons and are reflective practitioners. Another view shared by committed teachers is that teaching is not just a job. Teachers invest their personal time even outside school contact hours. They have made teaching a lifestyle. They often contemplate their class programs and students while engaging in a range of personal activities like in the shower, shopping, or watching television. Teachers' commitment has been studied in relation to teacher preparations. Choi and Tang (2009) indicated that a teacher who is highly dedicated to student affairs evaluates/assesses the acquisition of subject matter well and prepares well for the lessons. Fox (1964) illustrated the characteristics of a committed teacher as one who prepares well the content he/she is going to teach. Tella (2008) defined quality teaching as teaching that maximizes learning for all students. It entails engaging pupils as active learners to induce positive, comprehensive changes in their pre-existing knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These are achieved by committed teachers who are able to prepare well their lessons by taking into consideration learners' experiences, abilities, interests, motivation, and skills.

However, there are multiple objects of commitment for a teacher and teachers' commitment objects may also change across different life and career phases in different contexts (Leithwood, Jantz, & Steinbach, 1999). The enthusiasm and commitment demonstrated by teachers at the beginning of their careers are often followed by a time of experimentation, after which teachers can experience a period of frustration and self-doubt, often followed by stages of conservatism and eventual disengagement (Huberman, 1993). In view of this, there is a need to examine principals' conflict resolution skills as part of the variables that may influence teachers' commitment.

Conflict has been observed to be in existence in all human organizations including the school system. It could be described as all forms of opposition, disagreement, or friction between two or more parties and it manifests in the forms of arguments, protests, demonstrations, aggression, and other destructive behaviors. While conflict occurrence has been observed to be inevitable and ubiquitous in human organizations, the strategies for managing it have remained topical issues and matters of concern to individuals, groups, and scholars (Noun, 2009). Amason (1996) described conflict as a form of socialization. He stressed that people in organizations have both personal and role preferences about the organizations' actions and policies.

However, conflict exists whenever it is impossible for others to carry out their desired action. Hence, Bens (2012) reported that conflict is the tension that is experienced when a group of people feels that their needs or desires are likely to be denied. His argument was in consonance with the contention made by Owens (1995) who postulated that conflict occurs whenever incompatible activities occur. Thus, in a related survey, Adeyemi (2010) found that in the Nigerian school system, conflict occurs from time to time. He argues that conflict is the art of coming into collision, clash, or be in opposition with one another. His argument was in agreement with Canavan and Monahan (2001) that a conflict situation is one in which the parties involved are unable to iron out their differences.

Several types of conflicts identified in the schools according to Abubakar (2005) are student-staff conflict, student-student conflict, student-principal conflict, and community-school conflict. Communication barriers, role ambiguity, unclear expectations or rules, unresolved prior conflicts, conflicting interests, disagreement on tasks, and content issues are some of the factors that can lead to conflict situations in schools. At the same time, competition for scarce resources, differences in values, and inconsistencies among educators and learners may also bring about discord (Calitz, Fuglested, & Lillejord, 2002). Conflicts not only threaten school functioning but may trigger a chain of other educational and social problems which include abuse of office, disagreement, quarrels, hostility, and violent fights which may have a negative impact on the successful running of the school.

Conflicts have both positive and negative effects on an organization depending on the management and its final outcome. For Zikmann (1992) effectively managed conflicts can help identify previously undetected problems and attitudes. For conflicts to be managed functionally, one style may be more appropriate than another depending upon the situation (Rahim, 2002). In addition, the conflict management style of principals may depend on many factors, and gender is not excluded. Thus, this study finds out the influence of principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in the Ijebu division of Ogun State.

3. Methodology

3.1. Statement of the Problem

Researchers have observed that it is not uncommon to hear people remark that present-day teachers are not as good or committed as their yesteryear counterparts. Also, despite several efforts of the government and other stakeholders in the education sector to enhance the professional advancement of teachers in order to increase their commitment, not much seems to have been achieved. Hence, this study investigated the influence of principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in the Ijebu division of Ogun State.

3.2. Hypothesis of the Study

Ho1: There is no significant influence of principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in the Ijebu division of Ogun State, Nigeria.

Ho2: Principals' gender will not significantly moderate the influence of principals' conflict resolution skills in predicting teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in the Ijebu division of Ogun State, Nigeria.

3.3. Methods

A descriptive research design was employed in this study. The study population consisted of the three thousand one hundred and nine (3,109) teachers in the one hundred and thirty-five (135) public secondary schools in the Ijebu division of Ogun State. The sample for this study was six hundred and forty-five (645) teachers of public secondary schools through a multistage sampling procedure and simple random sampling technique. In the first stage, three (3) local government areas were selected from the six (6) local government areas in the Ijebu division of Ogun State, Nigeria through a simple random sampling technique. In the second stage, a disproportionate stratified sampling procedure was used to select 61.1% of schools from the Ijebu East local government area, 64 % from Ijebu-Ode, and 64 % from Odogbolu respectively. These amounted to eleven (11) public secondary schools from Ijebu East, sixteen (16) from Ijebu-Ode, and sixteen (16) from Odogbolu to form a total of forty-three (43) public secondary schools. In the third stage, fifteen (15) teachers were selected through simple random sampling techniques from each of the forty-three (43) public secondary schools to arrive at a sample of six hundred and forty-five (645) respondents. The samples of six hundred and forty-five (645) respondents represented a total of 21 % of the entire population while the forty-three (43) public secondary schools represented 33 % of the entire public secondary schools in the Ijedu division of Ogun State, Nigeria. The hypotheses were analyzed using regression analysis and tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

3.4. Instrumentation

3.4.1. Demographic Data Form

The biographic data of participants was taken using the demographic data form. Items in the form include principal's gender and work experience.

3.4.2. Organizational Commitment Scale

Organizational Commitment Scale (OCS) is a 24-item scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1996). The scale has been used internationally and locally by researchers (e.g Adams, 2007; Yavuz, 2010). It is divided into three (3) segments which are: affective commitment scale (e.g, I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization), continuance commitment scale (e.g, I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one line up) and normative commitment scale (e.g, I do not believe that a person must be loyal to his or her organization). The items are measured on a Likert type scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The Cronbach's alpha for the three (3) segments of the scale are 0.78, 0.73, and 0.77 respectively. The instrument was revalidated and a correlation coefficient of 0.91 was obtained indicating that the instrument is reliable for the study.

3.4.3. Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II)

Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory–II (ROCI-II) is a 28-item scale developed by Rahim (1983). It was used to measure the perception of the participants of their superior's typical behavior when resolving conflicts in the workplace (e.g., The principal tries to investigate an issue with the subordinates to find a solution acceptable to them). The ROCI-II is on a 5-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The Cronbach's alpha for the inventory is 0.81. The instrument was revalidated and a correlation coefficient of 0.96 was obtained indicating that the instrument is reliable for the study.

3.5. Results and Analysis

Hypothesis One

There is no significant influence of principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in the Ijebu division of Ogun State, Nigeria.

Table 1. ANOVA Result of the influence of principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Analysis of Variance Mean Square	F	Sig.
R=.253[a]	Regression	1894.828	1	1894.828	43.508	.000[b]
R Square=.064	Residual	27698.890	636	43.552		
Adjusted.R^2=.063	Total	29593.718	637			

a. Dependent Variable: Teacher' Job Commitment
b. Predictor: (Constant), Conflict Resolution Skills

The results in Table 1 revealed that principals' conflict resolution skills influence accounts for 6.3% (R = .253; R2 = .064; Adj. R2= 063; F (1,636) = 43.508; P< .05) of the variance in teachers' job commitment. Thus, it can be concluded that principals' conflict resolution skills have a significant influence on teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Ijebu division of Ogun State. Hence, the null hypothesis one is rejected.

Hypothesis Two

Principals' gender will not significantly moderate the influence of principals' conflict resolution skills in predicting teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Ijebu division of Ogun State, Nigeria.

Table 2. Model summary of the regression analyses for the moderating influence of principals' gender on principals' conflict resolution skills in predicting teachers' job commitment

Model	Male				Female			
	B	Beta	T	Sig	B	Beta	T	Sig
(Constant)	38.818		36.697	.000	44.221		14.680	.000
Principals' conflict resolution skills	2.250	.376	8.159	.000	.512	.048	.725	.469
Model Summary	R=.376; R^2=.141; $R^2_{(adj)}$= .139; $F_{(1,406)}$ =66.563; P<.05				R=.048; R^2=.002; $R^2_{(adj)}$= -.002; $F_{(1,230)}$ =.525; P>.05			

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers' job commitment

The results in Table 2 revealed that male principals have a significant moderating influence of principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment (R =.376; R2 =.141; R2(adj) =.139; F (1,406) =66.563; P<.05) as it accounts for 13.9% of the variance in the teachers' job commitment. Also, the results show that female principals do not have a significant moderating influence of principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment (R =.048; R2 =.002; R2(adj) =-.002; F (1,230) =.525; P>.05) which accounts for 0.2% of the variance in the teachers' job commitment. The outcome shows that being a male principal influenced principals' conflict resolution skills but being a female principal does not influence principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment. This implies that principals' gender significantly moderated the influence of principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in the Ijebu division of Ogun State. Therefore, null hypothesis two is rejected.

3.6. Discussion

This study examined the influence of principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in the Ijebu division of Ogun State. Hypothesis one revealed that principals' conflict resolution skills significantly influenced teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in the Ijebu division of Ogun State. It is worth noting that conflict occurs in schools as a result of many factors which include but are not limited to competition for inadequate resources, communication barriers, disagreements about goals or contradicting value systems, unclear expectations or rules, psychological needs of group and individuals, manipulation of information and perception. These factors do not only threaten school functioning but may trigger a chain of other educational and social problems which can further reduce teachers' commitment to the job. The result supported the findings of Uchendu, Anijaobi-Idem, and Odigwe (2013) who discovered that there is a significant relationship between principals' conflict management in terms of teacher-teacher conflict (TTC), teacher-student conflict (TSC), principal-teacher conflict (PTC) and organisational performance. The finding contradicts that of Adeyemi (2009) which shows that conflicts have not been effectively managed by principals of schools because of their inability to effectively utilize the strategies for resolving conflicts.

Hypothesis two revealed that principals' gender significantly moderated the influence of principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools. The result shows that male has a significant moderating influence of

principals' conflict resolution skills on teachers' job commitment while female does not. Based on this outcome, it is worthy of clarification that the gender of a principal as one of the principal's personal characteristics remains an essential factor in conflict management in the school system. The variation may be due to a number of assumptions about what women should be or should not be. Such assumptions include that women should be seen, not heard; that women's place is in the Kitchen (homemakers) etc. "Women should be seen, not heard" may be due to the fact that males possess different personal orientations. That is, men grow up more oriented to forming connections and establishing harmony with others, whereas women come to focus more on the aggressive behaviors required in a competitive work environment. The findings of this study corroborate the assertion of Okorie (2002) that principals' gender cannot be divulged from the way and manner at which the school is being managed. Also, Akinnubi and Oyeniran (2012) discovered that a significant relationship existed between principal's personal characteristics and conflict management in Kwara State secondary schools.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The success of the school to a large extent depends on the ability of the principal who is responsible for the academic as well as administrative functioning of the system. Thus, as a matter of fact, teachers' reactions to the principals' conflict resolution skills are crucial factors that must be critically looked into. Also, it is worth noting that the positive influence of the predictor variables serves as a valuable tool for improving teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools. The study recommended that regular seminars should be organized to educate principals on conflict resolution strategies. Also, the Ministry of Education should organize extensive in-service development programs and/or encourage the principals to go for short courses in educational management with specific emphasis on leadership skills and styles and conflict management in schools irrespective of their gender.

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