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PRINCIPALS' CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AKWA IBOM STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the extent to which Principals' Conflict Management Strategies predict Organizational Performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State. In order to achieve the purpose of this study, two research objectives were structured, two research questions raised and two null hypotheses formulated to guide the study. The study adopted two theories: Conflict Theory by Ralf Dahrendorf (1959) and Theory of Performance Effectiveness by Don Elger (1972). Correlational research design was used for the study. The population of this study consisted of 5009 teachers spread across all the four hundred and eleven Private Secondary Schools in the thirty-one Local Government Areas in Akwa Ibom State. Two hundred and fifty respondents were drawn from the population to participate in the study using multi stage sampling technique. This represents 5% of the study population. Two instruments, entitled "Principals' Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (PCMSQ) and Organisational Performance Questionnaire (OPQ)" were used to gather data for the study. The instruments were validated by three experts; two from The Department of Curriculum Studies, Educational Management and Planning and one from The Department of Psychological Foundations of Education, Faculty of Education, University of Uyo. The reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach Alpha Analysis which yielded reliability coefficients of .875 for PCMSQ and .855 for OPQ. Simple Regression Analysis statistics was used to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that, compromise and smoothing strategies significantly predict organisational performance of private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. It was recommended, amongst others that, Proprietors should organise in-service-training for principals in order to improve their management skills. The training perhaps should focus on conflict management in order to create a healthy and peaceful school environment that can enhance organisational performance.

Keywords: Principals, Conflict, Conflict Management, Organisational Performance, Private Secondary Schools

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

A secondary school can be regarded as a complex social organisation essentially characterised by formal structures and occupied by people. It is a place for learners and instructors (teachers) to interact with each other for the purpose of education and satisfaction of social needs. As a formal organisation, secondary school is structured organisation with well defined roles, hierarchy of authority and established procedures. A secondary school could be publicly or privately owned. A secondary school manager, commonly described as the principal is the major determinants of success in secondary school (Lipham, 2016). Therefore, the extent of performance of secondary school like any other organisation depends on goals, objectives and strategies of the school principal. Specifically, the goals encompass aspects like academic achievement of students, human resources well-being, and operational efficiency. When these goals are achieved, organisational performance of the school could be improved.

Al-Ajlouny and Nawafleh (2018) defined organisational performance of school as the overall effectiveness and success of the school in terms of the achievement of goals and objectives. Rufeng *et al.*, (2023) considered organisations effectiveness of a school in terms of academic performance of students, operational efficiency, financial performance, stakeholder's satisfaction, innovation, improvement in curriculum, resources utilisation reputation in the community and recognition by relevant agencies or bodies. Based on the foregoing, organisational performance of secondary school is conceptualised as the institution's fulfillment of acceptable, improved academic performance among students, the achievement of targeted administrative effectiveness, financial efficiency, customer satisfaction and attainment of desirable reputation in the community. The organisational performance of secondary school is crucial for several reasons. It does not only reflect the school's ability to achieve set goals, but as well serves as a quality indicator of educational services offered and an assurance of a positive learning environment. Thus, it can be argued that, organisational performance directly influences students' achievement, teachers' job satisfaction, and overall institutional reputation.

In spite of the advantages of organisational performance of secondary school, it appears that what is on ground, especially in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State is not very impressive since the problems associated with organisational performance are complex and multifaceted. Some of the primary issues of organisational performance are ineffective leadership, inadequate resources, teacher-related issues like inadequate training, student-related issues like poor attendance, and inadequate parental involvement. It is believed that, secondary schools may likely experience quality teaching, academic excellence and holistic development if principals can ensure that conflict in the school is reduced to the barest minimum through the application of suitable conflict management strategies such as compromise and smoothing strategy. This suggests that, organisational performance of secondary schools could hinge on the ability of the school principal to apply appropriate conflict management strategies.

Conflict is seen as the manifestation of controversy or divergence in opinion between two or more people concerning something that was not done or to be done in which opposing views are strongly held. Conflict could show as opposition or competition between two or more people arising either from the pursuit of incompatible goals or a class of rival opinions. It is on this ground that one can state that, in the Nigerian school system, conflicts are likely to occur from time to time and could take on the form of collision, clash or opposition with members of the institution. The internal mechanism that can be used by the appropriate

authority to resolve conflicts is referred to as conflict management strategy. Uwaezuoke and Obiekwe, (2021) defined conflict management strategies as the approaches that can be used to address disagreements and disputes effectively. The aim of conflict management is to achieve positive outcomes for all concerned parties. The method of managing conflict depends on the specific situation and the individuals involved. This explains the assertion that there is no single best way to manage conflicts. Madubuegwu *et al.,* (2022) identified arbitration, mediation, negotiation, reconciliation bargaining, problem solving, peace-making and the use of force as some of the strategies that can be used to manage conflicts in formal organisations. Iloakasia, (2022) identified avoidance, compromise and smoothing as conflict management strategies. In the context of this study, compromise and smoothing are considered as principals' conflict management strategies.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State face a multiple challenges of organisational performance. The organisational performance of private schools is a problem worthy of investigation because it directly impacts the quality of education provided to students, which in turn affects their academic achievement, personal growth, and future opportunities. Despite the importance of organisational performance, there are concerns that some private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State perform poorly due to perceived occurrence of conflict among teachers and students. When the challenges of organisational performance are not well managed, they can result in decreased academic achievement, high teacher turnover rates and decreased moral among students and staff. Also, poor organisational performance could result in teachers' job dissatisfaction, inadequate preparation and delivery of teaching, lack of staff involvement in school initiatives, and inadequate contribution to curriculum development. Most student also may exhibit a range of negative attitudes and behaviors such as disengagement from learning, decreased motivation, poor academic performance, increased absenteeism, and negative perception of the school environment. These signs necessarily prove poor organisational performance in which the researcher believes there may be underlying issues that need to be addressed.

In the light of these observed problems, several researchers have carried out research related to organisational performance in secondary schools at various places and time, but these problems still persist. The researcher therefore assumes that poor conflict management strategies adopted by school principals is a major contributing factor to poor organisational performance in private secondary schools. The researcher believed that principals'conflict management strategies such as compromise and smoothing strategies could have significant impact on organisational performance of private secondary schools. This has raised the concern of the researcher to attempt finding the extent to which principals'conflict management strategies predict organisational performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State. The question therefore is, to what extent does principals'conflict management strategies predict organisational performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which principals':

i. compromise strategy predict organisational performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State;
ii. smoothing strategy predicts organisational performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State

1.4 Research Questions

To guide the study, the following research questions were raised:

i. To what extent does Principals' compromise strategy predict organisational performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State?
ii. To what extent does Principals' smoothing strategy predict organisational performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

i. Principal's compromise strategy does not significantly predict organisational performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State
ii. Principal's smoothing strategy does not significantly predict organisational performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study adopted two theories: Conflict Theory by Ralf Dahrendorf (1959) and Theory of Performance Effectiveness by Don Elger (1972). Dahrendorf, a German Sociologist argues that society is categorised into the "command class (those with authority) and the obey class (those without authority)"; therefore conflict usually emanate from struggle between these two classes. The position of Dahrendorf is that the regulation of conflicts in an organisation is important continuous activity since private interests, antagonism or differences in interests among conflicting parties may resurface. What this means is that sectional interests should be recognised and checked so that they do not hamper the growth of the organisation. The theory of performance effectiveness by Elger on the other hand develops and relates certain foundational concepts to form a framework that can be used to explain performance as well as performance effectiveness. This theory focuses on four tenets which are: to perform (to produce valued results); a performer (an individual or a group of people engaging in a collaborative effort); developing performance (a journey); and the level of performance (location in the journey). According to Elger, in order to achieve organisational performance, three axioms are proposed which are: workers' mindset, enriching environment and engagement in reflective practice.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 Principals' Conflict Management Strategies

Conflict is an integral natural part of human interaction which can also be viewed as a fact of life. It can be said to be a reality in any social system. Although a generally accepted definition of conflict does not exist, Belias *et al.,* (2023) defined conflict as that which could happen between two or more people or groups with incompatible goals in an organisation. Similarly, Orunbon *et al.*, (2025) defined conflict as an act of discontentment and contention which either the workers or employers of labour utilise to put excessive pressure against each other so as to get their demands. From the forgoing, conflict can be defined as incompatibility of interests, goals, values, needs, expectations, and/or social cosmologies (or ideologies). Conflict can vary in severity from mild to severe and can be expressed verbally or nonverbally along a continuum ranging from a nearly imperceptible cold shoulder to a very obvious blowout. Conflict can manifest in various forms, can be a natural and sometimes even productive part of life (Kulesa *et al.* (2023).

The methods, techniques and approaches used by the principals to manage, resolve and mitigate conflicts in the school are called conflict management strategies. Nwafor and Robert-Okah (2022) grouped conflict management strategies or approaches into two categories viz: intervention and non-intervention approaches. To them, in the non-intervention strategies administrators do not try to modify, settle or hinder conflict rather they allow the parties concerned to resolve the conflict themselves. Examples of such strategies include avoidance, bargaining or compromising, politics, bribing collaborative and integrative problem solving; while in intervention approach, the administrator being conscious of a conflict situation intervenes to modify or settle the conflict between parties involved. Examples of such strategies include smoothing, forcing, deterrence or detraction, majority rule, resort to rules, altering the human variable, changing the individuals involved, restructuring the organisation, expansion of resources and mutual personnel exchange. However, Uwaezuoke and Obiekwe (2021) further identified problem solving, appeal to superior organisational goals, prevention, avoidance, expression of opportunities and resources, use of authority and command, changing the structure of the organisation and compromise as management strategies for resolving conflicts in organisations. In this study, compromise strategy and smoothing strategy are considered as the indicators of principals' conflict management strategies.

2.2.2 Principals' Compromise Conflict Management Strategy

Compromise conflict management strategy is a conflict management strategy which involves the willingness of all parties involved in conflict to concede some of their own views and focus on the others views to reach an agreement. It is an agreement in which people concur to accept less than they originally wanted (Abdul *et al.,* 2023). People who rely on the compromise style to resolve conflict find it necessary to satisfy some of their interests but not all of them; and such people are likely to say "let us split". In compromise, each person has something to give and something to take. Adeolu-Akande *et al.*, (2020) posit that compromise is an attempt to have a partial satisfaction for both parties in the sense that both receive the proverbial "half loaf…" and this compels both parties to make sacrifices to obtain a common gain. This strategy is used with issues of moderate importance, when both parties are equally powerful and equally committed to opposing views. Okoth, (2022) observed that, this approach results in the parties' attempting to win as much as possible while preserving the interpersonal or inter-group relationships as much as possible. Overuse of the compromising strategy may lead to loss of long-term goals, a lack of trust, creation of a cynical environment, and being viewed as having no firm values which results in making concessions to keep people happy without resolving the original conflict.

2.2.3 Principals' Smoothing Conflict Management Strategy

Smoothing conflict management strategy is a strategy that suppresses one's perceived views while focusing on the other's views of the situation. Smoothing strategy is also called accommodation strategy. It entails setting aside one's personal needs because the individual desires to please others in order to keep the peace. To Ndijuye, (2022) smoothing strategy means surrendering one's own needs and wishes to please the other person. The emphasis is on preserving a relationship. It can be useful when one is wrong or when you want to minimise losses as it preserves relationships (Ezekiel and Abdulraheem, (2022). Smoothing strategy is appropriate to use in situations when you want to show that you are reasonable, develop performance, create good will, keep peace, retreat, or for issues of low importance. The use of smoothing strategy involves principals' ability to sacrifice, the ability to be selfless, to obey orders and to yield. One of their main desires may be to keep everything the same. Smoothing as a conflict management strategy indicates a low concern for self and high concern for others. Individuals using this style tend to satisfy the needs of others while

ignoring or sacrificing their own needs (Ogharen *et al*., 2022). When smoothing is overused certain behaviors emerge. Some of these emergent behaviors include giving up personal space, being overly helpful and then holding a grudge and speaking in an extremely quiet almost unintelligible voice. Underuse of smoothing strategy can result in lack of rapport, low morale, and an inability to yield.

2.2.4 Organisational Performance of Secondary Schools

Organisational performance refers to how well an organisation is doing and how much of its daily tasks and set objectives it successfully completes (Iko *et al.,* 2024). Measuring an organisation's performance involves comparing its actual outputs or results with the intended ones. This comparison helps organisations determine if they're achieving what they set out to do. The fundamental aspects of performance in secondary schools include academic excellence, curricular standards, student achievement, community engagement, organisational effectiveness, student and staff well-being, and continuous improvement (Sadick and Kamardeen, 2020). Therefore, organisational performance of school is a comprehensive evaluation and measurement of various aspects that contribute to the effectiveness and success of the educational institution (Al-Ajlouny and Nawafleh, (2018). It encompasses a range of dimensions, each reflecting the school's ability to fulfill its educational mission and provide a conducive environment for the holistic development of students. Rufeng *et al*. (2023) noted some potential indices for measuring organisational performance of secondary schools to include the following: academic performance, operational efficiency, financial performance, customer satisfaction, innovation, improvement, reputation and recognition. Principals can measure organisation's performance of school at different levels. To achieve these, Chenangat and Makokha, (2023) suggested that, principals should evaluate teachers' individual performance especially in the aspects of their abilities, assess team-level performance through team training and measure organisation-level performance using external and internal assessments.

2.3 Empirical Framework

2.3.1 Compromise Conflict Management Strategy and Organisational Performance

A study was conducted by Amie-Ogan and Nma (2021) to investigate the relationship between conflict management strategies and teachers' performance. Four research questions and four hypotheses directed the study. Correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was two hundred and forty-five (245) school administrators from thirty-five (35) public senior secondary schools in Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt Local Government Areas of Rivers State. A sample of 245 school administrators was derived for the study through census sampling technique. Instruments titled "Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (CMSQ) and Teachers' Performance Questionnaire (TPQ)" were used for data collection while; the test re-test reliability method was used to achieve a reliability index of 0.85 after validation by experts in educational management and measurement and evaluation. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Statistical tool was used to answer the research questions and the t-translation used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study among others revealed that compromise conflict management strategy has a strong relationship with teachers' performance. The reviewed study is different from the present study in that the reviewed work was conducted in public secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State while the present study was conducted in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. However, both studies are related in that both studies considered compromise conflict management strategy as the independent variable.

In a similar development, Kagwiria and Obere (2019) conducted a study aimed at evaluating the influence of compromise and negotiation conflict management strategy on organisational performance. The study utilised a descriptive research design. A cluster sampling method was used to sample a population of 120 respondents comprising of human resource managers and support staff. Data was collected using questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The study found among others that, compromise strategy and organisational performance had a significant relationship. The study concluded that compromise strategy enables that organisation to effectively manage and resolve disputes arising from the employees very fast and stopping the possibility of escalating differences thus promoting a positive tolerant workplace culture. The reviewed study is related to the present work because both studies looked at the relationship between compromise conflict management strategy and organisational performance. However, the reviewed study was conducted among staff in Telecommunication Industry in Kenya while the present study was conducted among principals in secondary schools in Nigeria. This is the gap this study tries to fill.

2.3.2 Smoothing Conflict Management Strategy and Organisational Performance

A study was conducted by Ojika, (2024) to examine strategies for conflict resolution in improving university development in South-South Nigeria. Three objectives, three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted a descriptive and correlational research design. The population of this study comprised all the staff in the twenty (20) public universities in South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria. A sample of 900 respondents were selected in a five-phased multistage sampling technique in twelve (12) public universities in South-South of Nigeria. Three (3) experts validated self-structured instrument titled "Strategies for Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (SCRQ)" with a reliability coefficient of .921. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation (with a criterion mean cut off of 2.50) to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The study revealed among others that smoothing conflict management strategy has significant relationships with university development in the South-South of Nigeria. The reviewed study is different from the present study in that the reviewed work was conducted in universities south-south of Nigeria while the present study was conducted in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. Also, the reviewed study considered university development as the dependent variable while the present study considered organisational performance as the dependent variable. However, the studies are related in that, both studies focused on conflict management strategy as independent variable.

Similarly, Etudor-Eyo *et al*., (2024) conducted a study to examine the extent to which principals' conflict management strategies predicted teaching effectiveness in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District. Three objectives were structured, three questions raised and three null hypotheses formulated to guide the study. Correlational research design was used for this study. Multi-stage sampling approach was used for selecting 288 respondents (72 principals and 216 teachers) from the population of 86 principals and 3,608 teachers to participate in the study. Two researchers-developed instruments, entitled "Principals' Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (PCMSQ) and Teaching Effectiveness Questionnaire (TEQ)" were used to gather data for the study. The instruments were validated by four validates. The reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach Alpha formula with reliability coefficients of .913 for PCMSQ and .781 for TEQ. Simple Regression Analysis was used to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the finding revealed a

significant extent of prediction between accommodation (smoothing) strategy and teaching effectiveness in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District. The reviewed study is related to the present work because both studies considered smoothing conflict management strategy as independent variable and were conducted in Akwa Ibom State. However, the reviewed study considered teaching effectiveness as the dependent variable and was conducted in public secondary school while the present study considered organisational performance as the dependent variable and was conducted in private secondary school. Hence, the gap in the study.

RESEARCH METHOD

The correlational research design was used for this study. The population of this study consisted of 5009 teachers who are teaching in the 411 private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The sample size of this study comprised 250 teachers representing 5 % of the teachers' population. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used for the study. Two researcher's developed instruments entitled "Principals' Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (PCMSQ) and Organisational Performance Questionnaire (OPQ)" were used to obtain information from respondents. PCMSQ had 32 items while OPQ consisted of 30 items. The instruments were designed to obtain information from teachers about on how principals manage conflict in their school and the performance of private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. Both instruments were constructed on a four-point rating scale. Three experts validated the instruments, two from the Department of Curriculum Studies, Educational Management and Planning and one from the Psychological Foundations of Education all from Faculty of Education, University of Uyo, Uyo.

To ensure the reliability of the instrument, pilot test method was used for the two instruments. The scores obtained from the exercise were subjected to Cronbach Alpha Reliability Test which yielded reliability coefficients of .875 for PCMSQ and .855 for OPQ. The instruments: PCMSQ and OPQ were administered to the respondents in their various schools by the researcher with the help of 4 research assistants within two weeks. Out of 250 instruments sent out, 220 copies were returned. This represents 88% return. Out of 220 instruments returned, 7 instruments were wrongly filled and were not useful for analysis. All completed and returned copies of the instruments were coded and subjected to statistical analysis. Simple Linear Regression Analysis was used in answering research questions and to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Research Question 1: To what extent does Principals' use of compromise strategy predict organisational performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 4.1 Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the extent to which Compromise Strategy predict Organisational Performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State

Variable	R	R^2	Extent of Prediction	Std. Error of Estimate	Remark
Compromise Strategy	.445	.198	19.8%	6.35735	Moderate Extent
Organizational Performance					

The output in Table 4.1 shows the strength of relationship R and the determination of the extent to which compromise strategy predicts organisational performance of private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The R value of .445 indicates a moderate extent of relationship between the two variables. The calculated R^2 of .198 which is the coefficient of determination indicates that only 19.8% of organisational performance of private secondary school-+*s is predicted by compromise strategy. This implies that compromise strategy, to a moderate extent, predicts organisational performance of private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

4.1.2 Research Question 2: To what extent does Principals' use of smoothing strategy predict organisational performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 4.2 Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the extent to which Smoothing Strategy predict Organisational Performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Variable	R	R^2	Extent of Prediction	Std. Error of Estimate	Remark
Smoothing Strategy	.442	.196	19.6%	6.36752	Moderate Extent
Organizational Performance					

The output in Table 4.2 shows the strength of relationship R and the determination of the extent to which smoothing strategy predicts organisational performance of private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The R value of .442 indicates a moderate extent of relationship between the two variables. The calculated R^2 of .196 which is the coefficient of determination indicates that only 19.6% of organisational performance of private secondary schools is determined by smoothing strategy. This implies that smoothing strategy to a moderate extent predicts organisational performance of private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

4.1.3 Hypothesis 1: Principal's use of compromise strategy does not significantly predict organisational performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State

Table 4.3 Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the extent to which Compromise Strategy predict Organisational Performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Cal	F-Crit	Decision @ P < .05
Regression	2118.273	1	2118.273	52.412	3.89	*
Residual	8568.175	212	40.416			
Total	10686.449	213				

The entries in Table 4.3 reveals the calculated F-value of 52.412 is greater than the critical F-value of 3.86 0.05 level significant with 1 and 212 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which claims that compromise strategy is not a significant predictor of organisational performance of private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State is rejected. The

result shows that compromise strategy significantly predicts organisational performance of private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

4.1.4 Hypothesis 2: Principal's use of smoothing strategy does not significantly predict organisational performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4.4 Simple Linear Regression Analysis for the extent to which Smoothing Strategy predict Organisational Performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Cal	F-Crit	Decision @ P < .05
Regression	2090.855	1	2090.855	51.568	3.89	*
Residual	8595.594	212	40.545			
Total	10686.449	213				

The entries in Table 4.4 shows that the calculated F-value of 51.568 is greater than the critical F-value of 3.86 0.05 level significant with 1 and 212 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which claims that smoothing strategy is not a significant predictor of organisational performance of private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State is rejected. The result shows that smoothing strategy significantly predicts organisational performance of private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

4.2.1 Compromise Conflict Management Strategy and Organisational Performance

The result of the analysis reveals a moderate positive relationship and a significant extent of prediction between compromise strategy and organisational performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State. This finding suggests that adopting a compromise approach in managing conflicts has a positive impact on how private schools operate and achieve their goals. This result must have come out this way for reasons that, balancing the interests of different parties can lead to satisfaction of all parties involved in conflict thereby reducing the likelihood of future conflicts. Another possible reason of the significant result is that, compromise strategy fosters a collaborative school culture where stakeholders feel heard and valued. This can lead to increased trust in school leadership and a more cohesive school community.

This result supports the finding of Chukwujama *et al.*, (2024) who agreed that organisational performance could be enhanced if compromise strategy is used as a means of resolving conflict. This is because, by seeking compromise, staff can resolve conflicts in a way that maintains relationships, promotes a sense of fairness, and ensures that the needs of various stakeholders are considered. Similarly, this result agrees with Bob-Fubara *et al.*, (2022) who found that compromise conflict management strategy has a substantial impact on workplace harmony in terms of communication and teamwork. This is because, this approach encourages collaboration, mutual understanding, and respect for differing perspectives. Therefore, principals' ability to call conflicting parties to give up something in order to reach a solution would enhance organisational performance in secondary schools.

4.2.2 Smoothing Conflict Management Strategy and Organisational Performance

The result of the analysis reveals a moderate positive relationship and a significant extent of prediction between smoothing strategy and organisational performance of Private Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State. This indicates that using a smoothing approach in managing conflicts has a positive impact on how private secondary schools operate and achieve their goals. This result seems to have come out this way probably because smoothing conflict management strategy emphasises areas of agreement and downplaying differences which can effectively reduce tensions and avoid escalating conflicts among conflicting parties. Also, by reducing conflict-related stress and tension, school principals can focus on key priorities such as improving academic performance, enhancing student well-being, and achieving school goals without disruptions from interpersonal conflicts.

This finding is at variance with the findings of Owan, (2018) who found that smoothing strategy had no significant relationship with secondary school effectiveness. The result of this study supports Abubakar and Aturu-Aghedo, (2024) who agreed that smoothing conflict management style has a significant and positive effect on organisational performance. In private secondary schools, where relationships and communication are needed to achieve educational goals, smoothing as a conflict management strategy can play a role in promoting organisational performance by maintaining harmony and reducing disruptions, thereby supporting the school's overall functioning and effectiveness.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

This study was able to make various discoveries and observations about the extent to which principals' conflict management strategies predicted organisational performance in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. If organisational performance of private secondary school is to be enhanced, conflict among teachers and students must be appropriately managed. It is through settlement of differences among school personnel that teachers and students will find school environment conducive for teaching and learning. As strategies for improving organisational performance, compromise and smoothing strategies have been established to be indispensable tools and means of getting staff to put in adequate effort towards attainment of educational goals. It was concluded based on the result that compromise and smoothing strategies to a great extent significantly predicted organisational performance of private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

i. Ministry of Education should promote the adoption of effective conflict management strategies in private secondary schools through guidelines or policy frameworks.
ii. Proprietors should organise in-service-training for principals in order to improve their management skills. The training perhaps should focus on conflict management in order to create a healthy and peaceful school environment that can enhance organisational performance.
iii. Principals should use conflict management strategies interchangeably since there is no best conflict management strategy.

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