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Conflict management strategies as predictors of teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in delta state

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Abstract: This study examined conflict management strategies as predictors of teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. A correlational research design was adopted. The population comprised 11,011 teachers in public secondary schools across the 25 local government areas of Delta State. A sample of 551 teachers was selected using proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using two researcher-developed instruments: the Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (CMSQ) and the Teachers' Task Performance Questionnaire (TTPQ). The instruments were validated by experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation, while reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha, which yielded an overall coefficient of 0.750. Data were analysed using simple regression at the 0.05 level of significance with the aid of SPSS version 27. The findings revealed that dialogue conflict management strategy significantly predicted teachers' task performance, whereas avoidance and dominating conflict management strategies did not significantly predict teachers' task performance. The study concluded that dialogue-based conflict management strategies are more effective in enhancing teachers' task performance in public secondary schools. The study therefore recommended that principals should adopt dialogue-oriented conflict management approaches that promote open communication, collaboration, and mutual understanding within the school system.

Keywords: Conflict management strategies, dialogue strategy, avoidance strategy, dominating strategy, teachers' task performance, public secondary schools

INTRODUCTION

Teachers' task performance remains a critical factor in the achievement of educational goals and the overall effectiveness of secondary school administration. The extent to which teachers effectively discharge their professional responsibilities influences students' academic achievement, discipline, and school productivity. Teachers' task performance refers to all the responsibilities teachers carry out. Hwang et al., (2017) asserted that teachers' task performance are the actions they perform in schools in order to

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achieve educational goals. It is the extent of teachers' involvement in the realization of academic excellence and all round development of learners. Teachers' task performance is their commitment in the discharge of their duties at any given time in the school directed towards achieving the daily classroom, school and entire goals of education (Ikegbusi et al., 2022). This means that teachers' task performance and the realization of educational goals go hand in hand because teachers' task performance to a very large extent determines the learning outcome of students. There are various ways of ascertaining teachers' task performance.

Teachers task performance could be measured through the annual report of their activities in terms of performance in teaching, lesson preparation, mastery of subject matter, competence, teachers' commitment to their job, effective leadership, supervision, monitoring of students' work, motivation, class control and disciplinary ability (Ikegbusi et al., 2023). Teachers task performance can be ascertained through assessing the extent of their involvement in the whole task assigned to them in schools (Ikegbusi, 2025). In the opinion of Ohamobi et al. (2024) and Onyiorah (2021b) teachers' task performance could be determined through their preparation of lesson notes and plans, coverage of scheme of work, lesson presentation, involvement in extra-curriculum activities, punctuality in school, regularity in school, participation in staff meetings, execution of official duties delegated to them by the principal, involvement in students and so on. Teachers are expected to perform their task very well.

There seem to be lapses in teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State. This is evidenced in their display of non-challant attitude towards instructional delivery, teaching without adequate instructional materials, absenteeism from school, coming to school late, leaving the school without permission before dismissal, non-covering of the curriculum content, giving students notes that are not updated, lack of interest in students' discipline and so on. The researcher made this observation as a teacher who have worked in different public secondary schools in Delta State. There lapses in teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State could be as a result of absence of proper conflict management strategies

Conflict is disagreement between two opposing individuals or groups. Conflict may arise because of differences in ideology, opinion or view of individuals. Conflict is inevitable in any social organization where human beings interact. Since conflict and human relationships are unavoidable in organizations such as schools, there is need for proper handling of conflicts as they arise through conflict management strategies, given the importance of positive interaction and engagement among members of the school community (Ikegbusi et al., 2026). Conflict management strategies are methods of handling disputes. It should be noted that conflict is inevitable in social settings such as school where individuals from different values and converge to work. Conflict management strategies has to do with the methods of identifying, analyzing and handling differences to prevent escalation. Obi et al. (2025) defined conflict management strategies as the act of planning, organizing, coordinating, leading and controlling school affairs to pre-empt, forestall and address conflict in the school. Binyanya (2021) pointed out that conflict management

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strategies are various ways of suppressing conflicts either permanently or temporarily. Conflict management strategies are the methods of dealing with every situation of difference in opinions or clashes among two or more parties (Obizue et al., 2020). Previous studies have shown that effective leadership, sound managerial strategies, positive interpersonal relationships and appropriate conflict management practices are crucial factors in enhancing teachers' commitment, productivity and task performance in secondary schools (Ikegbusi, 2016; Ikegbusi et al., 2018; Ikegbusi et al., 2025; Ikegbusi & Ogamba, 2026; Ohamobi et al., 2024). Findings from Onyiorah (Onyiorah, 2022; Onyiorah 2023a; Onyiorah, 2025; Onyiorah 2026) and Oguejiofor and Onyiorah (2023) imply that effective educational and managerial practices contribute to improved performance and productivity, highlighting the importance of appropriate conflict management strategies in achieving teachers' task performance.

Principals can use different conflict management strategies to settle issues among teachers in secondary schools. Clifford and Ejike (2022) opined that conflict management strategies include; integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising. Yidana (2022) opined that avoiding, integration, accommodating, obliging, competing collaborating, dialogue/negotiation, mediation, dominance, confrontation and compromising are the conflict management strategies in educational institutions. This study focused on avoidance, dominating, and dialogue conflict management strategies. Avoidance conflict management strategy involves withdrawing and suppressing the conflicting issue. If involves delaying or ignoring a conflict. Clifford and Ejike (2022) stressed that avoidance conflict management strategy is a way of not addressing a conflict, or a tactical way of postponing the conflict for a better time, if at all such time will come. In the opinion of Maha (2025), avoidance conflict management strategy is a way of completely evading the conflict neither pursue one's interests nor those of the others involved in the dispute. Principals can use this type of conflict management strategy if they feel that the conflict is trivial and handling it will be a waste of time or if they feel that delving into it will result to some other ugly situations. Principals can equally use dominating conflict management strategy.

Dominating conflict management strategy involves the use of threats or force to compel the conflicting parties to settle their disputes. Hareesol et al. (2019) and Onyiorah, (2021a) asserted that dominating conflict management strategy involves the use of position power, aggression, verbal dominance, and perseverance in resolving or settling grievances among two or more parties. Principals may apply dominating conflict management strategy by using their authority as head of school to arrive at decision toward resolving conflict without consideration of parties' views or opinions, if the conflict has lingered for long and it is also hindering the attainment of school goals. (Okorji & Nzekwe, 2019). Dialogue conflict management strategy involves the peaceful resolving of disagreements by the conflicting parties using dialogue. Smriti (2021) pointed out that dialogue conflict management strategy involves the strategies used by disputing parties to reduce tension and reach an agreement and restore peace without necessarily employing a facilitator. It is method of taking decision to settle disagreements amicably by disputing individuals or

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parties. teachers can decide to resolve disagreements arising in schools in the course of teaching and learning amicably by themselves without inviting the principal. Mwaniki and Muathe (2021) opined that negotiation is a conversation made among parties especially in times of conflict whose aim is to reach a beneficial outcome for all the parties involved and to solve the issues at hand.

The importance role teachers' play in secondary education cannot be over emphasized. They are important channels for delivering the curriculum content and inculcating the right values and attitude in young adults. Observation by the researcher revealed that teachers task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State seems poor. Some of them come to school late and leave before school dismissal mostly without permission, they teach without instructional materials and care less about students' discipline, some quarrel among themselves at the close watch of students, they do not update their lesson notes and disobey the school rules and regulations. If teachers' task performance is poor, students learning outcome will decline. Poor students' learning outcomes in public secondary school in Delta State will equally affect the school, families and the society negatively. Hence, there is need for the determination of the reason for poor teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State. Poor teachers' task performance could be as a result of different factors such as; family influence, stress, poor students' attitude to learning, work overload and conflict management strategy of the principal and so on. It is based on this background that the researcher examined conflict management strategies as predictors of teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Statement of the problem

There seem to be lapses in teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State. This is evidenced in their display of non-challant attitude towards instructional delivery, teaching without adequate instructional materials, absenteeism from school, coming to school late, leaving the school without permission before dismissal, non-covering of the curriculum content, giving students notes that are not updated, lack of interest in students' discipline and so on. The researcher made this observation as a teacher who has worked in different public secondary schools in Delta State. There lapses in teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State could be as a result of many factors such as; conflict, poor students study habit, inadequate school facilities, work overload, family influence and improper conflict management strategies. Poor teachers' task performance is a serious cause of worry because it will affect the school, families and the society negatively. If teachers fail to perform their task which involves; instructional delivery, students' discipline, imparting the right values and moral behaviour very well, students will not get quality knowledge. They will graduate from the school and would not be able to gain admission into higher institutions of learning, in the long run they will turn out to be causing problem in the society instead of helping to solve problems and develop the society. It is against this backdrop that this study examined conflict

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management strategies of avoidance, dominating and dialogue, as predictors of teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine conflict management strategies as predictors of teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. ascertain the predictive value of avoidance conflict management strategy on teachers task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State.
2. determine the predictive value of dominating conflict management strategy on teachers task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State.
3. verify the predictive value of dialogue conflict management strategy on teachers task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Research Questions

1. What is the predictive value of avoidance conflict management strategy on teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State?
2. What is the predictive value of dominating conflict management strategy on teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State?
3. What is the predictive value of dialogue conflict management strategy on teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State?

Hypotheses

1. Avoidance conflict management strategy is not a significant predictor of teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State.
2. Dominating conflict management strategy is not a significant predictor of teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State.
3. Dialogue conflict management strategy is not a significant predictor of teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Methodology

Correlational research design was used in this study. The aim of this type of research design is to establish relationship between two or more variables. Ifeakor (2018) defined Correlational research as the type that aims at establishing the relationship that exists between two or more variables. Correlational research design is appropriate for this research because it examined the predictive value of conflict management strategies on teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State. The population of this study comprised 11,011 teachers in public secondary schools across the 25 local government areas of Delta State (Ministry of Secondary Education, Asaba, Delta State, 2025). Teachers were selected as respondents because they are directly involved in school

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activities and are in a better position to assess the conflict management strategies adopted by principals and their influence on teachers' task performance.

The sample of the study consisted of 551 teachers from public secondary in the 25 local government areas in the State. The sample size was 5% of the total population. Obi et al. (2022) maintained that if the population is a few hundreds, a 40% or more sample will do; if many hundreds, a 20% sample will do; if a few thousands, a 10% sample will do and if several thousands, a 5% or less sample will do. Since the population comprised of several thousand students, the researcher drew 5%, size the researcher was able to manage. Stratified sampling technique was used to arrange all the public secondary schools clusters under the 25 local government areas in the State. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to draw 10% of the number of school in each local government. Simple random sampling technique was used to draw the proportion of teachers from the selected schools in the 25 local government areas in the State to ensure adequate representation.

Data were collected using two researcher-developed instruments: the Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (CMSQ) and the Teachers' Task Performance Questionnaire (TTPQ). The instruments were developed from the review of related literature and consultation with experts in the Department of Educational Foundations, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus. The CMSQ contained 30 items designed to elicit information on principals' conflict management strategies. The instrument comprised three clusters: avoidance strategy (10 items), dominating strategy (10 items), and dialogue strategy (10 items). The TTPQ consisted of 20 items developed to measure teachers' task performance. All items in the instruments were structured on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

The instruments were validated by three experts comprising two specialists in Educational Management and one specialist in Measurement and Evaluation from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus. Their observations and suggestions guided the revision of the instruments to ensure clarity, relevance, and adequacy of the items. A pilot test was conducted using 30 teachers randomly selected from public secondary schools in Edo State due to the similarity of the school administrative structure with Delta State. The internal consistency of the instruments was determined using Cronbach Alpha. The reliability coefficients obtained were 0.663 for avoidance strategy, 0.751 for dominating strategy, 0.865 for dialogue strategy, and 0.781 for teachers' task performance, with an overall reliability index of 0.750, indicating that the instruments were reliable for the study.

The instruments were administered by the researcher with the assistance of five trained research assistants. Copies of the questionnaires were distributed and collected using the direct delivery method to ensure a high return rate. Out of the 551 copies distributed, 534 were successfully retrieved, representing a return rate of 96.91%. Simple regression analysis was used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses on the predictive relationship between conflict management strategies and teachers' task performance. The strength of prediction was interpreted using the correlation coefficient (R) as recommended by Rusakov (2023): 0.00–0.30 (weak), 0.31–0.69 (moderate), 0.70–

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0.89 (strong), and 0.90–1.00 (very strong). The null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. A null hypothesis was rejected when the p-value was less than or equal to 0.05, and retained when the p-value exceeded 0.05. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the predictive value of avoidance conflict management strategy on teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State?

Table 1: Simple regression analysis of the amount of variation of teachers' task performance predicted by avoidance conflict management strategy in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std Error of the estimate	Change R^2 change	Statistics F change	df_1	df_2	Sig. F change
1	0.029 a	0.001	0.001	5.820	0.001	.006	1	532	0.630

a. predictor: (constant), avoidance conflict management strategy

Findings from Table 1 showed the regression analysis of the amount of variation in teachers' task performance that was predicted by avoidance conflict management strategy. A correlation coefficient (R) of 0.029 with associated coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.001 was obtained. This coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.001 revealed that 0.1% variation of in teachers' task performance can be predicted by avoidance conflict management strategy.

Research Question 2: What is the predictive value of dominating conflict management strategy on teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State?

Table 2: Simple regression analysis of the amount of variation of teachers' task performance predicted by dominating conflict management strategy in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std Error of the estimate	Change R^2 change	Statistics F change	df_1	df_2	Sig. F change
1	0.052 a	0.003	0.003	5.820	0.003	0.005	1	532	0.722

a. predictor: (constant), dominating conflict management strategy

Table 2 showed the regression analysis for the amount of variation in teachers' task performance that was predicted dominating conflict management strategy. The

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responses of respondents on dominating conflict management strategy were correlated with teachers' task performance and a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.052 with associated coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.003 were obtained. This coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.003 denoted that 0.3% variation in teachers' task performance can be predicted by dominating conflict management strategy.

Research Question 3: What is the predictive value of dialogue conflict management strategy on teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State?

Table 3: Simple regression analysis of the amount of variation of teachers' task performance predicted by dialogue conflict management strategy in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std Error of the estimate	Change R^2 change	Statistics F change	df_1	df_2	Sig. F change
1	0.069 a	0.005	0.003	5.793	0.002	5.031	1	532	0.030

a. predictor: (constant), dialogue conflict management strategy

Table 3 revealed the regression analysis of the amount of variation in teachers' task performance that was predicted by dialogue conflict management strategy. The result indicated that when the responses of respondents on dialogue conflict management strategy were correlated with in teachers' task performance, a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.069 with associated coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.005 was obtained. This coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.005 revealed that 0.5% variation of in teachers' task performance can be predicted by dialogue conflict management strategy.

Hypotheses

Hypotheses 1: Avoidance conflict management strategy is not a significant predictor of teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 4: Regression ANOVA test of significance for the variation in teachers' task performance that can be predicted by avoidance conflict management strategy in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig.	Decision
1	Regression	0.188	1	0.188	6.443	0.063	
	Residual	18021.063	532	33.874			Not
	Total	18021.251	533				Significant

Dependent variable: teachers' task performance

Predictor: (constant), avoidance conflict management strategy

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Table 4 showed that the variation in teachers' task performance that was predicted by avoidance conflict management strategy was not significant ($F(1, 532) = 6.443$, $p = 0.063$). Since the associated probability value of 0.063 was greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypotheses was not rejected. Therefore, it was concluded that there was no significant variation in teachers' task performance predicted by avoidance conflict management strategy in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Hypotheses 2: Dominating conflict management strategy is not a significant predictor of teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 5: Regression ANOVA test of significance for the variation in teachers' task performance that can be predicted by dominating conflict management strategy in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig.	Decision
1	Regression	0.163	1	.163	7.870	0.072	
	Residual	18021.088	532	33.874			Not
	Total	18021.251	533				Significant

Dependent variable: teachers' task performance

Predictor: (constant), dominating conflict management strategy

Table 5 revealed that the variation in teachers' task performance that was predicted by dominating conflict management strategy was not significant ($F(1, 532) = 7.870$, $p = 0.072$). Since the associated probability value of 0.072was greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypotheses was not rejected. Therefore, it was concluded that there was no significant variation in teachers' task performance predicted by dominating conflict management strategy in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Hypotheses 3: Dialogue conflict management strategy is not a significant predictor of teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Table 6: Regression ANOVA test of significance for the variation in teachers' task performance **that can be predicted by** dialogue conflict management strategy **in public secondary schools in** Delta **State.**

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig.	Decision
1	Regression	168.838	1	168.838	6.583	0.030	
	Residual	17852.413	532	33.557			Significan
	Total	18021.251	533				t

Dependent variable: teachers' task performance

Predictor: (constant), dialogue conflict management strategy

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Result in Table 6 indicated that the variation in teachers' task performance that was predicted by dialogue conflict management strategy was significant ($F(1, 532) = 6.583$, $p = 0.030$). Since the associated probability value of 0.030 was less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypotheses was rejected. Therefore, it was concluded that there was significant variation in teachers' task performance predicted by dialogue conflict management strategy in public secondary schools in Delta State.

Discussion of Findings

Avoidance Conflict Management Strategy and Teachers' Task Performance

The findings revealed that avoidance conflict management strategy had no significant predictive value on teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State. The strategy accounted for only 0.1% of the variance in teachers' task performance, indicating a negligible contribution. This suggests that principals' reliance on avoidance strategies, such as withdrawal from or ignoring conflict situations, may not create conditions that enhance teachers' effectiveness in carrying out professional responsibilities. The finding contradicts the studies of Amie-Ogan and Eziri (2021) and Utile et al. (2020), which reported that avoidance conflict management strategy significantly predicted teachers' task performance. The disparity may be attributed to contextual and geographical differences in the study settings.

Dominating Conflict Management Strategy and Teachers' Task Performance

The study further showed that dominating conflict management strategy was not a significant predictor of teachers' task performance, accounting for only 0.3% of the observed variance. The finding implies that authoritarian or coercive approaches to conflict management have limited influence on teachers' effectiveness. Dominating strategies may weaken collegial relationships, reduce collaboration, and create an unfavourable work climate for teachers. This finding aligns with Okorji and Nzekwe (2019), who reported that dominating approaches do not significantly improve teachers' performance outcomes. The result underscores the importance of adopting more supportive and participatory approaches to conflict resolution in schools.

Dialogue Conflict Management Strategy and Teachers' Task Performance

In contrast, dialogue conflict management strategy showed a positive predictive value on teachers' task performance, accounting for 0.5% of the variance. Although the contribution was modest, the finding suggests that dialogue-based approaches, which emphasize open communication, active listening, and collaborative problem-solving, can enhance teachers' effectiveness. The finding is consistent with Ademola et al. (2023), who found that dialogue conflict management strategy significantly predicted teachers' task performance. Dialogue-oriented practices may foster trust, cooperation, and a supportive school climate that enables teachers to perform their instructional and professional duties more effectively.

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Conclusion

The study concluded that dialogue conflict management strategy significantly predicts teachers' task performance in public secondary schools in Delta State, while avoidance and dominating strategies do not significantly predict teachers' task performance. The findings suggest that constructive conflict management approaches, particularly dialogue-based strategies that promote open communication and collaboration, are more likely to enhance teachers' effectiveness in carrying out their professional responsibilities. Therefore, principals should adopt conflict management strategies that foster cooperation, trust, and a positive school climate to improve teachers' task performance.

Educational Implications

The findings implied that school principals should prioritize dialogue-based conflict management strategies to enhance teachers' task performance. Dialogue-oriented approaches promote open communication, collaboration and positive interpersonal relationships, thereby creating a supportive school climate that enhances teachers' effectiveness. Conversely, reliance on avoidance and dominating strategies may not contribute meaningfully to improved task performance.

Recommendations

1. Principals should adopt dialogue-based conflict management strategies that encourage open communication, mutual understanding, and collaborative problem-solving in order to enhance teachers' task performance.
2. Principals should ensure that school conflicts are addressed promptly and constructively rather than avoided, as unresolved conflicts may negatively affect teachers' effectiveness.
3. Principals should minimize the use of dominating conflict management strategies because coercive approaches may weaken collegial relationships and limit teachers' task performance.

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