

Social Studies Students' Perception on the Use of Collaboration as a Mechanism in Conflict Resolution and Management in Colleges of Education in North-central, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study assessed social studies students' perception on the use of collaboration as a mechanism in conflict resolution and management in Colleges of Education in North-central, Nigeria. A sample size of 3.35% of the entire student population was drawn and a ten-item researcher-made close ended structured questionnaire was drawn along 4-point Likert-scale of SA = Strongly Agreed (4 points); A = Agreed (3 points); D = Disagreed (2 points); and SD = Strongly Disagreed (1 point) were made to analyse students views on the effects while a t-test ANOVA was used to measure the perception of the social studies students on the use of collaboration as a tool for managing the conflicts with the reliability index of 0.05. The study revealed that there is significant difference in the perceptions of students on the use of collaboration as a tool in conflict resolution and management with the probability value (p) of 0.001 which is less than the alpha level of significance ($p < 0.05$). As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected, which indicates that in spite that students agreed in the use of collaboration as a technique in conflict resolution and management. However, some of the students still believes that the use of the technique is ineffective without the involvement of other techniques such as compromise, accommodation and avoidance. The study recommended that the college management should be Open, transparent, and ensure timely communication to stakeholders on issues surrounding the colleges; they should be able to create trust, confidence, fairness, and mutual respect among the stakeholders; they should be willing to adopt a collaborative method in conflict resolution rather than authoritarian approach; they should be able to create inclusiveness of stakeholders during decision making processes in the colleges; and they should be able to create equitable power balance and fairness among the stakeholders.

Keywords: Collaboration, Conflict, Management, Tool

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is inevitable in society if individual interests vary. However, the way and manner issues in a conflict are managed determines the extent to which the conflict is resolved (Agbo, et al, 2020; Ertürk, 2022). Collaboration is one of the mechanisms or strategies of conflict resolution and management. Bothu-Usman, et al (2024) defined it as a win-win situation where both parties to a conflict exercise high respect for each other. The mode of this resolution is characterized by high assertiveness and cooperation among the parties involved in a conflict. Cheng, et al (2020), and Imtiaz, et al (2022) regard it as a tool that allows unity and understanding to find a solution that effectively addresses the concerns of both sides involved in a conflict. Kayser & Kaplan (2020) and Umana (2019) saw it as the integration of ideas to reach the most optimal resolutions in a

conflict situation, through a creative process that is sparked by the contributions of other parties involved, and the best solution is found, while Utaka & Silas-Dikibo (2020), and Shariq et al (2022) describes it as an approach that is often characterized by layering ideas upon ideas to develop the most effective resolution to a conflict that satisfies all parties involved.

Studies on conflict resolution and management have been extensively carried out, but no attempt has been made to assess the social studies students' perception on the use of collaboration as a mechanism for conflict resolution and management in Colleges of Education in North-central Nigeria, which is the focus of this study. Among the studies are Almito & Oriangi (2023), Sniras (2023), Mekkah (2023), Agbo (2021), Zembylas, & Bekerman (2019), Shehu-USman, Uzochukwu, Gambo, and Abubakar (2024) and Leslie, et al (2013). Others include Chibinidze (2014), Abubakar, Agbo, and Gana (2020), Gbadamosi (2015), Francis (2015), Shanka and Thuo (2017), Cheng, et al (2020), and Imtiaz, et al, (2022), and Adesoji (2018). Some include Nkomo (2020), Agbo, et al (2019), Nkang & Uwah (2021), Kayser & Kaplan (2020) and Umana (2019), and Ertürk (2022).

The study by Leslie, et al (2013) was on the Effects of conflict management strategies on intra-group conflict in southern universities in the United States of America, which is not the same with this study both in content and geographical location. The study took a sample of 270 undergraduate students, and the data was collected and the use of variance to test the hypotheses. The study's finding revealed that the way and manner conflict is handled impacts important group outcomes. The study by Agbo, et al (2019) was on the influence of social studies education on religious tolerance among the NCE students in the two colleges of education in Kaduna State. The research took a sample of 250 respondents of 940 NCE II and NCE III students of Federal College of Education Zaria and College of Education Gidan Waya and the data was collected and analysed. The findings revealed that there was a significant difference between the mean perception scores of NCE II and NCE III students on the influence of Social Studies on religious tolerance with the p value of 0.006 which is less than the significance level of 0.05 indicating that the opinion of NCE II and NCE III students did differ in the perception regarding the influence of Social Studies education on religious tolerance in the state.

On teachers' perception of management of conflict in Primary schools in Mberegwa District, Zimbabwe, by Nkomo (2020), the study explored the perception of teachers on conflict

management in eight representative schools in Mberegwa District and the result shows that poor communication, unfair treatment, shortage of resources, poor governance, political affiliations were the major causes of conflict in schools within the study area. Ertürk (2022) study showed that teachers' weariness and tiredness decreased in a conflict-free work environment, as the disappearance of ethical values within the school system constituted a major source of conflict. This study like many others did not highlight the use of collaboration as a mechanism for conflict resolution and management in Colleges of Education, North-central Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In North-central Nigeria, most colleges of education have experienced various conflicts arising from the enforcement of disciplinary and campus conduct rules between either the Students versus College Staff or Student versus College Authorities; employment/union disputes between college staff versus College Management; and sector restructuring/cost-of-living pressures between either Student versus College Authorities or between staff and College Management. These have led to the loss of lives and properties, vandalism of facilities, the closing down of schools, and disruption of academic activities. In the quest to curb the menace, collaboration has been used as the best conflict resolution and management tool in establishing peace in the school system. However, anytime understanding is made and peace is established, it will not be long before the same or other crises emerge or resurface, and this has been the trend in the area. This situation has raised concerns about the effectiveness of the tool in conflict resolution in the area which is the focus of this study.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to assess the social studies students' perception on the use of collaboration as a mechanism for conflict resolution and management in Colleges of Education, North-central, Nigeria. In achieving the purpose of this, the following objectives were outlined

- i. Examine causes of conflict that affect social studies students in colleges of education, North-central, Nigeria.
- ii. Determine the social studies students' perception of collaboration as a mechanism for conflict resolution and management in colleges of education, North central, Nigeria
- iii. To establish the perception of the social studies student's base on gender on the use of collaboration as a mechanism of managing the conflicts.

Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the causes of conflict that affect social studies students in colleges of education, North-central, Nigeria?
- ii. What are social studies students' perception of collaboration as a mechanism for conflict resolution and management in colleges of education in North central, Nigeria?
- iii. To what extent has the social studies student base on genders perceive collaboration as a mechanism for managing conflicts in the area?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis below was tested –

H₀: There is no significant difference based on male and female in the social studies students' perception of collaboration as a mechanism for conflict resolution and management in colleges of education, North-Central, Nigeria.

Significance of Study

This study is timely and currently significant as almost more than half of the Colleges of Education in the North-central have faced one or more conflicts or the other in recent times, and collaboration as a technique has been in use in resolving the situation. However, anytime understanding is made and peace is established, it will not be long before the same or other crises emerge or resurface, which has been the reason for this study. Social studies students are a subset of the wider student body of the colleges of education. As a result, suffered the grouch of any conflict experienced in the institution like any other students in the study area. Hence, the target population in this study. The findings of this study are useful as they provide students with knowledge based on their views on the use of collaboration as a tool in conflict resolution and management in their area. It also provides the stakeholders with an overview of the conflicts in their domain and how they were resolved over time.

It also provides the teachers with a knowledge base on how to implement the social studies curriculum and also make appropriate decisions on conflicts in the study area. It also provides the state, federal, and local governments of Nigeria with a knowledge base on the views of students on the use of collaboration as a tool in conflict resolution and management in their area, and how to use it as an Instrumentality of social studies curriculum to equip students with adequate conflict

management strategies for effective conflict resolution in the Nigerian society. The study also provides the school administrators of higher learning with a knowledge base on the views of students on the use of collaboration as a tool in conflict resolution and management in their area, and how to use it as an Instrumentality of social studies curriculum in their area, as they are the custodians of the social studies curriculum, in which they enforce the implementation on other teachers. The study is also useful to the wider Nigerian society as it provides a knowledge base that contributes towards the peace and overall development of Nigeria as a nation, especially at this time when the conflict situation in the country is on the increase.

Scope of the Study

The study only limits itself to the perception of social studies students on the use of collaboration as a tool of conflict resolution and management, with no consideration to other students from other departments and units or other conflict resolution management mechanisms, such as compromise, avoidance, and accommodation. The study's focus was on examining conflicts and their causes in colleges of education in North-central, Nigeria; collaboration as the resolution and management mechanisms used for managing the conflicts, and how social studies students perceive the use of the tool for managing the conflicts in the area. However, reviewed from pilot survey shows that six colleges of education in North-central, Nigeria have witnessed one form of conflict or the other. As a result, one form of resolution mechanism has been used in curbing crises, which makes this study viable to be carried out. Notwithstanding, North-central, Nigeria is home to twelve (12) Colleges of Education, with Federal Government Colleges of Education (FCE) constituting the highest number with 66.67%, while State Colleges of Education (COE) and privately owned College of Education constitute the least with 25.00% and 8.33% respectively. The tertiary institutions have a cumulative social studies student population of 19,367, with the male population constituting the highest population with 60.76% while the female population is 39.24% which the effect of any conflict on them cannot be ignored. Hence, this study.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design method. A survey design method is a type of research design in which a group of populations or items are studied in their natural setting. In this case, social studies students in the colleges of education in North central are seen as the target population existing in their natural environment in which what happened in the environment

affects their welfares. Conflict is one of the prominent issues that affect the students in the institutions which need to be studied.

The population comprising of all social studies students in the colleges of education, North-central, Nigeria. The total of the student population is nineteen thousand, three hundred and sixty-seven (19,367) spread across the colleges of education. A sample size of 3.35% from Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) determination table which stipulated that for a population between 15,000 and 20,000, a sample size between 3.20% and 3.50% should be used for equitable representation in the sample frame. This model was used by Utaka & Silas-Dikibo (2020), and Shariq, et al (2022) and was adopted in this study. Given this, the sample size of 3.35% was used and it represents six hundred and forty-nine (649) questionnaires administered in the study area. However, a random sampling technique was used in the administration of questionnaires to the students' respondents.

A ten-item researcher-made close ended structured questionnaire was drawn along 4-point Likert-scale of SA = Strongly Agreed (4 points); A = Agreed (3 points); D = Disagreed (2 points); and SD = Strongly Disagreed (1 point) were made to analyze the response of the students views on the effects while a t-test ANOVA was used to measure the level of the social studies students perception on the use of collaboration as a mechanism for managing the conflicts with the reliability index of 0.05.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What are the Causes of Conflict that affect Social Studies Students in Colleges of Education, North-central, Nigeria?

Table 1: The Social Studies Students' Perception on the Causes of Conflict that Affect Social Studies Students in Colleges of Education, North-central, Nigeria N = 649

S/n Items	Mean	Std. D	Decision
1. Competition for inadequate resources causes conflicts	3.65	.554	Agreed
2. Contra polity value system causes conflicts	3.60	.620	Agreed
3. Conflict is caused by the psychological needs of groups and individuals	3.63	.558	Agreed
4. Arguments with other people about accepting one's opinion led to conflict.	3.58	.647	Agreed
5. Undue negative influence on other students causes conflict.	3.63	.585	Agreed
6. Conflict is caused by an inadequate supply of basic amenities in schools.	3.61	.646	Agreed
7. Standing on one's ground on an issue leads to crises	3.62	.609	Agreed
Average mean score and Std. Dev.	3.62	.603	Agreed

Source: SPSS version 25

Table 1 shows that all students agreed that all the factors revealed in the table are the causes of conflicts in Colleges of Education in North-Central, Nigeria. This was ascertained when the overall average mean score of the study was revealed to be 3.62 indicating that all students agreed on the

Causes of conflict in Colleges of Education, North-Central, Nigeria. However, the students agreed that Competition for inadequate resources, standing on one’s ground on an issue, inadequate supply of basic amenities, Contra polity value system and Arguments with other people about accepting one’s opinion contribute the least cause of conflict with the mean score of 3.65, 3.62, 3.61, 3.60 and 3.58 respectively indicating that these factors are responsible for conflicts in the area (see table 1).

Research Question One: What are Social Studies Students’ Perception of Collaboration as a Mechanism for Conflict Resolution and Management in Colleges of Education, North central, Nigeria?

Table 2: The Social Studies Students’ Perception of Collaboration as a Mechanism for Conflict Resolusion and Management in Colleges of Education, North-central, Nigeria
N = 649

S/n	Items	Mean	Std. D	Decision
1.	Open, transparent, timely communication and establishment of proper channels for dialogue among students, staff forum, and college management	3.59	.666	Agreed
2.	Trust, confidence, fairness, and mutual respect that each party keeps to the agreement, diverse opinions, cultural differences, and institutional hierarchies	3.57	.652	Agreed
3.	Willingness of college leadership to adopt a collaborative rather than an authoritarian approach based on institutional policies and strong conflict resolution committees within the college	3.56	.660	Agreed
4.	Stakeholders' inclusiveness of students, staff unions, management, with sometimes external bodies like government agencies and traditional institutions, and avoidance of sidelining key stakeholders during resolution processes	3.58	.672	Agreed
5.	Equitable power balance and fairness by ensuring that no group dominates the process in decisions, resource allocations, disciplinary measures, transparent negotiations, and a compromise mechanism	3.61	.662	Agreed
6.	Maintenance of cultural and social values emphasize dialogue, reconciliation, respect for elders, influence of religion, the traditional system of mediation, and ethnic diversity	3.55	.665	Agreed
7.	Availability of trained mediators with skills and knowledge capacity of negotiations, mediation, and peace-building workshops for staff and student leaders	3.68	.667	Agreed
8.	Involvement of government and external influences through promotion of government policies on industrial harmony and staff to staff-to-student relationships, and political actors	3.59	.661	Agreed
9.	Availability of financial and material resources to implement agreements and adequately support conflict resolution committees	3.57	.663	Agreed
10.	Willingness of parties to make concessions on long-term commitment to building harmonious relationships rather than focusing on short-term solutions to conflict	3.62	.658	Agreed
Average mean score and Std. Dev.		3.59	.663	Agreed

Source: SPSS Version 25

Table 2 shows that students agreed on the use of Collaboration as a mechanism for conflict resolution and management in colleges of education, North-central, Nigeria with the overall average mean score of 3.59, indicating that students agreed on the use of Collaboration as a mechanism for conflict resolution and management in the area. However, the student agreed on all

the indicators that there are an Open, transparent, timely communication and establishment of proper channels for dialogue among students, staff forum, and college management; there is trust, confidence, fairness, and mutual respect among parties with diverse opinions, cultural differences, and institutional hierarchies; there is always willingness of college leadership to adopt a collaborative rather than an authoritarian approach based on institutional policies and strong conflict resolution committees within the college; and there is willingness of parties to make concessions on long-term commitment to building harmonious relationships rather than focusing on short-term solutions to conflict etc. with the mean score of 3.59, 3.57, 3.56, 3.58, 3.61, 3.55, 3.68, 3.57, and 3.62 respectively indicating that student also agreed on all the use of factors of collaborating for conflict resolution and management in the area (see table 2).

Hypothesis Testing

H₀: There is no significant difference based on gender in the social studies students’ perception of Collaboration as a Mechanism for conflict resolution and management in North-Central, Nigeria

Table 3: t-test Analysis of Differences in Gender on Social Studies Students’ Perception of Collaboration as a Mechanism for Conflict Resolution and Management in North-Central, Nigeria

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	P	Decision
Male	351	3.45	0.44	89	85.40	.001	Rejected
Female	298	3.14	0.39				

Source: SPSS Version 25

As shown in table 3, a t-test analysis for gender differences on the use of compromise as tool for conflict resolution was carried out. The result revealed a t-value of 85.40 with a P-value of .001 which is less than $p < 0.05$. This indicates that there is a significance difference on the perception of male and female on the use of Collaboration as a Mechanism for conflict resolution and management in the area. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted indicating that in spite all students agreed on the use of collaboration as a mechanism in conflict resolution and management in colleges of education in North-central, Nigeria, genders have different significance perception on the use of mechanism as a tool in conflict resolution and management in the area. This also implies that some gender believes in the use of other techniques such as compromise, accommodation and avoidance in conflict resolution and management in the area.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that there is a significance difference on the perception of male and female on the use of collaboration as a mechanism for conflict resolution and management which indicates that the in spite that students agreed in the use of collaboration as a mechanism in conflict resolution and management in colleges of education in North-central, Nigeria, some section of the students have difference perception on the use of the technique in conflict resolution and management in the area which was confirmed by Shehu-Usman, Uzochukwu, Gambo, and Abubakar (2024) that the mechanism is a win-win situation where both parties to a conflict exercise high respect for each other which is characterized by high assertiveness and cooperation among the parties involved in a conflict . It also coincided with Cheng, et al (2020), and Imtiaz, et al, (2022) that regards the technique as allowing unity and understanding to find a solution that effectively addresses the concerns of both sides involved in a conflict.

The study was also consistent with the study by Kayser & Kaplan (2020) and Umana (2019) which saw collaboration as the integration of ideas to reach the most optimal resolutions in a conflict situation, through a creative process that is sparked by the contributions of other parties involved, and the best solution is found. However, the result contradicts the study by Utaka & Silas-Dikibo (2020), and Shariq, et al (2022) which describes the approach as layering of ideas upon ideas to develop the most effective resolution to a conflict that satisfies all parties involved.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, though, the study shows a significance difference on the perception of male and female on the use of collaboration as a mechanism for conflict resolution and management, the use of the technique in colleges of education in North-central Nigeria has been tremendous and has created industrial harmony in the colleges system until recently when there was a discrepancy created by inequitable distribution of power and fairness in the school system, which has affected the outcome of this research. However, the technique cannot be effective without the incorporation of other techniques such as compromise, accommodation and avoidance. The involvement of other techniques can create check and balances and ensure effectiveness in the use of collaboration as a technique in conflict resolution and management in the area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the established facts of this study, the following recommendations were proffered for improvement in the conflict resolution in the area.

- 1) The college management should be Open, transparent, timely communication and establishment of proper channels for dialogue among students, staff forum, and college management
- 2) The college management should create trust, confidence, fairness, and mutual respect that each party keeps to the agreement, diverse opinions, cultural differences, and institutional hierarchies
- 3) The leadership of the colleges should be willing to adopt a collaborative method in conflict resolution based on institutional policies and established strong conflict resolution committees within the college rather than an authoritarian approach
- 4) There should be stakeholders' inclusiveness of students, staff unions, management, with sometimes external bodies like government agencies and traditional institutions, and avoidance of sidelining key stakeholders during decision processes in the colleges by the management
- 5) The college management should ensure equitable balance and fairness by ensuring that no group dominates the process in decision-making, resource allocations, disciplinary measures, transparent negotiations, in the study area
- 6) There should be deliberate involvement of government and external influences through promotion of government policies on industrial harmony and staff-to-student relationships, and political actors to promote collaboration by the college authority in the study area
- 7) There should be willingness of parties to make concessions on long-term commitment to building harmonious relationships rather than focusing on short-term solutions to conflict.

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