

**TEACHERS' PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS' ADMINISTRATIVE  
VARIABLES ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN PUBLIC  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

The study examined the male and female teachers' perception of principals' administrative variables on conflict management in public secondary schools in Imo state, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population of the study was 6641 teachers in the 288 Public Secondary Schools in Imo state. The sample for this study was 664 teachers consisting of 239 male and 424 females in 28 public schools in Imo State; selected by sing multi-stage random sampling techniques. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher titled Influence of Principals' Administrative Variables on Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (IPAVCMSQ). The instrument was face-validated by three experts: two from department of Educational Management and one from Measurement and Evaluation, Department of Science Education, all from College of Education Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The data obtained through the trial testing were used to determine the internal consistency reliability of the items which yielded reliability index of 0.79. The data collected were analyzed using Mean scores and Standard Deviations in order to provide answers to the three research questions, while the null hypotheses were analyzed using t-test statistics at  $P < 0.05$  level of significance which revealed that principal's qualification and experience influence conflict management strategies in secondary schools, Imo State. Gender has no significant influence on the extent principal's qualification and experience influence conflict management in Imo State. The study among other things recommended that professional qualification is the requisite knowledge and skills a person has to acquire from training to enable him carry out work proficiently in his occupation; therefore, principals should be appointed based on their professional qualifications.

**Keywords:** Teachers' Perceived influence, principals' administrative variables, conflict management strategies, qualification and experience.

## Introduction

Educational establishments are complex organizations engaged in the delivery of utilitarian service which is geared toward social needs. The process of inculcating the right knowledge, attitude, value and skills to an individual or a child to contribute effectively to the society and also benefit from the society” (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Education unlike other organizations does not choose its client or members. It is free for all and sundry (everybody irrespective of family background, behavioural trait, age, state and mental ability). Under such situation of diversity operation, it is not devoid of conflicts, which is bound to arise from the daily interaction of the students and teachers. Individuals or groups are sometimes bound to disagree on issues with emotional intensity. When conflict occurs in an organization those involved are not necessary ‘bad people’ or ‘trouble makers’ or less worthwhile as members of the organization. But when conflict is well managed problems can be resolved effectively and solutions are more likely to be fresh and innovative. Conflict can be seen in various levels of education including the secondary schools.

Secondary school education in Imo State and in other eastern states is considered as an important sub-sector in the education system as well as for the development of the country’s economy. For example, inputs into higher learning educational institutions and in the labour force in Imo State depend on qualified outputs from secondary schools. Therefore, for a school to be effective, individual members need to be able to work in a conflict free environment. Secondary education comes between primary and tertiary institutions which are administered by principals.

The term educational administration is very comprehensive. It is concerned with the formulation, execution, and appraisal of educational policies, the organization and mobilization of all human and material resources in secondary school system for the achievement of identified objectives. According to Ngerem, Onunkowo and Igboekwe (2022), Educational administration refers to the administrative performance which deals with the effectiveness of an administrator towards the use of human and material resources to attain the stipulated goals of an educational organization. Educational administration is a social statement which guides educational activities, plan, programmes and facilities and provides leadership in long term but broad social perspective. Ngerem, Onunkowo and Igboekwe (2022) pointed that “educational administration is the process of utilizing appropriate materials in such a way as to promote

effective development of human qualities. It also involves the effective utilization of human and material resources of education to promote co-operation which foster the achievement of results. These are fostered by principals' administrative variables.

For a principal to receive credo for effective conflict management in secondary schools, he must be professionally skillful, tactful in instrumental and planning, and develop a workable leadership style and must be well trained and qualified with the qualities of a leader. Ogbonnaya (2017) defined an effective leader as an individual with the capacity to consistently succeed in a given condition and meeting the expectation of an organization or society. Ike (2017) submitted that principals with long year of teaching experience perform better in mobilizing the non-teaching and teaching staff towards attainment of school goals and objectives.

The principal has to ensure the programme and the activities of the school are planned, designed, coordinated and integrated in such a way that the school is able to satisfy the needs of the personnel in the school, the needs and the expectation of the society and meet the educational goals and objectives of the school. Peretomode (2016) noted that demographic variables such as age, gender, educational qualification, experience and marital status, could be advantageous or disadvantageous in the principals' performance of duties. In the Nigeria setting, according to Ibukun (2019), age has been considered with other factors like qualification, and experience in the appointment of teachers into position of principalship with believe that these factors would make some individuals to be more effective than others. Therefore, there is the need to examine the influence of these variables on principals' performance.

Professional qualification is the requisite knowledge and skills a person has acquired from training to enable him carry out work proficiently in his occupation. Akpan (2017) described professional qualification as the knowledge and skills acquired after a period of training and instruction by seasoned experts. Professional training could expose one to knowledge, skills, and values needed for effective job performance. However, the principal should reflect a mastery of some subjects and understand certain professional courses such as human growth and development, psychology of human behaviour and learning. A leader with a broad liberal education with high intelligent quotient can handle leadership problem which include conflict

Experience as viewed by Sturman (2013) in the practical sense is one important factor that is considered in the selection of school administrators. School as a formal organization encourages

the climbing of the seniority ladder; the teacher may have been form master/ mistress, house master/mistress or subject head after going through these various positions the individual must have gathered experience to be able to be a good leader. Since conflict is inherent an experienced principal will be able to take decisions in administrative matters that are prone to foster cooperation, team work, and goal attainment in the school. It has been suggested by Nwangwu (2016) that experience assists in developing the required social and intellectual skills, in learning how to work closely with other people and in finding out about individual interests and differences. This indicates that experience may be related to performance. However, Achunine (2011) opined that the length of time one stays on a job does not necessarily make one efficient; and argued that professional training is a more important factor than on-the-job experience in an administrator's job performance. It is therefore important to determine the extent experience relates to principals' performance in some aspects of the management of secondary schools. All these principals' administrative variables could be panacea to conflict management.

Administrative conflict management in secondary schools involves the application of management values and skills in designing, developing and effecting resources towards achievement of educational goals. The effective coordination of conflict in secondary schools is of great potentialities for provision of quality secondary education. Khan (2010) asserted that the overall responsibility for a school principal is conflict management in school. Babyegeya (2012) defined conflict as a breakdown of communication among members of the organization. He adds that the more closely people are expected to work together, the more the possibility of conflict to rise. In that case conflict management is perceived as part of school administration problem and has become part and parcel of Imo state secondary schools and educational institutions. The nature and types of conflicts that occur in secondary school administration vary from one school to another. In that way conflict may have either a positive or a negative effect on school performance, depending on the nature of the conflict and how it is managed (Armstrong, 2010).

In the opinion of Robbins (2013), intra personal conflicts involve conflicts within an institutional set up as between heads of school and the specific member of or any specific individual, staff, the students, parents, the sponsor or any other stakeholders in school. Interpersonal conflicts are the conflicts between persons. This may include conflict between specific staff members and students, specific teacher and parents. Within a group similarly inter

group conflicts may include conflict between various groups in educational institution. The act of handling conflict and conflict resolution in organization is known as conflict management.

Conflict management is the ability to cope with everyday situations that involves personal interaction involving differences in interest, perception, performance and opinion. Obi (2013) asserted that conflict management requires skills that reflect self-esteem, flexibility and openness of different ways of thinking and acting. Conflict management is the process of reducing the destructive capacity of conflict through a number of measures and by working with and through the parties involved in that conflict (Best, 2015:95). To apply the interceptive measures, it is imperative to understand the very nature, causes, and dynamics of the conflict. This will aid in determining the management option suitable for the case. This process, therefore, necessitates conflict analysis. Conflict management would in particular, seek to avoid or terminate violence between parties. Conflict management strategy in an organization is the ability to understand the workers, co-operate, appreciate, offer judicious rewards, integrate the workers, above all, and allow industrial democracy to prevail in the organization. Okotoni (2012) found out that the issue of conflict management becomes paramount for goal accomplishment in Imo state whereby teachers had to embark on a prolonged strike over the non-implementation of the harmonized salary structure announced by the federal government. All these become potential sources of industrial conflicts not only in the educational sector, but also in the entire civil service in the state (Okotono, 2012).

The choice of a particular conflict management strategy is often determined by factors such as principals years of experience, principals leadership style, school size and location (Nwokediuko, 2016). Effective management strategy may result in desirable outcome such as smooth management, enhanced discipline, and effective management of time, team spirit, and effective use of resources, achievement of goals, good relationships and great value by stakeholders. However, when ineffective management strategy is used, undesirable outcomes such as strikes, demonstrations, destruction of property, poor performance, emotional stress, and misallocation of resources, absence and frustration may occur. Olaleye and Arogundade (2013) argued that different management strategies may lead to either desirable or undesirable outcomes depending on their effectiveness or ineffectiveness, respectively.

According to Browarys and Price (2011), the conflict management strategies that could be used to resolve conflicts include: compromise, collaboration, accommodation, coercion, effective

communication and avoidance. Accommodation involves deal with the problem with an element of self-sacrifice. An individual set aside his own concerns to maintain peace in the situation. Compromise: this is about coming up with a resolution that would be acceptable to the parties involved. This one party is to will to sacrifice their own sets of goal as long as it can be viewed as a mutual give and take scenario. Collaboration: this is done through cooperating with other parties involve, hence communication is an important part of this strategy in the situation effect is exerted in digging into the issues to identify the need of the individual concerned without removing their respective interest. With creative management without compromising their own satisfaction. Handy (2014) cited in Ezegbo (2015) noted that the following strategies have been found effective in the management of conflict: dialogue, arbitration, in boxing, confrontation, neglect or silence by the principal.

The principal is the head, the administrator, the chief executive of secondary schools who initiates, manages, directs and ensures the effective implementation of policies and programmes for the achievement of the school goals. Ezegbo (2015) further stated that a principal must be appreciable and accessible to his staff, student, members of the board of government and parents; He should possess the ability to develop good human relations, he needs to be a good listener to the complaints of his staff and parents. He should be prudent in his dealing with staff. He should also have academic and professional qualification at least on the level of first degree. Armstrong, 2010) looked at the role of the principal as the primary leader in the school building. He must lead by example, he must be positive, enthusiastic, have his/her hand in the day to day activities of the school, listen to what their constituents are saying. He must think before action and put the school needs above their needs. Conflict management is an important task area of principals in the management of secondary education. Since education is free for all and sundry, different people from different religions, racial, economic and social or political group with different needs and aspirations; whose interest are more often than not divergent. This makes disagreement intrinsic and inevitable aspect of human existence. Emezue and Ota (2016) see conflict as a situation in which there is a discernible form of antagonistic interaction between two or more individuals. Such antagonistic psychological relations would include incompatible goals and one form of interference or the other. It is no longer news that conflict signifies the presence of disagreement, rancor, tension and anger in the relationship between or among individuals, groups, and institutions arising from incompatible goals, values, interest, and needs. Conflict centers on opposing interests, needs, or goal and often occur when individuals or groups realize that their interests, needs or goal are opposed to those of others,

and as such, expect these other persons to thwart their concern. It has become a commonplace cutting across every field of human endeavor. This means that in every social relationship, conflict is most likely to occur. As long as people engage in social interaction or relationship, differences in opinion are unavoidable. Such differences arise whenever people disagree over issues, interests, values, motivations, perceptions, feelings, or desires (Odigbo, Okonkwo & Eleje, 2014). It is only when an action is perceived as blocking the opportunity for the attainment of a goal by another person that conflict can occur and required conflict management strategies

The educational administrator takes the initiative of bringing the combatants into a meaningful dialogue. It gives those in conflict the opportunity to express their feelings, grievances, and views on the matter. A healthy dialogue frees the mind of grudge and bitterness and in turn evolves the readiness to bury the hatchet and settle conflict. It is therefore necessary that principal should be dedicated, trustworthy, committed, positive in attitude, creative, innovative, tactful and skillful and be adequately trained and groomed in the ethos and nuances of the administrative process to enable him manage conflict using various strategies. Hence, the need for this study to examine the teachers perceived influence of principals' administrative variables on conflict management strategies in public secondary schools in Imo state.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There is bound to be conflict of interest and most times these conflict of interest leads to either beneficial or destructive conflicts. The secondary school system is not strange to this situation. Dysfunctional conflict among principals, teachers, and students of the secondary school organization has continued to clogs the wheel of progress, growth and development of the school. Subordinate conflict caused by grievances and insubordination, interpersonal conflict, caused by competing for some promotion or position or teachers fighting over a class or period, conflict caused by interference with the task of another disagreement about an issue (substantive conflict). The method of selection of school principals which does not consider academic qualification and experience seem to be unsatisfactory and gives room for concern. Conflict and its concomitant consequences in the secondary school system seem to have worsened because of lack of proper principals 'administrative variables in resolving conflicts. It is based on these flaws that the present study is faced with the problem of establishing valid administrative variables for conflict management strategies. Therefore, the problem of this study put in a question form is: what are teachers' perceived influence of principals'

administrative variables on conflict management strategies in public secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria?

### Research Questions

The following research questions were answered as a guide to the study

1. What is the perception of teachers on the influence of principals' academic qualification on conflict management in public secondary schools?
2. What is the perception of teachers on the influence of principals' professional experience on conflict management in public secondary schools?

### Hypotheses

The following four null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of teachers on the influence of principals' academic qualification on conflict management in public secondary schools.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of teachers on the influence of principals' professional experience on conflict management in public secondary schools

### Methodology

The design of the study was descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design is used for studies, which aim at collecting data and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristic features of facts about a given population (Nworgu, 2016). Descriptive survey design was used to establish the opinions of male and female teachers on principals' administrative variables on the influence conflicts management in secondary schools.

The population of the study consisted of 6641 (2390 males and 4240 female) teachers in the 288 Public Secondary Schools in the three education zones (Owerri, Orlu and Okigwe) in Imo state. They include 1032 (423 male and 609 female) teachers in Okigwe zone, 1286 (451 male and 835 female) teachers from Orlu zone and 4323 (1249 and 4323 female) teachers from Owerri zone. The sample for this study was 664 teachers consisting of 239 males and 424 females in 28 public secondary schools in Imo State. Due to the large size of the population, 10% of the total population was used which gave 664.1 approximately 664 teachers and 28 public schools across the three education zones. Proportionate stratified sampling was used to



select 664 teachers across the three education zones 103 from Okigwe, 129 from Orlu and 432 from Owerri making it a total of 664 teachers in 28 public secondary schools in Imo state. In sampling the schools, a slip of paper each labeled the name of each of the secondary schools was folded into a basket. The researchers picked out one of the papers from the basket and recorded the name of the schools as contained in the slip of the paper to be picked by replacement. The procedure continued until 28 schools were selected. The selection was done without bias to ensure that every school had opportunity of being selected from the sampled schools, using simple random sampling technique, 664 public secondary school teachers were selected. According to Nworgu (2016), proportionate stratified sampling ensures adequate representatives of each group in the population. This sample posed a stratified proportion of the characteristics found in the parent population

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researchers titled: Principals' Administrative Variables on Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (PAVCMSQ). The questionnaire was constructed on the four (4) rating scale of Very High Influence(VHI) (4points) High Influence(HI) (3points) Low Influence (LI) (2points) and Very Low Influence(VLI) (1point) with 25items in four clusters. To determine the face validity of the instrument, the researcher consulted three experts, two from Department of Educational Management and one from Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Science Education, all from College of Education Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. These experts reviewed the items in terms of the clarity, the appropriateness of language and expressions, including the appropriateness of the instructions to the respondents. They restructured some of the items in the questionnaire to dwell on conflict management strategies in secondary schools. They also made suggestions and corrections which were reflected in the instrument.

The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using a trial test carried out on male and female teachers in Uturu secondary school in Isikwuato LGA Abia State which is not part of the population. 30 copies of the instrument were administered to 30 teachers (20 female and 10 male). The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha test of reliability. This technique was adopted in order to measure internal consistency. This yielded a coefficient index of 0.791. This was an indication that the items in the instrument were reliable for the study.

The 664 copies of questionnaire were administered and collected by the researchers with the help of three research assistants selected from the three education zones and properly briefed on how to administer and retrieve the instrument from the respondents. All the 664 administered copies of the questionnaire were dully retrieved on the spot. Hence 100% return rate. The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Acceptance levels of mean scores of 2.50 were used for the research questions. The hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics at an alpha level of 0.05. The null hypotheses of significant value of greater than 0.05 were accepted, while null hypotheses of significance value less than 0.05 was rejected. The results were presented on the tables.

## Result Presentation

**Research Question One:** What is the perception of teachers on the influence of principals' academic qualification on conflict management in public secondary schools?

**Table 1: Means ratings and standard deviations of the teachers on the extent principals' qualification influence conflict management strategies in Imo State**

S/N	Cluster Items	Male Teachers		Female Teachers		Overall		Decision
		$\bar{X}_1$	SD	$\bar{X}_2$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
1	Principal' s qualification influences the choice of conflict management strategies	2.77	1.198	2.90	1.130	2.84	1.164	Agreed to a High influence
2	A Principal with higher qualification promotes mutual understanding than those with lower qualifications.	2.46	1.144	2.56	1.087	2.51	1.116	Agreed to a High influence
3	Disagreements among staff are settled amicably by higher qualified principals than those with lower qualification.	2.69	1.055	2.61	1.045	2.65	1.050	Agreed to a High influence
4	Principals with higher qualification are in better position to bring together teachers with divergent views to work as a team.	2.95	1.290	2.89	1.323	2.92	1.307	Agreed to a High influence
5	Conflict management skills are possessed by principals with higher qualification than those with low qualification	2.58	1.378	2.72	1.316	2.65	1.347	Agreed to a High influence

6	Higher qualified principals can efficiently translate outcome of educational research to innovation in the classroom or school.	3.45	.808	3.45	.039	3.45	.424	Agreed to a High influence
7	Principal with higher qualification prepare realistic budget that help to curb conflict in secondary school education.	3.09	.942	3.14	.931	3.12	.937	Agreed to a High influence
<b>Cluster Mean and SD</b>		<b>2.86</b>	<b>1.116</b>	<b>2.90</b>	<b>.981</b>	<b>2.88</b>	<b>1.049</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

NB: VHE = Very High Extent; HE = High extent; LE = Low Extent and VLE = Very Low Extent,  $\bar{X}_1\bar{X}_1$  = Mean for Male teachers,  $\bar{X}_2\bar{X}_2$  = Mean for Female teachers, SD = Standard deviation

Table 1 shows that the cluster mean of the 7 items was 2.86 form male and 2.90 for female which is above the mean benchmark of 2.50 of a 4-point rating scale. This means that the respondents to a high extent agreed that principal's qualifications to a high extent influence conflict management in secondary schools in Imo State. The Table also revealed that the cluster standard deviation of the 7 items was 1.116 for male and .981 for female which shows that the respondents were not far from the mean and opinion of one another in their responses on the extent principal's qualification influence conflict management in Imo State adding further validity to the mean. A corresponding hypothesis formulated to further address the research question is

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant difference between mean score of the male and female teachers on the extent to which principal's qualification influence conflict management in Imo State.

**Table 2: t-test analysis for Equality of Mean Ratings of Male and Female qualification influence conflict management in Imo State**

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	tcal.	P-value	Remarks
MALE	239	2.85	1.10	662	0.045	0.438	NS
FEMALE	424	2.89	1.09				

$\bar{X}_1\bar{X}_1$  = Mean, SD = Standard deviation; Df = Degree of Freedom, P-value = probability value

Data in Table 2 indicate a t-calculated value of .045 and significant p-value of .438. Since the p-value of .438 is greater than 0.05 level of significant, the null hypothesis is accepted. There

is no significant difference between the mean score of the male and female teachers on the extent to which principals' qualifications influence conflict management in Imo State. Consequently, gender has no significant influence on the extent principals' qualifications influence conflict management in Imo State.

**Research Question Two:** What is the perception of teachers on the influence of principals' professional experience on conflict management in public secondary schools?

**Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation scores of the respondents on the extent principal's experience influence conflict management in Imo State**

S/N	Cluster Items	Male Teachers		Female Teachers		Overall		Decision
		$\bar{X}_1$	SD	$\bar{X}_2$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
8	An experience principal resolved conflict easily in the school system than inexperience ones.	3.42	.762	3.37	.790	3.40	.776	Agreed to a Very High influence
9	Interpersonal conflict in the school is amicably resolved by an experienced principal than inexperience ones.	3.03	.905	2.98	.891	3.01	.898	Agreed to a Very High influence
10	An experienced principal tactically manage conflict and promote harmony toward goal achievement.	3.44	.791	3.41	.772	3.43	.782	Agreed to a Very High influence
11	An experienced principal understands his subordinates and get the best out of them	3.38	.908	3.35	.898	3.37	.903	Agreed to a Very High influence
12	An experienced principal design an attitude changed programmes for his staffs and students.	3.00	.942	2.93	.949	2.97	.946	Agreed to a High influence
13	An experienced principal possess conflict resolution skill than the inexperienced ones.	2.75	.900	2.79	.921	2.77	.911	Agreed to a High influence
14	Experience principal organizes extra-curricular activities with parent of students and other stake holder in attendance for effective conflict management.	3.42	.778	3.43	.807	3.43	.793	Agreed to a Very High influence
<b>Cluster Mean and SD</b>		<b>3.21</b>	<b>.855</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>.861</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>.858</b>	<b>Agreed to a Very High influence</b>

NB: VHI = Very High Extent; HE = High extent; LE = Low Extent and VLE = Very Low Extent,

$\bar{X}_1$  = Mean for Male teachers,  $\bar{X}_2$  = Mean for Female teachers, SD = Standard deviation

Tables 3 show that the cluster mean of the 7 items was 3.21 for male teachers and 3.18 for female teachers which are above the real limit of 2.50 of a 4-point rating scale. This means that the respondents to a very high extent agreed that principal's experience influence conflict management in Imo State. The Table also revealed that the cluster standard deviation of the 7 items is .855 for male teachers and .861 for female teachers which shows that the respondents were not far from the mean and the opinion of one another in their responses on the extent principal's experience influence conflict management in Imo State adding further validity to the mean.

A corresponding hypothesis formulated to further address the research question is

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the male and female teachers on the extent to which principals' qualifications influence conflict management in Imo State

**Table 4: Results of t-test Analysis for Equality of Mean Ratings of Male and Female Teachers on the extent principals' qualifications influence conflict management in Imo State**

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	tcal.	P-value	Remarks
MALE	239	2.85	1.10	662	0.045	0.438	NS
FEMALE	424	2.89	1.09				

$\bar{X}$ ,  $\bar{X}_1$  = Mean, SD = Standard deviation; Df = Degree of Freedom, P-value = probability value

Data in Table 2 indicate a t-calculated value of .045 and significant p-value of .438. Since the p-value of .438 is greater than 0.05 level of significant, the null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference between mean score of the male and female teachers on the extent to which principal's qualification influence conflict management in Imo State. Consequently, gender has no significant influence on the extent principal's qualification influence conflict management in Imo State.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study show that Principal's qualification influence conflict management strategies in Imo State. Gender has no significant influence on the extent principal's

qualification influence conflict management in Imo State. For instance, both male and female teachers agreed that principal with higher qualification manages conflict more than those with lower qualification; principal with higher qualification promotes mutual understanding than those with lower qualifications; disagreements among staff are settled amicably by higher qualified principals than those with lower qualification. Principals with higher qualifications are in better position to bring together teachers with divergent views to work as a team. Higher qualified principals can efficiently translate outcome of educational research to innovation in the classroom or school. Principal with higher qualifications prepare realistic budget that help to curb conflict in secondary school education. Hence, gender has no significant influence on the extent principal's experience influence conflict management in Imo State.

This is in agreement with the findings of Chika and Ebeke (2017) on the role of principals' professional qualification on principals' instructional leadership and effect on teachers' job performance. Chika and Ebeke (2017) study revealed that the professional qualifications of principals is the most important school related factor influencing their instructional leadership. It was recommended that appointment of teachers to principalship position should be based on professional qualification.

More still, the findings of the study revealed that Principal's experience influence conflict management in Imo State that is why both male and female teachers unanimously agreed that an experience principal resolved conflict easily in the school system than inexperience ones. Interpersonal conflict in the school is amicably resolved by an experienced principal than inexperience ones. An experienced principal tactically manage conflict and promote harmony toward goal achievement. An experienced principal understands his subordinates and get the best out of them. An experienced principal design an attitude changed programmes for his staffs and students. An experienced principal possesses conflict resolution skill than the inexperienced ones. Experience principal organizes extracurricular activities with parent of

students and other stake holder in attendance for effective conflict management. Consequently, gender has no significant influence on the extent principal's experience influence conflict management in Imo State.

This finding is in agreement with the findings of Ebong (2013) on the relationship between years spent in education and productivity in South-South, Nigeria which showed that individuals with higher degrees achieved set goals because they understood the job description as experts. People exposed to too many years of professional training or education, engage in an enhanced productivity in their different responsibilities. They are punctual to work, execute duties, achieve set goals and have alternative solutions in crisis situations. Similarly, the study is in agreement with the study of Ibian (2015) on influence of experience on principals' effectiveness in government secondary schools in Abia State. The results of the study indicated that experience has significant influence on principals' effectiveness.

## **Conclusion**

From the findings of the study the following conclusions were made:

Principal's qualifications influence conflict management strategies in public secondary schools in Imo State. Gender has no significant influence on the extent principal's qualification influence conflict management in Imo State. Principal's experience influence conflict management in Imo State public secondary schools. Gender has no significant influence on the extent principal's experience influence conflict management in Imo State.

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

1. Professional qualification is the requisite knowledge and skills a person has acquired from training to enable him carry work proficiently in his occupation; therefore, principals should be appointed based on their professional qualifications.

2. Experience assists in developing the required social and intellectual skills, in learning how to work closely with other people and in finding out about individual interests and differences. Hence, while considering the qualification of the would-be principal, it is also important to consider his or her level of experience.

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