
**ROLE OF CIVIC EDUCATION IN PROMOTING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SKILLS AMONG
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NJIKOKA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ANAMBRA
STATE, NIGERIA**

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The study was conducted to determine the role of Civic Education in promoting conflict management skills among secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area, Anambra State. The study adopted a survey research design. Total number of 1,056 secondary school students constituted the population. A sample size of 399 students were using Research Advisors Sample Size Table. To carry out the study, three research questions were formulated. The instrument used in gathering data for this study was a structured questionnaire entitled “Role of Civic Education in promoting conflict management skills among secondary school students” (QRCEPCMS). Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The results of the findings revealed among others the roles of Civic Education in promoting conflict management skills among schools students. The study recommended among others that Civic Education teachers should use interactive teaching methods like role-playing, debates, and group discussions to help students understand, practice, and develop conflict resolution skills in a practical context.

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Introduction

An essential and unavoidable human phenomenon is conflict as human coexistence increases the possibility of conflict. Conflicts arise as a result of disagreements or misunderstandings among people or organisations in society. Conflicts can bring about positive or negative outcomes or changes in society depending on how such conflicts are managed. Like other human institutions, schools are likely to experience conflicts of some kind. As such, conflict management skills such as mediation, negotiation, avoidance, and collaboration are applied in conflict management. Conflict is sometimes a prerequisite for peace in society and other human organisations because of the diversity of individual and societal interests. Olufemi and Adealae (2017) noted that conflict is a

precondition for peace and harmony in the society. This suggests that conflicts between individuals and groups are unavoidable and necessary in society.

Conflict can be caused by many factors including fraud in the electoral system, failure of governance systems, economic resources, religious beliefs, artificial boundaries, land ownership, global repression, ethnicity and identity (Orhero, 2020). Schools often seem to be hot spots of conflict due to students’ desire for self-actualisation, and as such can affect academic activities. In the secondary school system, conflicts had hindered teaching and learning activities on several occasions. Such conflict has been attributed to institutional and personal factors such as personal disagreements between students, competition for grades or popularity, bullying or

harassment and was often suppressed without serious explorations of modern means of conflict management strategies, which sometimes lead to escalation of conflicts and dysfunctional educational systems. Therefore, there is a need for further study.

The study was theoretically anchored to the Conflict Management Theory of Max Weber (1905). According to Weber, the society serves as a battlefield for class struggle over scarce resources. Marx stressed that conflict between the social classes is vital in any human society. This theory suggests that conflicts and struggles for power and resources bring about transformations in society. In the secondary school system, the struggle for academic relevance, positions and quest for dominance can trigger conflict situations among students if they are not properly managed through the inculcation of the right values.

Civic Education is a conscious education designed to inculcate civic skills, values, and democratic culture, satisfying the needs for socialisation in the interests of the individual, civic society and the rule of law. It prepares young people to fulfil their roles and take responsibility as members of a community. Civic Education serves as a channel through which young people can be inspired to aim for the common. Sele (2020) defines Civic Education as the teaching of core values for better citizenship. Civic Education more often than not may not come as a deliberate effort, as it could occur at every stage of life and be taught in venues other than the school environment. It is therefore worth noting that members of society, the family, governments, religions, and mass media are responsible for

disseminating information that may be beneficial or harmful to the child and society. Hence, Civic Education within the school consists of deliberate courses geared towards developing citizens who are well informed and responsible in order to achieve a civil society. The key objective of Civic Education curriculum is to inculcate students with civic skills and values that are necessary for adjustment in a democratic society.

The goal of Civic Education is to equip individuals with the necessary skills to become better citizens who can contribute to nation-building. Civic Education is designed to expose students to civic skills and ideas on the duties of citizens towards development processes (Kayode-Olawoyin, 2017). Civic Education facilitates an understanding of the functions of different government institutions, as well as the individual rights, duties and obligations of citizens (Muleya, 2019).

Civic education provides students with ideas on how to resolve conflict and make peace among themselves; and in the development of cognitive civic skills that are relevant in building political and civic life. Secondary school students are exposed early to problem-solving skills, that can be applied within the classroom and the society to ensure sustainable development. Building civic skills in the learners such as necessary to promote peace within the students, exposing them to unity and mediation skills, and how to peacefully collaborate for the development of society.

Hence, Civic Education curriculum is a veritable tool for citizenship training and an important instrument promoting peace and justice, freedom and equality. Thus, Civic

Education, if effectively taught in schools can contribute to nation building in Nigeria. Civic Education aims to educate individuals to become responsible citizens (Olayemi et al, 2011).

Curriculum is a planned academic content of a course program. Curriculum connotes specific learning moduls, programmes, activities, as well as the instructional aids used for teaching and learning. Accordingly, Sofadekan (2017) noted that the newly reviewed senior secondary school education curriculum which includes Civic Education and whose implementation commenced in September 2011 has placed a big challenge on educators, especially secondary school teachers. Civic Education teachers with knowledge of the subject and innovative teaching skills goes a long way to facilitate the realisation of their lofty goals. Notably, teachers are charged with the responsibility of implementing curriculums and as such, the importance of quality teachers can never be undervalued. Thus, Civic Education teachers must have adequate competence, content knowledge and pedagogical skills (Jibril and Abba 2011).

Secondary school civic education curriculum standards represent a set of expected learning outcomes and activities that can be achieved by applying teaching strategies such as class discussions, enquiry, role plays and the use of computer-assisted instruction. Civic Education curriculum exposes students to learning activities, which promote the acquisition of skills for conflict management.

Conflict emerges because of incompatible groups or individual interests.

This can be attributed to various factors, including competition for limited resources, differing values or beliefs, and conflicting goals or objectives. To achieve peaceful coexistence, conflict is inevitable in every human society (Egobueze, 2021). However, violent conflict is a product of the human mind and personal orientation, which can be transferred to entire community.

Scholars have defined conflict in various ways. Orhero (2020) defined conflict as a contentious struggle for interest and goal allocation in society. This is a disagreement between inequality and the unequal distribution of human needs. Conflict involves disagreements and struggles over divergent interests (Dimelu et al. 2017). Conflict is the product of divergent interests, class struggles and the pursuit of equity in redistributing limited resources. This implies that conflict arises from competition for resources, status, and recognition and can metamorphose to violent crises when conflicting parties fail to reach a conclusive and harmonious agreement (Egobueze, 2021). Conflicts occur because of the perceived need to protect or defend goals and interests. Conflict can be classified as direct or indirect. Direct conflicts are political and socioeconomic-motivated violence characterised by physical suffering and deprivation (Galtung, & Salvage, et al., 2012). The impact of direct conflict is seen in the destruction of lives, properties, and starvation associated with armed conflicts. Indirect conflict on the other hand is a form of protest against cultural values, norms, injustice, discrimination, and inequality (Atere, Ayandiji, & David, 2019).

Conflicts are natural part of human society and as such are inevitable even in educational institutions. Secondary schools may not be exempted from conflict because it is an environment in which students from different backgrounds interact. Conflict among students is inevitable and can affect teaching and learning in schools. Factors such as personal disagreement, competition, bullying, and social frustration can cause conflicts among students.

As conflicts are inevitable in any human organisation, it is crucial to know how conflicts can be managed. Conflict management is the practice or methods used to resolve or settle conflicts. The achievement of any organizational goals depends on the ability of such organization to manage conflicts. Accordingly, Dimelu, Salifu, Enwelu, and Igbokwe, (2017), viewed conflict management is an approach for resolving disputes. It is a planned process for identifying, resolving and averting future conflicts. Egobueze (2016) conceived conflict management as a strategy designed to achieve resolution to end conflicts. Conflict management is a deliberate strategy of resolving conflicts through resolution.

In other words, conflict management is an intermediary procedure of resolving conflicts. Conflict management deals with skills used to resolve conflict and devise appropriate skills for effective management and enhancing the effectiveness of conflict management in secondary schools by developing an effective strategy that requires the involvement of a corporate level of management which will stipulate skills to cope with any conflict situations in the school. This suggests that the goal of

developing conflict management skills among secondary school students is the joint responsibility of parents, teachers, and administrators.

Conflict management skills include the strategies or approaches applied in to address conflicts. Nevertheless, conflicts in school environments can be resolved through mediation, arbitration, competition, collaboration, compromise, accommodation and avoidance (Oboegbulem and Onwurah 2011). The application of these strategies is rewarding depending on the nature of the conflict. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the role of Civic Education in promoting conflict management skills among secondary school students in the Njikoka Local Government Area in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

Conflict in the school system in Nigeria especially among secondary school students can be attributed to institutional and personal factors such as personal disagreements between students, competition for grades or popularity, bullying or harassment and was often suppressed without serious explorations of modern means of conflict management strategies which sometimes lead to escalation of conflicts and dysfunctional educational systems. A pilot study carried out by the researcher and causal reports by some teachers and students in the Njikoka Local Government Area indicated unfriendly relationships among students arising from factors such as personal disagreements between students, competition for grades, and popularity. If not properly managed, these situations may impede the quality of the teaching-learning process in schools and may

affect students' academic performance. The dearth of literature on the role of Civic Education in promoting conflict management skills among secondary school students is an important gap that this study seeks to fill. Therefore, this study focuses on investigating the role of Civic Education in promoting conflict management skills among secondary school students in the Njikoka Local Government Area, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the role of civic education in promoting conflict management skills among secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area, Anambra State.

Specifically, this study seeks the following:

- Determine the role of Civic Education in promoting conflict management skills among secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area, Anambra State.
- Identify the causes of conflict among secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area, Anambra State.
- Identify possible conflict management skills that may be used to resolve conflicts among secondary school students in the Njikoka Local Government Area, Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

- What are the roles of Civic Education in promoting conflict management skills

among secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area, Anambra State?

- What are the causes of conflict among secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area, Anambra State?
- What conflict management skills are used in resolving conflict among secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area, Anambra State?

Methodology

The study used a descriptive survey design. The study population consisted of 1,056 senior secondary school students from 11 public secondary schools in the Njikoka Local Government Area, Anambra State (PPSSC Anambra State, 2022). A sample size of 399 students was determined using Research Advisor's Sample Size Table at confidence level of 99.0%, while simple random sampling procedure was used to select four (4) public secondary schools in Njikoka Local Government Area, Anambra State. Data for the study was gathered using a 30 items Questionnaire on the "Roles of Civic Education in Promoting Conflict Management Skills" (QRCEPCMS). Data analysis was performed using the mean and standard deviation. The three research questions were analysed using mean and standard deviation. Mean scores of 2.5 and above were accepted, whereas mean scores below 2.5 were rejected.

Results

Table 1: Mean response of Respondents on the roles of civic education in promoting conflict management skills among secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area, Anambra State

| S/N | Item Statements | \bar{X} | SD | Decision |
|-----|--|-----------|------|----------|
| 1 | Civic Education enhances conflict management by the use of mediation skills. | 3.25 | 0.69 | Agree |
| 2 | Civic Education is an important ingredient of healthy relationship and interaction among the students. | 3.41 | 0.73 | Agree |
| 3 | Civic Education cannot be used to promote peace among the students. | 2.37 | 0.17 | Disagree |
| 4 | Civic Education inculcates in the students the accommodating skills for conflict management | 3.24 | 1.10 | Agree |
| 5 | Civic Education does not emphasize principle of reconciliation in everyday conduct | 1.90 | 1.04 | Disagree |
| 6 | Inculcates the right types of skills and values for interpersonal relationships | 3.22 | 0.70 | Agree |
| 7 | Civic Education promotes harmony among students. | 3.36 | 0.45 | Agree |
| 8 | Civic Education does not promote skills of peaceful co-existence among the students. | 2.30 | 1.02 | Disagree |
| | Grand Total | 2.88 | 5.99 | |

The data presented in Table 1 shows the role of civic education in promoting conflict management skills among secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area, Anambra State. The results indicated that Items 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7 had mean ratings of 3.25, 3.41, 3.24, 3.22, and 3.36, respectively. Since the mean values of the items were above the 2.50 benchmark mean for decision taking, it indicates that the roles of Civic Education in promoting conflict management skills among secondary school students were that Civic Education

enhances conflict management by the use of mediation skills, Civic Education is an important ingredient of healthy relationships and interactions among students. Civic Education inculcates in the students the accommodating skills for conflict management, inculcates the right types of skills and values for interpersonal relationships, and Civic Education promotes harmony among students. Meanwhile, the standard deviation scores of the items in Table 1 revealed a high variability from the mean scores.

Table 2: Mean response of Respondents on the causes of conflict among secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area, Anambra State

| S/N | Item Statements | \bar{X} | SD | Decision |
|-----|---|-----------|------|----------|
| 1. | Personal disagreement | 3.31 | 0.62 | Agree |
| 2. | Peace keeping | 2.30 | 0.66 | Disagree |
| 3. | Competition for grades | 3.18 | 0.80 | Agree |
| 4. | Harmony among the students | 2.05 | 0.78 | Disagree |
| 5. | Bullying | 3.20 | 0.69 | Agree |
| 6. | Differences in cultural beliefs | 3.23 | 0.88 | Agree |
| 7. | Good cordial relationships among the students | 2.18 | 0.76 | Disagree |
| 8. | Frustration over group assignment | 3.25 | 0.70 | Agree |
| 9. | Harassment | 3.36 | 0.80 | Agree |
| 10. | Disagreement over school functions | 3.24 | 0.84 | Agree |
| 11. | Difference in religion | 3.28 | 0.70 | Agree |
| 12. | Grand Total | 2.96 | 7.59 | |

The data presented in Table 2 shows the causes of conflict among secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area, Anambra State. Results indicated that items 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 8, and 19 had mean ratings of 3.31, 3.18, 3.20, 3.23, 3.25, 3.36, 3.24 and 3.28. Since the mean values of the items were above the 2.50 benchmark mean for decision making, this indicates that the causes of conflict among

secondary school students in the Njikoka Local Government Area, include personal disagreement, competition for grades, bullying, differences in cultural beliefs, frustration over group assignment, harassment, disagreement over school functions, and difference in religion. However, the standard deviation scores of the items in Table 2 above revealed high variation in the data from the mean scores.

Table 3: Mean response of Respondents on the conflict management skills used in resolving conflict among secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area, Anambra State

| S/N | Item Statements | \bar{X} | SD | Decision |
|-----|----------------------------|-----------|------|----------|
| 1. | Use of dialogue | 3.12 | 0.70 | Agree |
| 2. | Use of fighting skills | 1.36 | 0.45 | Disagree |
| 3. | Use of compromising skills | 3.15 | 1.02 | Agree |
| 4. | Accommodating skills | 3.33 | 0.79 | Agree |
| 5. | Quarrelling skills | 2.27 | 0.70 | Disagree |
| 6. | Communication skills | 3.11 | 0.88 | Agree |
| 7. | Being defensive | 2.32 | 0.86 | Disagree |
| 8. | Use of mediation skills | 3.21 | 0.70 | Agree |
| 9. | Overgeneralizing | 2.17 | 0.80 | Disagree |
| 10. | Problem-solving skills | 3.18 | 1.04 | Agree |
| 11. | Being right | 2.23 | 0.70 | Disagree |
| | Grand Total | 3.04 | 0.78 | |

The data presented in Table 3 shows the conflict management skills used in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area, Anambra State. Results indicated that items 20, 22, 23, 25, 27, and 29 had mean ratings of 3.12, 3.15, 3.33, 3.11, 3.21, and 3.18. Since the mean values of the items were above the 2.50 benchmark mean for decision-making, this indicates that conflict management skills used in resolving conflict among secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area include the use of dialogue, fighting skills, compromising skills, accommodating skills, communication skills, mediation skills, and problem-solving skills. However, the standard deviation

scores of the items in Table 3 revealed less variation from the mean scores.

Discussion

The findings reveal that Civic Education plays important role in promoting conflict management skills among secondary school students in the Njikoka Local Government Area by enhancing conflict management and mediation skills, promoting healthy relationships and interactions among students, inculcating accommodating skills and values for interpersonal relationships, and promoting harmony among students. This is in line with what Muleya, (2019) stated that the role of Civic Education in schools it exposes students to the process of

government and its institutions, and instills the skill of good citizenship. Civic Education helps students make informed decisions and adjust to the challenges and uncertainties of life by providing relevant education.

The findings indicate that the causes of conflict among Secondary School Students in Njikoka Local Government Area include personal disagreement, competition for grades, bullying, differences in cultural beliefs, frustration over group assignment, harassment, disagreement over school functions, and differences in religion. Thus, suggests that a conflict occurs when the conflicting parties fail to reach a conclusive and harmonious agreement. These findings corroborate the postulations of Max (1905) Conflict Management Theory, which states that conflicts and struggles for resources, power, and relevance is inevitable in any human organization.

The findings showed that the conflict management skills used in resolving conflict among secondary school students include the use of dialogue, compromising skills, accommodating skills, communication skills, mediation skills, and problem-solving skills. Conflict management skills encompass styles and techniques used to manage conflict between individuals or between groups. It involves skills as a process of reducing tension and the negative effects of conflict through the application of a number of measures aimed at fostering an understanding of the conflict situation by the parties involved.

Conclusion

Civic Education enhances conflict management through the use of mediation skills, serves as an important ingredient for healthy relationships and interactions among students, inculcates accommodating skills for conflict management, and values interpersonal skills, which helps in promoting conflict management skills among secondary school students. The causes of

conflict among secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area include personal disagreement, competition for grades, bullying, differences in cultural beliefs, frustration over group assignments, harassment, disagreement over school functions, and differences in religion. Use of dialogue, fighting skills, compromising skills, accommodating skills, communication skills, mediation skills, and problem-solving skills were the conflict management skills used to resolve conflict among secondary school students in Njikoka Local Government Area.

Recommendations

The study recommends that Civic Education teachers:

- Should use interactive teaching methods like role-playing, debates, and group discussions to help students understand, practice, and develop conflict resolution skills in a practical context.
- Encourage students become involved in community-based conflict resolution initiatives. This could include volunteering, participation in mediation programs, or peace workshops.
- Utilise technology to engage students in virtual conflict resolution simulations and online courses related to peace and conflict studies.
- Encourage open dialogue and create a safe space for students to express their opinions and concerns. This would help foster a culture of communication as a means of resolving conflict.
- Teach students about cultural diversity in Nigeria, such as cultural norms and practices related to conflict and resolution.

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