Strategies in Dealing with Violence in Schools: Perceived Effectiveness of Conflict Management Strategies Used by Education Leaders in Reducing Students' Disagreements

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Abstract

Introduction: Conflicts are normal, natural, and necessary in human relations and the problem is not the existence of conflict but how it is managed by the involved parties. With crime being the leading national problem in Jamaica and evidence showing that acts of violence retard the quality of education in schools, conflict management is important in resolving many conflicts before they digress to the stage of serious crimes.

Objectives: This study sought to 1) identify conflict management style and strategies that educational leaders use to manage conflicts in two Primary and Junior High schools in St. Andrew, Jamaica, 2) elucidate classroom teachers perception of conflict management styles and strategies used in their educational institution, and 3) examine students'perception conflict management styles and strategies used in their educational institution.

Materials and Methods: Mixed methodology was employed for this research. The sample was selected based on two criteria. These were 1) persons who employed in or attending a Primary and-or Junior High school, and 2) the schools were located in Upper St. Andrew, Jamaica. Seventy-seven participants were selected based on two aforementioned criteria. Ten conflict management style and strategies emerged in this study, including avoidance, compromise, teaching social skills, dispute resolution foundation, counseling, and accommodation.

Results: The school's educational leaders opined that the Conflict Management Strategies that they employ is based on the nature, severity and frequency of the social deviant behaviour exhibited by the students.

Conclusion: The findings are pertinent as they can be used to formulate policy interventions and aid in the development of conflict management approaches that are geared towards effectively addressing conflicts in schools.

Introduction

In inner city communities, violence seems to be a part of the landscape and this is equally manifested in the schools in these areas. Batsche and Knoff stated that school violence is usually defined by acts of assault, theft, and vandalism or acts that may not be intentional but cause fear in either teacher or student. Gumpel and Meadan classified aggressive behaviours as either acts that are clearly violent as in the case of those inflicting bodily harm or lower level type consisting of those including teasing, bullying or name-calling. Although it is proving difficult to control the violence in some Jamaican schools, there is still the expectation that some form of order must be maintained therein. This is of particular importance as besides being a threat to the personal safety of students and teachers, violence in schools is a challenge to the authority of school officials. When violence occurs on a school compound, it is viewed as an evident loss of authority [1-3].

The contributors to violence among pupils in schools have been attributed to several factors. These include conditions in the home such as harsh and ineffective parental discipline, and frustration caused by students' inability to resolve conflict [4-6]. Hence, the rate of violence in the wider society as well as in schools in Jamaica is a reflection of people's inability to address conflicts. According to Landau, Landau and Landau "Conflict exists in all human relationships: it always has and probably it always has and probably will". Burnside posited the view that conflict is not a phenomenon; it is inevitable when more than one person is involved in any enterprise or endeavor. Conflict is construed

as being normal, natural, necessary and the problem is not the existence of conflict but how it is managed by the involved parties. The absence of an all-inclusive definition of conflict engenders various definitions by numerous researchers from multiple disciplines.

There appears to be a scarcity of studies examining conflict management strategies used in primary or secondary schools in Jamaica. Although, studies in developed countries have shown positive relationship between use of collaboration and student and teacher satisfaction with the school climate, their contexts differ significantly from the Jamaican context in many ways including culture, level of industrialisation, levels of education, and involvement of various stakeholders in the decision making process. These differences have the capacity to create variations in the responses of participants in the school system to the head teachers' conflict management strategies. This study attempts to resolve the paucity of information on conflict

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management strategies employed in primary schools in Jamaica, provide pertinent information on whether these are effective according to teachers', students' and administrators' perceptions.

Conceptual Framework

Violence in schools: Overview of Jamaica

A study by Soyibo and Lee [7] among high school students revealed that 27% of the participants had caused injuries to persons, 59.5% used weapons during violent acts, including the use of hands or feet. Some 59.1% used nasty words, 54.5% used punches and kicks, 26.5% used blunt objects, 18.4% used knives, 9.3% used ice-picks, 8.9% used machetes, 8.5% used scissors, 7.5% used forks, 6.9% used guns, other weapons (bottles and dividers) 6.7% and 5.5%. Calender who conducted a study in schools in Jamaica's capital found that 70% of students had seen fights in which a weapon was used. The knife was the most frequently used weapon. Another 32% of students had been hurt in fights and needed treatment by the teacher. 50% of students reported that other students had deliberately damaged their property.

Meeks-Gardener et al. [8] found that 83.7% of a sample of 1710 knew children who took weapons such as a knife to school: 80% said children in their class fought a lot and were worried about violence at school, 40% reported that students threaten teachers with violence, and 21% reported that students have actually attacked teachers at their school. Most often, the more serious incidents are the ones which are recorded or gain public attention. Incidents of violence in schools occur on a daily basis, whether it is bullying, quarrels or fights. Turner [9] in analyzing Ralf Dahrendorf's work on 'Conflict in Society' as an aspect to its functionality forwarded a position that particular deficiencies within society explains some of the violence that are evident in society. Among the deficiencies are how to deal with interpersonal dynamics and conflicts.

Hawkins and Catalano [10] have identified several risk factors in young people that are predictors of later violence and antisocial behaviour. Among these factors was stress, and alienation which was linked to a lack of bonding to school, family and community. Coser explained that violence and conflict are social ailments, and that they should not be construed as mere deviant acts [11]. He likened violence to 'pain in the human body' that inform the individual that there in danger, and not that social pressure should be administered to this situation. Hence, Coser argued that "dissent may more readily be explained to what is perceived as a sickness in the body social". This dysfunction should be carefully understood, as negative reprimand (in the form of flogging) could be fueling the dissent. Thereby, this could result in intense conflict between pupils and teachers, or between pupils and teachers, or among teacher-pupils and the community.

Conflict management strategies

Conflict management as Hellriegel and Slocum state, consists of the interventions designed to reduce conflict, or in some instances, to increase insufficient conflict [12]. It is a process whereby managers design plans, and implement policies and procedures to ensure that conflict situations are resolved effectively. Conflict management broadens understanding of the problem, increases the resolutions and tend to work towards consensus and to seek a genuine commitment to decision making. Because there is a broader, stronger element of disagreement and discord within the conflict process, a considerable amount of mental and psychological energy is generated. The ability to divert this energy into productive achievement for both parties involved in the conflict can result in the conversion of conflict into a joint finding and problem solving solution [13].

According to Bisno a conflict management strategy is an operational plan to achieve a conflict goal [14]. Conflict management strategy can be defined as the behaviour towards the intensification, reduction and resolution of conflict [15]. Follett identified three primary strategies that leaders use to manage conflict, namely: openness (or collaboration), distribution (or non-confrontation), and control. Although other authors (Morgan) have suggested additional strategies, Daves and Holland showed that a three-dimensional model could effectively characterize supervisory conflict management behaviour [16].

Materials and Methods

The prime focus of this study was to examine conflict management styles and strategies employed in two Primary and Junior High schools in St. Andrew, Jamaica, as well as to explain whether students and-or teachers believe that these are effectively employed in their institutions. The study was conducted using a non-probability approach (i.e. purposive sampling). This research is twofold as 1) it is a descriptive cross-sectional survey and 2) interpretivism component which allowed for the use of interviews, narratives and thematic identifications. The survey method allows for the 1) measurement, 2) statistical analyses, and 3) objectivism [17-23].

The population for this research was teachers, students, principals and vice-principals in two Primary and Junior High schools in Upper St. Andrew, Jamaica. Initially, the researcher chose probability sample of ten percent of the number of Primary and Junior High schools in Upper St. Andrew, Jamaica. But it was discovered in the fieldwork that many of likely participants did not want to participate as the Principals believed that time was inappropriate as the students were close to examination preparations and in some of the selected schools' principals indicated that they did not want to participate in this type of enquiry. The researchers discovered that 4 out of every 5 selected schools' principals did not want to participate in the research. Hence, the researcher took the decision to use a non-probability approach (i.e. purposive sampling) of 2 schools in Upper St. Andrew as these institutions were more than willing to accommodate the study. The rationale behind the selection of the sampling design was totally based on willingness of the principals to give permission for the research to be carried out in their institutions.

The sample was selected based on two criteria. These were 1) persons who were employed in, or attending a Primary and Junior High school, and 2) the schools were located in Upper St. Andrew, Jamaica. The individuals who fulfilled these criteria were part of the sample. Eight-two participants were selected based on two aforementioned criteria (Table 1). Although purposive sampling is non-probabilistic in nature and cannot be used to generalize, it still yields pertinent information on the sampled respondents. This sampling approach is qualitative in nature; but should not be construed as non-scientific as it is still able to yield pertinent information on the studied population.

Findings

Table 2 shows the characteristics of the sampled population and these were disaggregated by School type (i.e. School A and B). Of the sampled respondents, 18.2% were males compared to 81.8% being females. Almost 1.7 times more males were in School A compared to School B. Two in every 3 respondents had a Bachelor's degree, with only 53.4% being in School B.

Participants	School A		School B		Total	
	Population	Sample	Population	Sample	Population	Sample
Principals	1	1	1	1	2	2
Vice Principals	2	2	2	2	4	4
Guidance Counselors	1	1	2	2	3	3
Deans of Disciplines	1	1	2	1	3	2
Teachers	20	20	43	26	63	46
Students	800	10	650	15	1 450	25
Total	**825**	**35**	**700**	**47**	**1 525**	**82**

Table 1: Sample Design

Characteristics	School A		School B		Total
	n	%	n	%	n (%)
Gender					
Male	4	22.2	2	13.3	6 (18.2)
Female	14	77.8	13	86.7	27 (81.8)
Age cohort					
26-30 years old	2	11.1	2	13.3	4 (12.1)
31-35 years old	3	16.7	3	20.0	6 (18.2)
36+ years	13	72.2	10	66.7	23 (69.7)
Educational Attainment					
Diploma	3	16.7	5	33.3	8 (24.2)
Bachelor's	14	77.8	8	53.4	22 (66.7)
Masters	1	5.5	2	13.3	3 (9.1)

Table 2: Socio-demographic Characteristics of School Personnel

Research Question 1

What conflict management style and strategies do educational leaders use to manage conflicts in two Primary and Junior High schools in St. Andrew, Jamaica?

Figure 1 shows the identified Conflict Management Style and Strategies utilized by educational leaders to manage conflicts in two Primary and Junior High Schools in Upper St. Andrew, Jamaica. It can be deduced from Figure 1 that the majority of the educational leadership employ the Dispute Resolution Foundation in addressing conflicts in their educational institutions. The issue of avoidance is also widely used by school's personnel
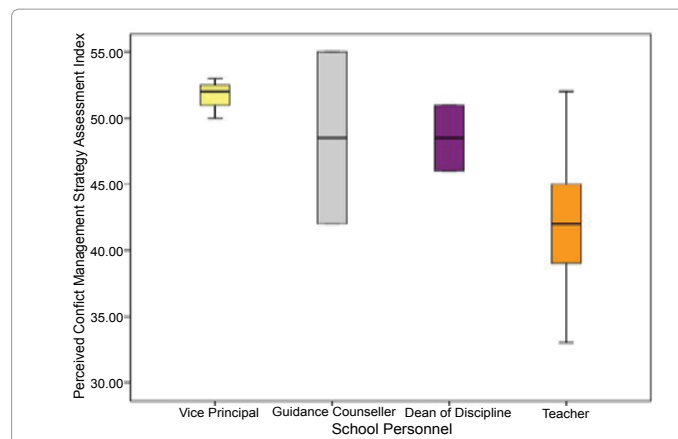
The school's educational leaders opined that the Conflict Management Strategies that they employ is based on the nature, severity and frequency of the social deviant behaviour exhibited by the students. One Educational Leader stated that some of the employed Strategies are more employed for problematic students and infrequently used for social deviance. These include 1) parental conferencing, 2) retention, and 3) counseling. One Principal argued that the 'regular strategies 'that he employed to address problematic behaviours of some students were 1) detention, and 2) parenting liaison conferences. He continued that "There are some conflicts when committed by students result in them being sent to the Guidance Counselor and Dean of Discipline and others warrant the intervention of Dispute Resolution Foundation". All the Educational Leaders concur that the social deviance ranges from getting in each other's way, quarrelling, physical confrontations (or fights) to resistance in participating in school assignments (or low academic performance).

One educational leader argued that parental involvement is critical to conflict resolution, and academic performance of students. She contended that the highly involved parents 'children are more likely to be high achievers, their children are less likely to be among the problematic students and these students are normally of high morale.

The Educational Leaders all concur that they are forced to employ many of Conflict Management Strategies on a daily basis because of the differences in personality of the students, the area in which many of them reside and the difficulty in pupils amicably resolving dispute with the intervention of external agents. "The type and nature of many of the conflicts, the underlining issues, the complexities of the matters, and the cross fertilization of matters with the social milieu warrants more knowledge than we have" Mrs. Lindo said (pseudo name of a Principal). "It is for those very reasons why Conflict Management Seminars are needed at least once per year to aid teachers with approaches, strategies and identifiable behaviours that warrant intervention outside of school's human resources" she continued.

Another Principal said that "Conflict Management Strategies (CMS) is integral to the success [of the school] as it determines the kind of responses from staff members in order to have the smooth running of the school. At all times individuals need to see fairness, transparency, honesty et cetera being a part of managing the students' behaviours" (Mr. Matthews, pseudo name). Mr. Matthews mentioned that " Listening is integral to the approach to conflict resolution as well as compromise can provide an excellent behavioural response from all concerns".

Mrs. Lindo believed that students lack patience, are intolerant, find it difficult to compromise, are not their brother's keeper and many of them are angry, which account for many of the conflicts. "Some of the conflicts could have been averted if someone has just stopped, examine the situation, is a brother's keeper and is slow to anger" She said. Interpersonal differences, personality and social milieu from which many of the pupils are drawn make it difficult for them to operate in a co-operative manner. The pupils are drawn from communities are fragmented, divisive, and they are socialized to dislike the other person. When these individuals meet in a mutual area, which is school, it is highly difficult for school's administrators to have them cooperate, collaborate and perform a single task as they were socialized to dislike, hate, despise, and 'not eat with, sit or speak to the someone from the

Figure 1: Interpersonal Conflict Strategies employed by the Educational Administrators in the sampled schools.

Figure 2: Perceived Conflict Management Strategies Assessment Index by School Personnel, It depicts a box plot of school's personnel perception on conflict management style and strategies.

Figure 3: Perceived Conflict Management Strategies Assessment Index by School Type.

other side'. "These social dynamics become group dynamics and form part of the justification for conflicts and the need to have conflict management strategies employed in schools", Mr. Matthews said. He continued that " It is difficult to coordinate all the resources in a school, particularly the human resources, in order to effectively educate the pupils. But, we cannot cease, and all play dead as the answer to the challenges is enveloped in information."

Research Question 2

How do classroom personnel perceived the conflict management styles and strategies used in their educational institution?
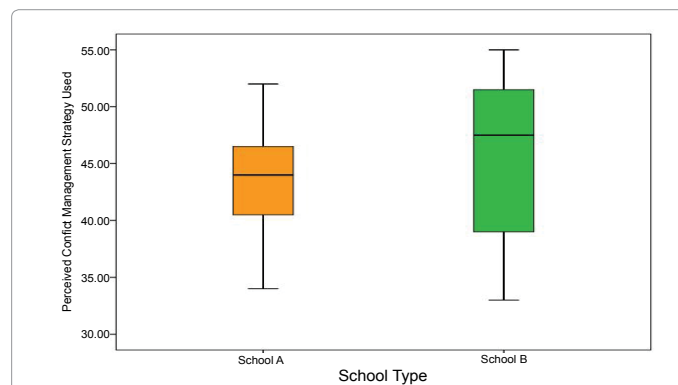
From the survey instrument, generally, the sampled respondents indicated that Conflict Management Styles and Strategies are employed in their educational institution (44.4 ± 6.1; 95% CI: 42.0-46.7, out of a maximum of 55.0. An examination of Perceived Conflict Management Styles and Strategies used by school personnel revealed significant statistical difference between the two variables (F-test=3.416, P=0.033). Hence, it can be deduced from Figure 2 that Vice Principasl were more likely to indicate that their educational institutions employed Conflict Management Styles and Strategies (mean=51.7 ± 1.5; 95% CI: 47.9-55.5) compared to Guidance Counselors and/or Deans of Disciplines (mean=48.5 ± 9.2; 95% CI: 34.1-131.1) and (mean=48.5 ± 3.5; 95% CI: 16.7-80.3) respectively as well as Teachers (mean=42.6 ± 5.4; 95% CI: 40.1-45.0). Teachers had the least belief that the educational institutions to which they are employed utilize Conflict Management Styles and Strategies.

Figure 3 shows the descriptive statistics for the Perceived Conflict Management Style and Strategies used by School Type. On average the sampled respondents in School A indicated that Conflict Management Style and Strategies used in their school was relatively high (43.6 ± 4.8; 95% CI: 41.1-46.2) compared to 45.4 ± 7.5; 95% CI: 40.6-50.2 for those in School B, which is statistically the same using Independent Sample t-test (t-test=5.505, P=0.480).

In the focus group sessions with educators and administrators, it was clear that Vice Principals were more likely to indicate that their educational institutions were employing different Conflict Management Styles and Strategies compared to other educators and administrators, particularly the teachers. The Vice Principals spoke extensively and verbosely about the different Conflict Management Styles and Strategies and how these have been able to substantially reduce conflicts. The Deans of Disciplines and Guidance Counselors of the schools as well as the Vice Principals did not see things in the same

general atmosphere, and while they concur that many and varying Conflict Management Styles and Strategies are employed in their schools believed that much more can be done. The teachers, on the other hand, were less optimistic and indicate that senior administrators continue to "pussy-foot" around issues. They argued that administrators are highly irresponsive to some social deviances and these go unnoticed until they have reached a stage of non-avoidance. However, the teachers continued that avoidance is a Conflict Management Styles and Strategies that is frequently employed by administrators in their educational institutions, some issues are swept under the carpet, others are ineffectively managed and the Dispute Resolution Foundation is used instead of exhausting all alternatives.

All the sampled individuals lamented the unwritten approach to Conflict Management Style and Strategies at their educational institutions, and they indicated that this forms a part of the problem in effective address conflicts. Mrs. Chin, pseudo name, teacher, indicated that because there is no clear written policy and guideline on social deviance and conflict management, often times the human element forms a major part of how things are interpreted and explains inconsistencies in decision-making processes. She continued that social deviance, like bullying, is not handled the same way whenever it arises and decisions taken require much to be desired. A Guidance Counselors concurs with Mrs. Chin, and offered to the discourse when she argued that the non-standardization of the Conflict Management Styles and

Strategies and actions for particular social behaviour (i.e. deviance) forms part of the problem in the educational institutions as people sometimes interpret these as biased behaviours, and they intensify future problems as well as demoralize junior staffers. This, clearly, offers a rationale for a high degree of avoidance by junior staffers on many social issues in-classes. In Table 3, 75% of the people used avoidance as approach in Conflict Management Resolution.

Research Question 3

How do students perceived the conflict management styles and strategies used in their educational institution?

All the students indicated that Conflict Management Styles and Strategies are employed in their educational institutions. However, there is disparity in the extent, practice and usage of particular types of Styles and Strategies. The pupils believed that there is some policy on Conflict Management Styles and Strategies in their schools; but that some are overly used by school's personnel, particularly classroom teachers. All the pupils indicated that the some of the Conflict Management Styles and Strategies employed in their schools include 1) detention, 2) expulsion, 3) standing in class, 4) counseling including visitation to Counselor or Dean of Discipline, 5) parenting and other consultations, 6) public apology, 7) class duties, 8) suspension, 9) standing in the sun, 10) police or outside agencies, 11) workshops, and 12) others including extortions.

The majority of the pupils indicated that social deviance is high at their school. They outlined some of the behaviours to include physical confrontations (i.e. fights), quarrels, dishonesty, bullying, bad mouthing, disrespectfulness of teachers, and low academic performance. One pupil argued that the conflict management style and strategy is sometimes demoralizing to the individual as he or she may be told to 'wash dishes' as a punishment. On examining the pupils' comments, detentions and suspensions were highly used by teachers. A pupils summarized the use of detention this way "If you do something bad they will give you detention". Another student indicated that sometimes pupils take weapons to school (i.e. knives, guns) and the police are call in to address these social deviances.

When the students were asked ' How do you view the teachers' conflict management strategies impact on students' morale in your class', the majority of them indicated yes to the question. Instead of stating yes, a number of pupils used the term 'bad' to refer to the styles and strategies employed by their teachers as punishment. This indicates that the employed styles and strategies are ineffective in addressing many of social deviant behaviours exhibited by the students.

When the pupils were asked 'To what extent do you attributes the school's success to your principal's conflict management strategies?', 58% indicated to a great extent with only 2% stating somewhat (Figure 4).

The majority of the students (80%) indicated that different conflict management skills play a critical role in address social deviance at school and frequently aiding in improving academic performance. One pupil stated that "…If you fight, a letter is sent to your parent(s) requesting them to attend the school to address what next?" In fact, the pupils were able to forward a listing of likely outcome or approaches that will follow certain social deviance at school. However, they argued that too often the punishment does not fit the crime. "Detention, class chores (cleaning of classroom), standing inside in a corner or outside in the sun are popular strategies employed by class teachers and the wider school's administrators for most social deviant behaviours of students."

The students lamented the behaviour of the police when they are called in to address some social deviance including physical confrontations, weapon carrying and behaviours that contravene the law. The police, oftentimes, are abusive, using foul language, being physical with students and widen the oppressive nature of social punishments. The students contended that the police and other stakeholders are sometimes go beyond the call of duty, belittle and trifle on the human rights of the child.
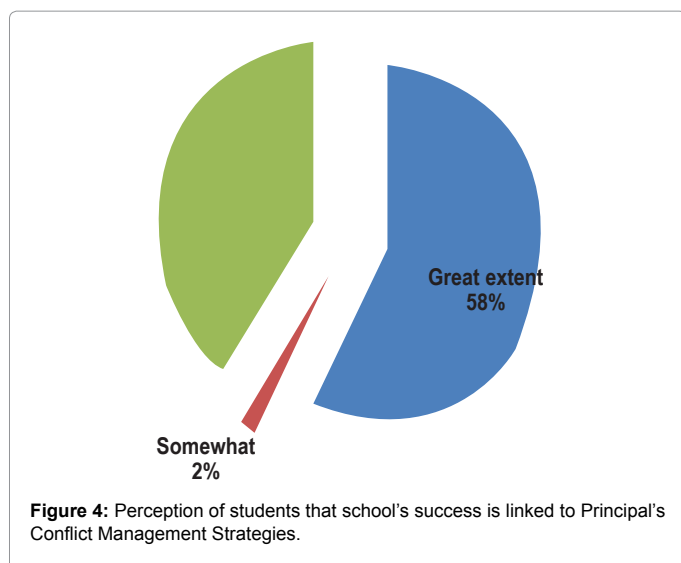
Limitation

Some of the limitations which are embodied in this study are 1) the researcher is a teacher in the Jamaican school system. Therefore, it is likely that the researcher will have biases and pre-conceptions which could influence the study; 2) the small sample size that was selected by the researcher may not allow the results of the study to be generalized to other populations, 3) the instrument is not an established standardized one. Finally, this research was approved by the Ethical Review Board of the University of Technoloy, Jamaica (UTECH).

Discussion

Jamaica has been experiencing a crime problem since the 1990s. The crime problem in Jamaica has resulted in heightened fear and victimization, so much so that it is the number one leading national problem. A cross-national probability survey which was conducted by Powell, Bourne and Waller found that 11 out of every 25 Jamaicans indicated that crime and violence was the leading national problem followed by unemployment (15 in every 50 Jamaicans) and education (3 in every 50 Jamaicans). Using secondary national data on inflation, unemployment, exchange rate and murder for Jamaica, established that gross domestic product (GDP) and the exchange rate are strong predictors of violent crimes in Jamaica. It can be extrapolated from the crime statistics and studies on crimes in the Caribbean, particularly Jamaica [24-31] that there is a culture of crime in the society. This crime pandemic has infiltrated the schools so much so that there are many instances of acts of violence committed by students. In fact, some cases of school violence are even aired and reported in the media. Like the widespread crime problem in the society, school violence is equally widespread, gruesome and frightening. The extent of acts of violence in school is, therefore, a reflection of the wider society as children learn 'what they see'.

Description	Vice Principal	Teacher	Guidance Counselor	Dean of Discipline	Total
	N (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	
Always	0 (0.0)	1 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (3.6)
Very often	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (19.0)	4 (14.3)
Sometimes	1 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (50.0)	6 (28.6)	8 (28.6)
Not very often	2 (66.7)	1 (50.0)	1 (50.0)	4 (19.0)	8 (28.6)
Rarely, if ever	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	7 (33.3)	7 (25.0)
Total	3	2	2	2	28

Table 3: Response of Avoidance Used by School Personnel

Figure 4: Perception of students that school's success is linked to Principal's Conflict Management Strategies.

Schools which should be safe and conducive environments for learning have become unsafe placesm [32]. While many people report and are concerned about 1) rapes, 2) shootings, 3) stabbings and 4) beatings, in schools, little attention is placed on 1) verbal threats, 2) cursing, and 3) name-calling. We continue to grapple with an effective approach to solving violence in the society as well as in schools. The challenges of educators and school administrators as well as policy makers to address school violence extend beyond Jamaica [33-35]. At the primary level aggressive behaviour, including name calling and the exertion of power, occurs and this act has an influence on the social environment and by extension the educational level of students. A slogan forwarded by the Ministry of Education that 'Every Child can Learn-Every Child must Learn' which is designed from the 'No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (Stecher and Kirby)' increases the accountability on teachers, particularly principals as they are the stewards of their institutions. Recently there is a thrust of many parents in wanting their children to attend certain non-traditional (or newly upgraded high schools) because of the outcome of the children under the tutelage of stewards who have transformed the negative perception of these institutions. Are principals meeting the expectations of stakeholders including teachers, pupils and the wider public, which is a new mandate of educational leaders?

Studies that have examined acts of violence in schools [36] have not examined bullying at the primary level, particularly in class which is expanded on by this research. According to Bourne, "Gumpel and Meadan further classified aggressive behaviors as either acts that are clearly violent as in the case of those inflicting bodily harm or lower level type consisting of those including teasing, bullying or name-calling" (p. 4), suggesting that the social deviance in schools must extend to primary level as bullying is a real phenomenon. Schools have been portrayed as unsafe places, characterized by rapes, shootings, stabbings and beatings. The occurrence of acts of violence in the form of verbal threats, cursing, name-calling or fights is more frequent. Batsche and Knoff stated that school violence is usually defined by acts of assault, theft, and vandalism or acts that may not be intentional but cause fear in either teacher or student. The rate of violence in Jamaican schools, there severity and coverage have explained the introduction of Deans of Disciplines, the Peace and Love in School, Dispute Resolution an attempting to address violence in schools. Furthermore, students, teachers, guidance counselors, principals and parents have indicated that schools are now experience a rise in 1) physical confrontations, 2) provocations, 3) destruction of property, 4) lying, 5) extortion, 6) threats, and 7) disregarding rules and instructions, 8) shootings and murders, 9) stoning, and 10) students sending negative text messages and pictures. The conflicts in Jamaican schools are such that principals and senior administrators are called into question their inability to lower and address conflicts in such a way that the school becomes a safe place for learning as it should.

Norguera noted that the occurrences of violence in school are clear indications that the administrators have loss authority in school management. Norguera's perspective is highly simplistic and does imply that violence is a manifestation of break-down of authority as against social issues among or between people. Social deviance could be an expression of a retaliatory position of people against a social system that is oppressive, untenable and exclusionary. Another issue which is not taken into consideration by Norguera is the socialization process children are social being and if they cultured into a violent milieu there is greater probability that they are likely to exhibit the experience of the wider society. According to Gerber et al. [37], each person's perception of the world and of his or her environment differs from that of other people. Clearly the widespread violence and criminality in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean is account for the expression of the acts of violence seen in schools including the bullying phenomenon at the primary level. While Norguera may want to ascribe who is response for the acts of violence in schools, it goes beyond the break-down of authority. Emile Durkheim explains the crime or violence phenomenon in the society, when he contended that "Crime is needed for society to evolve and maintain itself and that there is no society that does not have crime ...." Bourne, suggesting that crime is expression of people. Tosi et al. help in people's expressions when they opined that due to perceptual differences and error in judgment, one party may blame another for a problem, and attribute the cause of the problem to the other person's motives, which accounts for conflicts and by extension in the rate of violence in the Jamaica as well as in schools. Violence in the general society, particularly among adults, is affecting children and this is empirically established by Osofsky [38].

In Jamaica, Powell, Bourne and Waller found that crime and violence were the leading national problem and that interpersonal trust was low among Jamaicans. Powell, Bourne and Waller found that 7/100 Jamaicans indicated that they trust other people, 3/25 said the 'war against crime and delinquency in Jamaica is being won', 9/50 people have been assaulted and attacked, 16/25 believed that the police can be bribed, which speaks to the social dilemma which is occurring in the society and that this is affecting the children. There is no denial that the social deviance at the primary level is an indication of the cultured milieu of violence in the social, the low interpersonal trust and that these cannot be solely placed at the feet of school authority to solve the general social decay in the society. Studies have empirically established that exposure to violence causes one to commit acts of violence [38-50], which offers an explanation for the need of conflict management styles and strategies by educational leaders as well as teachers.

Conflicts arose owing to different social issues, which has led to educational administrators implementing various conflict management strategies (i.e. avoidance, comprise, counseling, problem solving sessions, Dispute Resolution Foundation, Police). Luthan provided a justification for conflict that it arises from information deficiency. When people fail to communicate effectively, it means that communication is not complete, because it does not result in understanding. Misinterpreted messages can lead to disagreements

and increase the possibility of conflicts. This provides an understanding of what obtains in this study as many of the students are drawn from violent inner-city communities which are opposed to the other's perspectives, and this therefore limits interaction between the students and oftentimes they misinterpret the other's intentions [51-77]. This accounts for the inclusion of social skill session, counseling, problem solving sessions and compromise employed by school's administrators to address the social group dynamics and the conflicts therein. Glasser provided an explanation of the importance of social skills in conflict management that many children exhibit negative behaviours at school because they lack the skills necessary to use positive behaviours to meet their basic needs. The skills necessary to interact in a constructive and cooperative manner may not have been developed for several reasons. The pupils in this study admitted that the employment of conflict management strategies have aided in the reduction of conflicts, which based on Glasser's perspective it is understandable as the student will learn to work in a group, understand the issue of differences, respecting other's perspectives and appreciate how to relate to others [78-86].

The reality is without teaching social skills, problem-solving skills and the utilization of other conflict management strategies, acts of violence how have been greater in many inner-city schools in Jamaica. Acts of violence disrupts the learning process and therefore lowers the quality of the educational outcome. How can the teaching-learning process be at it zenith, where there are disruptions such as shooting, murders, stabbing, extortion and rape committed in an educational institution, particularly at the primary and secondary level? A provision of the some statistics on violence in schools will let you understand the severity and coverage of the violence issue in schools as well as provide a rationale for likelihood of the teaching-learning process be retarded with acts of violence in schools. Among studied sample of high school students, Soyibo and Lee found that 27% of the participants had caused injuries to persons, 59.5% used weapons during violent acts, including the use of hands or feet. Some 59.1% used nasty words, 54.5% used punches and kicks, 26.5% used blunt objects, 18.4% used knives, 9.3% used icepicks, 8.9% used machetes, 8.5% used scissors, 7.5% used forks, 6.9% used guns, other weapons (bottles and dividers) 6.7% and 5.5%. The findings of Soyibo and Lee are not limited to high schools as Callender (1996 in Bourne, p. 79), researching schools in Kingston, Jamaica; found that 7 out of every 10 pupils had seen fights in which a weapon was used. Another research on acts of violence in Jamaican schools by Meeks-Gardener et al. revealed that 84% of children knew the child who took weapons such as a knife to school. Furthermore, Meeks-Gardener et al. found that 8 out of 10 children witnessed in-class confrontations and 40% of them saw teachers been attacked by pupils. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that teachers in this study believed that employed by administrators in their schools are less effective than other schools personnel as they are the ones having to experience the conflict on a minutely, hours and daily basis. The teachers are not the ones that is able to take a final decision on behaviour of a deviant child and there is a probability that they believe that the punishment does not fit the behaviour [87-102].

According to Bourne, many young adults indicated that they have experienced violence in their lives, which would be the same for young primary school aged children, if this were to be the case in schools the young children would dread the school experience. The constant psychological scar of witnessing violence in schools, in the form of threats, name calling, physical confrontation and otherwise, is making schools unsafe for pupils and retarding the learning process. One can understand, therefore, the importance of conflict management style and strategies employed in schools, particularly violent prone schools,

and why teachers may think that the administrators' are pussyfooting around institute formal approaches to address acts of violence and by extension conflicts in schools.

The inter-correlation between acts of violence and lower academic performance is a rationale for the frustration of many teachers, particularly in environment in school there is a growing require for performance based salary. The number of violence acts and the nature of these acts have not been labeled as explanations of the low academic performance of students in Jamaican schools, and the public is ascribing the low performance mostly on teachers and by extension educational leaders. It can be extrapolated from the findings of Powell, Bourne and Waller's cross-sectional probability survey that there is national dilemma in the educational system as they found that education is the third leading national problem in 2007. Instead of coalescing all the factors that account for the dismally low performance of students at the primary and secondary level in the Jamaican educational system, the former Minister of Education (then Minister, Andrew Holness) classified many schools as 'failing schools' (Henry) and decry principals and teachers for the dismally low performance of students. The Minister did to take into consideration, the hours lost to violence in some schools that are in violent prone areas, the number and frequency of disruptions in class to address conflicts in these inner-city schools in which pupils are drawn from warring communities, the time spent in mediation, the time utilized for teaching social skills and problem-solving sessions with the students instead of teaching? It is easy to understand the frustration of teachers, with the background the performance-based pay system, and time taken by administrators to reach a decision on social deviance in schools.

Of the two schools in this study both are classified as a 'failing schools'. With the plethora of acts of violence, the extent of the cases and the low of teaching-learning hours owing to stoppages to address conflicts among students, principals of schools, particularly the failing ones, are faced with the challenge of how to modernize and transform poor performing students within a cultured crime environment. Apart from the challenges of the general cultured milieu from which the students are from, there are issues such as 1) parental background (including income challenges), 2) a support system, 3) nutritional inadequacies, 4) low IQ of students and 5) deficiencies in social amenities and all these things contribute to the low performance of students; yet former Minister of Education, Mr. Andrew Holness, single out teachers and principals to carry the bulk of the blame for the educational deficiency among students. Such a position is highly fictitious and irresponsible as the factors influence academic performance extend beyond only teacher and/or the administrators of schools.

In this study, all participants concurs that acts of violence and different conflicts are high in these two schools. In fact, the findings from the qualitative research are no different from that of the quantitative research. The reality, teachers spend less hours in the teaching of the curriculum, there is reduced instructional time and supervision, there is the inability of the teachers to complete curriculum, and psychological stress of conflicts are accounting for some degree of failing students. With the literature showing that acts of witnessed violence increases probability of perpetrating the same [41,42], if the wider acts of violence in the community are not addressed with urgency, inner-city schools in Jamaica will continue to experience reduced educational outcomes of students as they become preoccupied with violence instead of education. Bourne aptly described the effects of violence this way that "Besides causing physical harm, there is the socio-psychological distress associated with violence"(p. 3), and this must account for the

lowered performance displayed by students at the primary level as well as otherwise. It should come as no surprise that classroom teachers will punish the simplest of in-class social deviances as these will affect the general psychological state of children and end result will be lowered academic performance of the students. The children on the other hand, interpret the actions of the teachers as excessive and believe that their teachers punish for every little thing and that some punishment measures are belittling; even though the conflict management styles and strategies have aided in lowering conflicts in schools.

From the present findings, most of the students (4 out of 5) indicated that different conflict management skills play a critical role in address social deviance at school and frequently aiding in improving academic performance. One pupil stated that "…If you fight, a letter is sent to your parent(s) requesting them to attend the school to address what next?". In fact, the pupils were able to forward a listing of likely outcome or approaches that will follow certain social deviance at school. "Detention, class chores (cleaning of classroom), standing inside in a corner or outside in the sun are popular strategies employed by class teachers and the wider school's administrators for most social deviant behaviours of students." The students focus on the punishment and not the implications of their actions as well as its coverage on the general state of others' educational outcome, while they believe that the teacher's focus is the punishment and not suitability the reprimand. Tosi et al. offered an explanation of what is unfolding in this study that differences in values, attitudes and beliefs contribute to feelings about what is right and what is wrong and to the predisposition to behave positively or negatively in reaction to an event. Fifty-eight percentage points of students indicated that employed conflict management styles and strategies effectively address the conflicts, which shows the consequence for action dilemma.

On witnessing acts of violence in the classroom, teachers as well as administrators cannot just arbitrarily switch the minds of the children into gear to effectively absorb instructions. There is the delayed effect of the witnessed activities, the severity of the matter and the extent to which other becomes involved that will linger on the mind of the children when the teacher tries to impart the instructions. Instead of solely applying themselves to learning in class, the cultured crime milieu in Jamaica is resulting in the imitation of the acts of violence, which was outlined in Social Learning Theory (Bandura. Social Learning Theory posited that people can acquire aggressive behaviours by way of observation and experience, and this suggests that switching from education to acts of violence goes back to the general social milieu

With Osofsky perspective that "Exposure to violence could have significant effects on children during older development" goes to the crux of the social deviance in the society and at all levels in the educational system in Jamaica.

The milieu in Jamaica is infesting, fostering and perpetrating the grown of violence, which was uncovered in this research. The students opined the behaviour of the police when they are called in to address some social deviance including physical confrontations, weapon carrying (i.e. knives, et cetera) and behaviours that contravenes the law. The police, oftentimes, are abusive, using foul language (i.e. bad words), being physical with students and widen the oppressive nature of social punishments. They (i.e. students) contended that the police and other stakeholders are sometimes warranted to address unlawful behaviours displayed by students; but, the extent to which they people go are beyond the call of duty, belittling and trifling of the rights of the child. Clearly, the violence in the society is negatively affecting the people which are expressed in the behaviour of personnel by the State

that are given the responsibility to serve and protect. While conflict management styles and strategies employed by schools have aided in the reduction of conflicts, the must be restraint of the measure to ensure that conflicts are not perpetrated thereafter.

The social deviance affecting many primary schools in Kingston and St. Andrew extends to Jamaica as well as to secondary schools and this continues to be a challenge for teachers and administrators. The researcher believed that among the components of conflict management styles and strategies are avoidance and compromise that while have their place should not be used as weapons against the students. Such an approach could suppress the conflict, and care should be used in utilizing avoidance and compromise in conflict management. When conflicts are suppressed, disputants invest more energy in perpetuating the conflict and individuals who have the potential to contribute toward enhancing school performance become stifled by the coercive style of administrators. Simply put, administrators must be cognizant of the conflict style and strategy as their actions could go to further deepen the divide and foster futuristic conflicts. This provides a justification for the importance of collaboration in conflict management and as Lussier indicated that the view that the users of this style assertively attempt to jointly resolve conflict with the best solution, agreeable to all concerned, it is good for conflict resolution [103-121].

According to De Dreu et al. because a collaborative approach pays attention to the interest of all parties, it makes subordinates feel more satisfied and therefore this approach can be used to temper the atmosphere in schools instead of avoidance and compromise. Although, a compromising style to resolving conflict takes an assertive give-and-take concessions, it must be used in a positive way in confronting conflicts in schools as students must understands it purpose and it should not be construed as avoidance to one's detriment. Like compromise, avoidance is passively ignoring conflict, which can further exasperate the situation. The school personnel must understand the appropriateness of conflict management style and strategies, and the approaches should not be used with carefully assessing the situation and measures used because of its appropriateness. The pupils in this research were complaining about the inappropriateness of conflict management styles and strategies by school's personnel and although there is no evidence of this unfolding in the sampled schools, the school's personnel, particularly the administrators, must be equally mindful of appropriateness of strategies and how to best apply a strategy to the right situation. Morgan opined that a manager's choice to employ a particular conflict management strategy must be hinged on whether he or she wishes to engage in assertive or co-operative behaviour, which offers an insight into the importance of the appropriateness of a style or strategy in attempting to effectively resolve a conflict. Based on the perspective of Bisno a conflict management strategy is an operational plan to achieve a conflict goal and this speaks to the validity of understanding the appropriateness of utilization strategies in seeking to obtain a desired behavioural outcome.

Cole believed that students were increasingly coming from backgrounds where antisocial behaviour was more the norm than the exception and that their behaviour is a reflection of socialization on how conflicts are resolved. Shafii and Shafi stated that children learnt to resolve their own problems through the use of violent strategies which they see being used. School's administrators as well as teachers cannot always employ authoritative or controlling power strategies in managing conflict as they may not attain their desired outcome. Controlling conflict management style employs power to dominate and ensure that one party wins at the expense of the other and within

the context of the students will further deepen the divide between administrators and students. Follett purported that there are three primary strategies that leaders can use to manage conflict, which are openness (or collaboration), distribution (or non-confrontation), and control. In this research while pupils admit to the importance of conflict management styles or strategies, clearly there is a divide between employed strategies and their perception of appropriateness. This divide can be as a result of the non-collaborative stance of the school's personal believing that students are vessels made to absorb instructions and not people with perspectives, desires, ideas, values and an understanding of right and wrong. With the pupils being mostly from inner-city violence communities, a controlling style to conflict management as well as employing violence to curb their behaviour will foster resentment, increase conflict and appropriate skills would have been lost in the discourse of resentment.

Conclusion

The violence pandemic that is experienced by many Jamaicans, particularly young children, requires immediate appropriate conflict management strategies. It should be noted here that merely applying a conflict management strategy as a band to all conflict will not yield the desired results. The conflict management strategies employed by school personnel in this research provide empirical evident that they have been lowering in-school violence and conflicts. Despite the value of conflict management styles and strategies in social deviance modifications, not all strategies will attain the same results and can be employed to all situations. With the complexities of group dynamics and human behaviour, it is imperative that school's personnel be taught the appropriateness of utilizing certain conflict management styles and strategies, as the wrong approach could further deepen conflicts.

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