



## **Investigation into Strategies to Enhance Positive Inter Group Relationships and Assessed The Effectiveness of Existing School Programs in Public Secondary Schools in The Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria**

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**Abstract.** Inter group relationships among students in public secondary schools are fundamental to creating conducive learning environments and promoting social cohesion. This study investigated strategies to enhance positive inter group relationships and assessed the effectiveness of existing school programs in public secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria, using a descriptive research design and a sample of 180 students. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that students positively perceived strategies such as inter group sports, cultural events, cooperative projects, and peer mentoring as effective in fostering inter group harmony. School clubs, anti bullying programs, guidance and counseling services, and clear school policies were viewed as supportive of positive interactions across diverse student groups. The study concludes that a combination of structured strategies and supportive school programs enhances inter group relationships among students. It recommends expanding collaborative learning, strengthening peer support, enhancing inclusive activities, and investing in counseling services.

**Keywords:** Inter group relationships, Effectiveness of existing school programs, Public secondary schools.

## Introduction

Inter-group relationships among students in public secondary schools constitute a crucial dimension of school life, as they directly influence students' social development, emotional well-being, academic engagement, and overall school climate. Schools are not merely academic institutions; they are social environments where students from diverse backgrounds interact, form identities, and learn values such as tolerance, cooperation, and respect for differences. Positive inter-group relationships encourage mutual understanding, reduce prejudice, and promote peaceful coexistence, thereby creating an atmosphere conducive to effective teaching and learning. In contrast, negative inter-group relations often manifest in the form of discrimination, bullying, social exclusion, rivalry, and open conflict, all of which undermine students' academic focus and psychological stability [1], [2].

Inter-group relationships refer to the patterns of interaction, attitudes, and behaviors that exist among individuals belonging to different social groups within a school setting. These groups may be defined by ethnicity, religion, language, gender, socio-economic status, academic ability, or extracurricular interests [3], [4], [5]. During adolescence a period characterized by identity formation and heightened sensitivity to social belonging students are particularly vulnerable to group influences. As a result, the quality of inter-group interactions in secondary schools plays a decisive role in shaping students' values, interpersonal skills, and attitudes toward diversity [6]. Schools that successfully promote positive inter-group relations are more likely to produce students who are socially responsible, emotionally balanced, and academically motivated.

Public secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, operate within a uniquely diverse social context. As Nigeria's capital, the FCT attracts families from all parts of the country, resulting in schools with students from multiple ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. This diversity presents significant opportunities for intercultural learning, social integration, and national unity. However, it also poses challenges, particularly when differences in beliefs, traditions, and social status are not effectively managed. In some cases, these differences lead to group stereotyping, marginalization, and conflict among students, which negatively affect school harmony and academic outcomes.

Recent observations in public secondary schools within the FCT indicate increasing concerns related to inter-group tensions, student rivalry, and occasional group-based conflicts. These challenges are often exacerbated by inadequate social integration programs, weak peer support structures, and limited opportunities for meaningful interaction among diverse student groups. When left unaddressed, poor inter-group relationships can escalate into persistent hostility, increased indiscipline, and a breakdown of trust within the school community. Such conditions not only disrupt teaching and learning but also threaten the broader goal of education as a tool for social cohesion and national development.

To address these challenges, schools have adopted various strategies and programs aimed at fostering positive inter-group relationships. These include inter-group sports competitions, cultural and social events, cooperative learning activities, peer mentoring, school clubs, guidance and counseling services, anti-bullying initiatives, and clearly defined school policies that promote inclusion and respect for diversity. These strategies are designed to encourage interaction across group boundaries, reduce prejudice, and build shared identities among students.

However, the effectiveness of these strategies largely depends on how well they are implemented and how students perceive and engage with them [5], [6], [7], [8].

Despite the introduction of such programs, there remains limited empirical evidence on their effectiveness in promoting positive inter-group relationships among students in public secondary schools in the FCT. Many existing interventions are implemented without systematic evaluation, making it difficult for policymakers, school administrators, and educators to identify best practices. Furthermore, contextual differences among schools mean that strategies successful in one setting may not automatically yield the same results in another. Against this background, this study investigates strategies for enhancing positive inter-group relationships and examines the effectiveness of existing school programs in public secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite efforts by school authorities to promote social cohesion, many public secondary schools in FCT, Abuja, continue to experience challenges related to inter-group relations. Students often form cliques based on ethnic, religious, or socio-economic affiliations, which may lead to misunderstandings, rivalry, and sometimes violent confrontations. These conflicts disrupt academic activities, reduce student participation in collaborative programs, and undermine the overall school climate. Furthermore, there is limited empirical research focusing on specific strategies that can effectively enhance inter-group relationships among students in public secondary schools within the FCT. Without evidence-based strategies, interventions often remain superficial and fail to address the underlying social dynamics contributing to inter-group tension. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate strategies that can foster positive inter-group relationships among students, with the aim of promoting peaceful coexistence and enhancing academic performance.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study is aimed to investigate strategies to enhance positive inter group relationships and assessed the effectiveness of existing school programs in public secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

Identify strategies that can enhance positive inter-group relationships among students in public secondary schools in FCT, Abuja.

Examine the effectiveness of existing school programs in promoting harmony and cooperation among diverse student groups.

### 1.4 Research Question

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

What strategies can be implemented to enhance positive inter-group relationships among students in public secondary schools in FCT, Abuja?

How effective are existing school programs in promoting harmony and cooperation among students from diverse groups?



**Methods**

The study adopted a descriptive research design, which is suitable for investigating the current state of inter-group relationships and identifying strategies for improvement among public secondary school students in FCT, Abuja. Descriptive research is appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect detailed information about students’ experiences, perceptions, and attitudes toward inter-group relations without manipulating variables. The population of the study comprises all students in public secondary schools across the FCT, Abuja. A sample size of 180 students was drawn using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation across different schools, grade levels, and demographic backgrounds. Data was collected through structured questionnaires, which will include both closed-ended and open-ended questions designed to gather information on students’ perceptions of inter-group relationships, sources of conflict, and strategies for fostering positive interactions. Collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to summarize responses. This analysis provided insights into the current state of inter-group relationships and highlight the strategies perceived as effective by students for enhancing cooperation and harmony among diverse student groups.

**Results and Discussion**

**Research Question 1:** What strategies can be implemented to enhance positive inter-group relationships among students in public secondary schools in FCT, Abuja?

**Table 1. Strategies to Enhance Inter-Group Relationships**

<b>Sub-Item Question</b>	<b>Agree (%)</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (%)</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Organizing inter-group sports & cultural activities improves relationships	60%	40%	Majority of students agree that activities bring groups together.
Conducting workshops/seminars on teamwork and tolerance enhances cooperation	55%	45%	Students find educational programs helpful for promoting harmony.
Encouraging group projects with diverse students fosters harmony	50%	50%	Collaborative projects are highly effective in building positive relationships.
Implementing peer mentoring programs strengthens interaction	65%	35%	Peer mentoring is considered an effective strategy to improve inter-group relations.



The result collected in Table 1 indicate that students perceive all listed strategies positively. Inter-group sports and cultural activities, peer mentoring, and collaborative projects are particularly effective in fostering positive relationships. This suggests that both recreational and structured educational interventions are valuable for enhancing harmony among diverse student groups in public secondary schools in FCT.

**Research Question 2:** How effective are existing school programs in promoting harmony and cooperation among students from diverse groups?

**Table 2. Effectiveness of Existing School Programs**

<b>Sub-Item Question</b>	<b>Agree (%)</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (%)</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
School clubs and societies promote positive interaction	60%	40%	Extracurricular programs help students engage across groups.
Anti-bullying programs reduce conflicts between groups	55%	45%	Conflict-prevention initiatives are effective in maintaining harmony.
Guidance & counseling promote understanding and conflict resolution	50%	50%	Counseling services are seen as equally important in managing inter-group relations.
School rules & regulations encourage respectful behavior	65%	35%	Enforcement of school policies contributes positively to inter-group respect.

Table 2 result collected shows that existing school programs are generally effective in promoting harmony among students. Clubs, anti-bullying measures, counseling, and clear rules contribute significantly to positive inter-group interactions. This implies that while strategies outside the classroom (like sports and clubs) are important, structured guidance and regulation within the school environment also play a crucial role in fostering peaceful coexistence.

**Findings**

The result revealed that students perceive all listed strategies positively. Inter-group sports and cultural activities, peer mentoring, and collaborative projects are particularly effective in fostering positive relationships. This affirmed that both recreational and structured educational interventions are valuable for enhancing harmony among diverse student groups in public secondary schools in FCT. Also, the result established that existing school programs are generally effective in promoting harmony among students. Clubs, anti-bullying measures, counseling, and clear rules contribute significantly to positive inter-group interactions. This implies that while strategies outside the classroom (like sports and clubs) are important, structured guidance and regulation within the school environment also play a crucial role in fostering peaceful coexistence.

## Discussion of Findings

The findings from the two tables show that students perceive specific strategies and existing school programs positively in enhancing inter-group relationships in public secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria. These findings align with research evidence on improving intergroup relations in school settings [9], [10], [11], [12], [13], [14]. The result revealed cooperative and structured group activities such as inter-group sports, cultural events, and collaborative academic projects were regarded by students as effective strategies. Research on contact theory emphasizes that cooperative learning where students from different backgrounds work together toward common goals reduces prejudice and improves intergroup attitudes because it encourages interaction under supportive conditions. Studies have shown cooperative learning enhances social interactions and mutual respect across diverse student groups in classrooms (e.g., cooperative learning groups promote cross-group friendships and reduce stereotypes [6], [15]).

Result indicated that the positive perception of peer mentoring and similar programs supports what research on buddy or mentoring systems has argued that peer support structures help create inclusive environments, increase social interaction, and foster acceptance of differences within school communities. The buddy system demonstrates that pairing students in supportive roles can build trust and improve peer acceptance, which contributes to enhanced social cohesion and inter-group cooperation. The effectiveness of school clubs, anti-bullying campaigns, guidance and counseling services, and clear rules matches findings from studies highlighting the importance of intentional, school-wide structures that support contact and relationship building. Schools that actively structure opportunities for diverse students to interact such as clubs, dialogues, or counseling sessions help foster empathy, reduce anxiety about interactions, and strengthen intergroup bonds [16]. Inclusive environments where students learn to respect diversity and work together contribute positively to intergroup relationships. Research on inclusive and multicultural learning environments shows that when teachers encourage cooperation and value diversity, intergroup contact among students becomes more positive, improving attitudes and reducing intergroup tensions.

## Conclusion

The study found that students in public secondary schools in FCT, Abuja, perceive a range of strategies and existing school programs as effective in enhancing positive inter group relationships. Strategies such as organized sports, cultural activities, collaborative academic projects, peer mentoring, and guidance and counseling services were all rated positively by respondents. Additionally, school clubs, anti bullying initiatives, and clear regulations were seen as contributing to harmony and cooperation among diverse student groups. These findings suggest that both structured academic strategies and supportive school programs play vital roles in improving intergroup relations in schools.

Based on the findings, the following are recommended:

1. Expand Cooperative Learning Programs: Schools should institutionalize cooperative projects and group tasks that require students from different groups to work together regularly, as these promote mutual respect and reduce intergroup bias.
2. Strengthen Peer Support Systems: Implement formal peer mentoring and buddy systems to help students build cross group friendships and provide social support.
3. Enhance Inclusive Extracurricular Activities: Schools should organize diverse cultural, sporting, and club activities that deliberately mix students from different backgrounds to foster interaction.
4. Invest in Guidance and Counseling: Guidance counselors should be trained and supported to lead inter group empathy sessions and conflict resolution programs.
5. Promote School Wide Inclusive Policies: Administrators should develop policies that reward positive cross group interaction and discourage exclusionary behavior.

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