



## **Causes of Conflict and its Management Strategies in Anambra State Tertiary Institutions**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Conflict management refers to attempts to control or regulate conflict through a number of measures. Successful conflict management occurs by listening to and providing opportunities to meet the needs of all the parties and to adequately address interests, so that, each party is satisfied with the outcome. The study investigated the causes of conflict in Anambra state tertiary institutions and most importantly the management strategies employed in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. The study was carried out in Anambra state. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. For the study sample, three hundred and sixty was selected by stratified sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was 45 items Likert-type questionnaire tagged 'Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire' (CMSQ). The reliability of the instrument was determined through test-retest method and the reliability co-efficient was 0.86. The content validity of the instrument was carried out by two experts, one in measurement and evaluation and the other in guidance and counseling. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics; multiple regression analysis, analysis of variance t-statistics and probability value from the regression result were used for the test of hypotheses. The result of the analysis revealed that causes of conflict, both external pressures and internal pressures has no positive and significant effect on conflict management strategies in Anambra state tertiary institutions. Again, the result revealed that implication of conflict, distrust and hostility among professionals and academics, have contributed in hampering smooth, effective and efficient administration of conflict management in Anambra state tertiary institutions. Findings from the hypothesis showed that commonly used conflict management strategies; the participatory decision strategy has positive and significant effect on conflict management in Anambra state tertiary institutions. The study thus, concludes that conflict management strategies are critical variables and have positively and significantly improved conflict management in Anambra state tertiary institutions within the period under review. Amongst the recommendations is that University/Polytechnic/College constitution, laws and regulations should be made available to both academic and professional administrators and all staff so as to avoid communication gap and conflict within the system.

**Keywords:** Causes of Conflict, Management Strategies, Anambra State

### **INTRODUCTION**

Many people view conflict as an activity that is almost totally negative and has no positive qualities. Some consider it as dysfunctional, destructive, and the same time as a catalyst for change, creativity and production (Adeyemi & Yahaya, 2019). The tertiary institutions and organizations is not immune from conflict. This is because; in any circumstances where two or more people co-exist to form an organization, conflict is anticipated. Conflict is an integral part of work and the inability to resolve conflict is the biggest source of stress and dissatisfaction in the workplace (Afrankova & Emrova, 2018). The university and college systems comprise a variety of communities based on the wide range of academic disciplines and functions. Its internal behavior constitutes a very complex organism shaped by many hands. This implies that, internally the university or college life is shaped by many logic, habits and dynamics. It is also influenced by various challenges, constraints and pressures from the outer environment. The combinations of external pressures and internal pressures within the

university and college systems made administration very difficult, therefore conflict is expected. Conflicts have given rise to suspicion and resentment among professionals and academics, thus contributing in hindering smooth, effective and efficient administration in the universities. It also appears that despite this situation, stakeholders in education seem to develop nonchalant attitude towards conflicts. If this role conflict is not checked, it can be descriptive and negative as people involved will often see one another as enemy (Fareo & Jajua 2018). This is unwholesome for the college community and Nigeria educational system as a whole (Ndum & Okey, 2012). De Janasz, Dowd, and Schneider (2006) stressed that conflict is a fact of life in organizations. According to Folgers and Shubert (1995), colleges and universities are no longer seen as quiet enclaves free from the conflicts that arise in all hierarchical organization. Differences in goals or plans for the allotment of resources, misunderstanding or conflicting application of institutional regulations, breaches of formal or informal contracts, power struggles and personal antagonisms are all possible sources of conflict.

The study is hinged on Process Theory proposed by Goldman (1966), in Alade (1998). The theory states that the observation of conflicts pertaining to major organizational offices is a reliable procedure for sampling the developmental tendencies of the organization as a whole. Hence, when universities experience positive/non-destructive role conflicts, innovations and creativity would emerge, which will further lead to better conflict resolutions and conflict avoidance; thus improving the administrators' efficacy and effectiveness in accomplishing set goals and objectives of the universities/colleges.

A number of research findings showed that various form of conflicts also occurs at varying degrees and proportions in tertiary institutions. Amuseghan (2007) for instance, found that the level of occurrence of student/authority conflicts in the United Kingdom (UK) and Canadian universities was high, while Oyebade (2000);Awosusi (2005); Adeyemi, 2009;Adeyemi and Ademilua (2012) and Olaleye and Arogundade (2013) studies revealed that the occurrence of conflict in Nigerian colleges of education and universities were at a frequent level. Their studies also highlighted that communication gap between management and workers were the leading cause of conflict in the universities. Oyebade (1994) in another study described conflict as inevitable. Conflict can therefore be described as a fact of life, and it can be said to be a reality in any social system. In the Nigerian institutions, there had been chains of conflicts which had led to gradual but steady disruption of academic activities. Many scholars have identified different conflict management strategies being used in organizations. Oyebade, (2000); Adeyemi (2010); Adeyemi and Olumilua (2012); and Olaleye and Arogundade (2013) revealed in their studies that the most effective strategies for resolving conflict was through dialogue between the two parties involved. The strategy identified by Meyer (1994) was effective communication which he described as the best because it would make the group aware of the kind of communication which could lead to problem solving. Nevertheless, Ibukun (1997) identified problem solving, appeal to superior organizational goals, prevention and avoidance, expression of opportunities and resources, use of authority and command, changing the structure of the organization and compromise as management strategies for resolving conflicts organizations. Likewise, Oyebade (1995) identified certain strategies as important in resolving conflict. These strategies include dialogue, automatic, emergency and delaying approaches. The efforts of all stakeholders in the college/university management are required in ensuring amicable resolution of conflict. In this regard, Adebayo (2007) postulated that the first strategy of conflict resolution is commitment to the management of productive conflict, such that conflict does not become destructive. He advocated for these strategies by enjoining leaders, management and all in positions of authority to promote the rule of law, protect the fundamental human rights, promote human freedom, fair allocation of values and equity of justice. These values are very vital in order to reduce hostility and conflict in organizations. Conflicts of interest in tertiary institutions are as follows:

1. Students versus college/university management on issues of increase in tuition fees, poor electricity and water supply, attaching death of students to bad administration of the Provost/Rector/Vice-Chancellor of the college, polytechnic or university. This conflict degenerated in Nnamdi Azikiwe University to destruction of property worth millions of naira which led to the closure of the institution in 2003.
2. Students versus lecturers: Students attributing their poor performances to lecturers' weaknesses or wickedness.

3. Staff versus the Provost/Rector/Vice-Chancellor: delay in salary payment, lack of promotion when due, delay of promotion areas,
4. Staff versus Federal/State Government: Areas of interest included nonpayment of certain benefits and earned allowances. In Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, the Non- Academic Staff Union (NASU) and Senior Staff Association of Nigerian University (SSANU) in January 2019 embarked on an indefinite industrial action to demand payment of earned allowances. The workers began their strike on the same day their colleagues in Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) resumed full academic activities at the university after their nationwide strike for their rights. The then NASU chairperson Njideka Nwangwu, said that the university management has refused to disburse to non- academic staff the earned allowances released by the government to the university in the second week of January. She said other universities have paid all their workers. (Okafor 2019).It was against this backdrop that this study was carried out to examine the causes of conflicts in tertiary institutions and determine the most effective management strategies that could be used in resolving them. In addressing this problem, three research questions and one research hypothesis were postulated.

### **Empirical Review**

Adeyemi and Yahaya (2019) examined conflict management strategies and administrative effectiveness in tertiary institutions in Sokoto metropolis. The study employed a correlational survey research design with questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. The population comprised all the eight tertiary institutions in the area. A sample of 168 lecturers were selected as respondents across four tertiary institutions. Two researcher developed instruments titled “Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire” (CMSQ) and “Administrative Effectives Scale” (AES), with reliability indices of 0.82 and 0.85 respectively, were used for data collection.

Data were analyzed using Multiple Regression Analysis. The study established a significant relationship between dialogue, competition, prevention, and communication on one hand and administrative effectiveness on the other hand. It is recommended that tertiary institutions institutionalize dialogue as a conflict management strategy because through dialogue, team members develop skills to think together and to accept differences, thereby avoiding crises and improving performance.

Adeyemi and Ademilua, (2012) investigated conflicts management strategies and administrative effectiveness in Nigerian universities. As a descriptive survey, the study population comprised all the 62 public universities in Nigeria. Out of these, 12 universities were selected through the simple random sampling technique. Out of the 25,421 members of staff in the universities, 3,820 members of staff were selected for the study. The instrument used to collect data for the study was the “Conflict Management Strategies and Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire”. The data collected were analysed using frequency count, percentages, mean, Correlation Matrix, Regression Analysis of Variance and Multiple Regression. It was found that conflict in Nigerian universities occurred frequently. Communication gap between the authorities and the workers was found to be the major cause of conflict in the universities. The effectiveness of the existing conflict management strategies used in Nigerian universities was at a moderate level. It was recommended that the authorities of Nigerian universities should adopt a blend of management strategies in managing conflicts in their institutions in order to enhance administrative effectiveness.

Mirian, Chukwudebelu and Rev. Onuoha (2020) investigated conflict management strategies for improving secondary school administration in Imo State. It was a descriptive survey carried out in Imo State Secondary Schools with Senior Secondary School Principals (SSSP) and Junior Secondary School Principal (JSSP) as the respondents. The population of the study was 482 principals in the 274 secondary schools from the six education zones of Imo State. The study was a census study no sample was conducted. The instrument for data collection was a researcher-made questionnaire. The researcher collected the instrument with the help of a trained research assistant. The instrument was adequately validated by 3 experts in the relevant field. Mean rating, ranking and t- test statistics were used to analyze the data collected. The finding revealed that five strategies out of the 10 listed for conflict management were effective for improving secondary school administration and out of all the strategies, negotiation was the most effective. Based on the findings the researchers recommended

among others that the relevant authority should train principals on effective conflict management strategies for better administration service delivery.

Alajekwu and Alajekwu, (2017) investigates how properly managed conflict can improve performance of institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The sample comprised 1,200 respondents from all the government owned universities in south eastern Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was a 22-item structured Likert type questionnaire found reliable with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.78. The research questions were answered with the frequency tables and percentages with SPSS software version 20. The results show that organizational conflict between teaching-staff and school administrators, students and teaching-staff, students and school administrators; and students and non-teaching staff have no significant positive relationship on the performance of institutions of higher learning in south eastern Nigeria. It is then recommended among others that in the events of any organizational conflict, the personalities involved in the activities should not be attacked, instead, the problem should be the focus.

Muhammad and Karima, (2019) Tertiary institutions in Nigeria like many developing countries have witnessed series of conflicts; the chaotic situation has undermined so many programmes aimed at enhancing the impartation of knowledge and skills. The paper advocates the use of peace education as a strategy for managing conflict in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Some of the root causes of conflicts in tertiary institutions includes; delay in meeting the demands of student, poor communication and staff unionism. While the consequence of conflict includes: Closure of affected schools, strike by the staff of the institutions, loss of life and destruction of properties. Some of the peace education strategies for managing conflict in tertiary institutions includes: Mediation programmes, integration of the peace education principles and skills into multiple subject areas as part of the curriculum content, inculcating in students the right values and attitudes on how to manage anger and fostering the spirit of unity. The challenges of implementing peace education includes: inadequate knowledge and skills of peace education, poor communication channels and leadership style of the school administrators. Some of the suggestions made includes: Capacity building on peace education, good communication channels and use of appropriate leadership styles.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

Descriptive survey design was used for the study. A survey research is one in which a group of people is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only few people considered to be representative of the entire group, the method was considered appropriate for the present study because it has been used successfully in related research. The study was carried out in Anambra state and Anambra state has nine recognized tertiary institutions, namely: Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Federal Polytechnic Oko and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Uli, Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe. The population was made up of all staff and management of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Federal Polytechnic Oko and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbariam. The econometric technique involving descriptive statistics, multiple regression analysis, analysis of variance t-statistics and probability value from the regression result were used for the test of hypotheses.

## **RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

The descriptive statistics shows the minimum value, maximum value, mean and standard deviation of the variables used in the study

### **Descriptive Statistics**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Causes of Conflict	354	9	30	21.20	4.301
Implication of Conflict	354	10	30	18.25	4.059
Commonly Used Conflict Management Strategies	354	11	30	20.22	4.086
Anambra State Tertiary Institutions	354	11	30	22.54	3.208

Source: SPSS Version 21.0

This table present the summary of statistics used in the analysis. It provides information about the mean and standard deviation of the variables used in the study. Causes of conflict have a mean value of 21.20 with a standard deviation of 4.301. Implication of conflict has a mean value of 18.25with a standard deviation of 4.059. Again, commonly used conflict management strategies have mean value of 20.22 and a standard deviation of 4.086 while Anambra State tertiary institutions recorded a mean value of 22.54 with a standard deviation of 3.208. Low values of standard deviation for each of the variables indicate a consensus on statements associated with each of the variables.

**Multiple Regression Analysis**

Multiple regression result was employed to test the effect of independent or explanatory variables on the dependent variables. The result of the multiple regression analysis is presented in the tables below.

**Table 2. Summary of the Regression Result**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.294 <sup>a</sup>	.686	.572	3.185	.086	6.151	5	326	.000	1.875

a. Predictors: (Constant), CC,IMC, CCMS

b. Dependent Variable Anambra State Tertiary Institutions

Source: SPSS 21.0

Table 2 shows that R<sup>2</sup> which measures the strength of the effect of independent variable on the dependent variable have the value of 0.686. This implies that 69% of the variations in conflict management strategies in tertiary institutions in Anambra state are explained by variations in (Causes of Conflict, Implication of Conflict and Commonly used Conflict Management Strategies). This was supported by adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of 0.572.

In order to check for autocorrelation in the model, Durbin-Watson statistics was employed. Durbin-Watson statistics of 1.875 in table 4.5 shows that the variables in the model are not auto correlated and that the model is reliable for predications.

**Table 3 Analysis of Variance**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	312.052	5	62.410	6.151	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	3307.502	326	10.146		
	Total	3619.554	331			

a. Predictors: (Constant), CC,IMC, CCMS

b. Dependent Variable: Anambra State tertiary Institutions

Source: SPSS 21.0

The f-statistics value of 6.151 in table 4.5 with f-statistics probability of 0.000 shows that the independent variables has significant effect on dependent. This shows that causes of conflict, implication of conflict and commonly used conflict management strategies can collectively explain the variations in conflict management strategies in tertiary institutions in Anambra state.

**Test of Hypotheses**

Here, the three hypotheses formulated in this study were tested using t-statistics and significance value of the individual variables in the regression result. The essence of this is to ascertain how significant are the effect of individual independent or explanatory variables on the dependent variables. The summary of the result is presented in the table below.

**Table 4: T-Statistics and Probability Value from the Regression Result**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	18.916	1.918		9.863	.000
Causes of Conflict	.123	.043	.158	-1.870	.072
Implication of Conflict	.028	.044	.204	-1.632	.016
1 Commonly used Conflict Management Strategies	.085	.044	.202	-2.923	.008

**Source: SPSS 21.0**

**Test of Hypothesis One**

Ho: Causes of conflict has no positive and significant effect on conflict management strategies in tertiary institutions in Anambra state.

Hi: Causes of conflict has positive and significant effect on conflict management strategies in tertiary institutions in Anambra state.

In testing this hypothesis, the t-statistics and probability value in table 4 is used. Causes of conflict had a t-statistics of -1.870 and a probability value of .072 which is statistically insignificant. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis and reject alternative hypotheses which state that the causes of conflict have no positive and significant effect on conflict management strategies in Anambra State tertiary institutions.

**Test of Hypothesis Two**

Ho: Implication of conflict has no positive and significant effect on conflict management strategies in tertiary institutions in Anambra state.

Hoi: Implication of conflict has positive and significant effect on conflict management strategies in tertiary institutions in Anambra state.

Implication of conflict has a t-statistics of 1.632 and a probability value of 0.016 which is statistically insignificant. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternative hypotheses which suggest that the implication of conflict has no positive and significant effect on conflict management strategies in Anambra State tertiary institutions.

**Test of Hypothesis Three**

Ho: Commonly used conflict management strategies has no positive and significant effect on conflict management in Anambra State tertiary institutions

Hi: Commonly used conflict management strategies has positive and significant effect on conflict management in Anambra State tertiary institutions

Commonly used conflict management strategies had t-statistics of 2.923 and probability value of 0.008 which is statistically significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypotheses which implies that commonly used conflict management strategies has positive and significant effect on conflict management in tertiary institutions in Anambra state.

**CONCLUSION**

The study investigated the causes of conflict, implication of conflict and its management strategies in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. The result of the analysis revealed that causes of conflict, both external pressures and internal pressures has no positive and significant effect on conflict management in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. Again, the result revealed that implication of conflict, distrust and hostility among professionals and academics, have contributed in hampering smooth, effective and efficient administration of conflict management strategies in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. Findings from the hypothesis showed that commonly used conflict management strategies; the participatory decision strategy has positive and significant effect on conflict management in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. The study thus, concludes that conflict management strategies are critical variables and have positively and significantly improved conflict management in tertiary institutions in Anambra state.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. University/Polytechnic/College constitution, laws and regulations should be made available to both academic and professional administrators and all staff so as to avoid communication gap and conflict within the system.
2. The management of universities, polytechnics and colleges of education should always explore the dialogue strategy as a foremost step in managing conflict before embarking on the others for higher administrative effectiveness in the institutions
3. The academic and professional administrators should continue to demonstrate spirit of tolerance so as to ensure the smooth running of the University/Polytechnic/College. Conditions that promote effective conflict management should include consideration of a wide range of alternative solutions, a cooperative climate, an organized and orderly process, and avoidance of artificial conflict-reducing devices such as voting or relying on a leader to make the final decision.
4. Conflict management should not be seen to imply a rigid approach that suits all situations, rather, it should involve a series of concerted efforts to prevent and arrest a seemingly serious crisis.

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