

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT APPROACHES AS DETERMINANTS OF ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTION IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA IMPLICATION FOR PEACE AND UNITY IN SELECTED COMMUNITIES

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Corresponding Author Adalikwu, Rose Amokeye Peace and Conflict Unit, Centre for General Studies, University of Cross River State, Nigeria Article History Received: 08/12/2024 Accepted: 25/12/2024 Published: 29/12/2024	Abstract: This study examined the impact of conflict management approaches on administrative effectiveness in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria, with implications for peace and conflict management. The research involved 309 heads of departments and utilised an ex-post-facto design. The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique and a proportionate stratified random sampling method. A validated instrument, Conflict Management Approaches as Determinants of Administrative Effectiveness Questionnaire (CMSAEQ), was used to measure collaboration and mediation strategies. Data analysis using simple and multiple linear regression revealed that both collaboration and mediation strategies significantly influenced administrative effectiveness. The study recommended that conflicts should be effectively managed rather than ignored. Keywords: Conflict Management, Approaches, Administrative & Effectiveness.
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Introduction

An administrator's role is to ensure the smooth and efficient daily operations of an organization, department, or team by managing tasks, facilitating communication, and maintaining records and systems. Key duties include answering phones, scheduling, filing, preparing reports, managing office supplies, and ensuring policies are followed. The specific responsibilities vary greatly depending on the industry and the size of the organization. According to Yange (2015) administrative effectiveness is an administrator's capability to successfully achieve an organization's goals by planning, organising, directing, and evaluating its functions and resources, such as staff, materials, and finances. It requires competent leadership, efficient resource allocation, and a conducive environment to boost performance and productivity, ultimately contributing to the organization's overall success and quality outcomes.

The differences in individuals' needs in society cannot be undermined. This is because man's needs are insatiable, coupled with the quest for daily interactions within and outside the environment. If not properly done, conflict may occur. Conflict occurs because of differing needs, perspectives, and goals, which is a natural aspect of human interaction. Ukpabio (2005) identified some common causes to include poor communication, unmet expectations, clashes in values and personalities, ego and pride, competition for limited resources, and past experiences or fears. While often seen negatively, well-managed conflict can also bring positive outcomes like creative solutions and diverse perspectives.

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Conflict management is the process of identifying and handling disagreements or disputes to minimise negative outcomes and prioritise positive ones, leading to improved effectiveness and a more positive work environment. It involves various tactics, like active listening, negotiation, and finding solutions that address the needs of all parties involved. By managing conflict effectively, organisations can prevent issues like poor morale and decreased productivity and foster innovation (Thomas, 2010).

Conflict is any form of disagreement between two or more parties, which can be seen even in the family, schools, churches and business organisations. Conflicts cannot totally be avoided in any organisation since in every organisation, there are structures or units with groups of different people to perform different functions in order to achieve the set objectives of the organisation. Despite the harmonious relationship that can be experienced in any human institution or organization, the existence of conflict situation is inevitable in the organization. People in organization deal with conflict daily; educational leaders are not exempt. In the past, educational institutions in Nigeria had few conflicts and controversies.

Conflicts can arise in tertiary institutions due to differing opinions and interests among staff, management, and students, potentially leading to strikes and reduced productivity. According to Uya (as cited in Uwa, 2014), effective conflict management is crucial in such settings. A study by Igbo (2010) explored crisis management techniques in Imo State's tertiary institutions, surveying 150 academic and 250 non-teaching staff. The findings revealed that integration and

dialogue were the preferred conflict resolution methods, likely due to their collaborative and problem-solving nature. These techniques allow for open discussion, leading to satisfactory solutions for all parties involved

The study carried out by Okon, Inaja, and Udo (2010) to determine principals' preferred conflict resolution style in both public and private secondary schools in Calabar South Local Government Area used sixty research subjects (30) each from both twelve schools. Percentages and the chi-square (X^2) were used to analyse data. The findings showed that the preference for the collaboration conflict management strategy of school principals, irrespective of the type of school type scored 91.66% of the total figure above avoidance, strategy (3.33%), competition, accommodation and compromise strategies scoring 1.66% each. The chi-square (X^2) analysis revealed no significant relation of school type and principals' preference for any of the conflict management strategies.

Nwi-ue (2012) in his study to determine the preferred crisis management strategies among lecturers in tertiary institutions in River State had one of the hypotheses of the study as: sex of school administrators does not significantly influence preference for dialogue as a conflict management strategy. The study used a sample of five hundred and eighty-eight (588) lecturers in four post-secondary institutions using strategies random sampling. Data was collected using the Preferred Crises Management Strategies Questionnaire (PCMSQ). The independent t-test analysis was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of statistical significance. The result showed no significant relation of sex on principals' preference for dialogue (collaboration) as a strategy for conflict management.

Research conducted by fully in 2012 investigated how mediation strategies in conflict management impact the administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals in New York. The study involved 40 principals and 200 teachers who completed a questionnaire, and the findings showed that using mediation strategies can significantly improve a principal's effectiveness. The study's results suggest that principals who use mediation strategies in conflict management tend to perform better administratively.

Effectiveness refers to the production of a desired result in a way that is goal-oriented. The degree to which the goals and objectives of a department are achieved in relation to quality and quantity. The effectiveness of heads of department could be described as the extent to which the heads of department can achieve the departmental set goals. Effectiveness and efficiency are vital qualities to be possessed by leaders at all levels of human institutions. Heads of departments in any organisation, especially in tertiary institutions, need to be effective and efficient in managing human and material resources, which will lead to the attainment of the department and the institution in general. The researcher observed that among the tertiary institutions in Cross River State, some department heads appear to be ineffective in carrying out their managerial duties. This propelled the researcher to investigate whether it is due to the conflict management strategy adopted by tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

Statement of the Problem

Almost every day, a conflict situation is mentioned in the media. Conflict occurs when there is disagreement between two parties. In a tertiary institution in Cross River State, conflict

situations have occurred, which have hampered the effectiveness of the heads of department within the institution. Conflict situation has led to loss of lives and properties in some of our tertiary institutions Academic Staff Union of Polytechnic (ASUP) strike (2021). This study is aimed at finding out to what extent conflict management strategies predict Head of Departments administrative effectiveness. Conflict situations have serious effects on both staff and students. For instance, when there is a strike due to conflict between the government and workers, management and staff, or between management and staff, both staff and students are affected, and even the government will be affected, depending on the nature of the conflict. On the part of the students, the academic period will become longer than necessary, and some courses will not be properly covered as expected, which leads to poor academic performance. Likewise, many staff will be forced into borrowing or collecting items on credit due to non-payment of salary because of strike. Some staff suffer emotional stress, which at the end, affects their effectiveness even after the conflict is resolved. Conflicts in tertiary institutions often stem from communication gaps between staff, students, and management. These tensions can be exacerbated by broader societal issues, such as economic downturns. In Nigeria, poor salaries and inflation have led to widespread dissatisfaction among teaching and non-teaching staff, resulting in industrial disputes and conflicts. This has negatively impacted the morale of educators and administrators. To address this issue, this study aims to investigate conflict management strategies and their impact on the administrative effectiveness of heads of departments in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate conflict management approaches as determinant of administrative effectiveness in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria, and implications for peace and conflict management. Specifically, this study is aimed at finding out;

- He use of a collaboration strategy in the management of conflict by heads of departments in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.
- Finding out to what extent mediation in the management of conflict by heads of departments in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- How does collaboration strategy predict administrative effectiveness of heads of departments in tertiary institutions in Cross River State?
- How does mediation strategy in management of conflicts predict administrative effectiveness of heads of department of tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

Statement of the Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to give direction to the study:

- The use of collaboration strategy in the management of conflicts does not significantly predict administrative the effectiveness of heads of department of tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

- The use of mediation strategy in the management of conflicts does not significantly predict administrative effectiveness of heads of department of tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

Research Method

This research focused on the relationship between conflict management strategies and administrative effectiveness in Nigerian tertiary institutions, with a specific emphasis on peace and conflict management implications. Guided by two hypotheses, the study reviewed relevant literature on key variables. The research population comprised 309 department heads, all of whom were included in the study due to the manageable size. A multi-stage sampling approach and proportionate random sampling method were employed. The study utilized an ex-post-facto design and a validated instrument, CMSAEQ, to assess collaboration and mediation strategies. Experts in measurement and evaluation validated the instrument, and Cronbach's alpha confirmed its reliability. Data analysis involved simple and multiple linear regressions, with hypotheses tested at a 0.05 significance level.

Hypothesis one

The use of collaboration strategy in the management of conflicts does not significantly predict administrative effectiveness of Head of Department in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

- **Independent variable:** The use of collaboration strategy in the management of conflict

- **Dependent variable:** Administrative Effectiveness of Heads of Department
- **Statistical tool:** Simple Linear Regression

Hypothesis two

The use of mediation strategy in the management of conflicts does not significantly predict administrative effectiveness of Heads of Department in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

- **Independent variable:** The use of mediation strategy in the management of conflict
- **Dependent variable:** Administrative Effectiveness of Heads of Department
- **Statistical tool:** Simple Linear Regression

Results and Discussions

Hypothesis four

The use of collaboration strategy in the management of conflicts does not significantly predict administrative the effectiveness of heads of department tertiary institutions in Cross River State. In order to carry out the statistical analysis, simple linear regression analysis was executed with the use of collaboration strategy as the predictor variable and administrative effectiveness as the criterion variable. The results obtained from the test statistical analysis are summarised and presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Regression of administrative effectiveness on collaboration strategy in management of conflicts

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
	.135 ^a	.018	.015	10.18957	
Sources of variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Regression	574.865	1	574.865	5.537	.019 ^b
Residual	31044.345	299	103.827		
Total	31619.209	300			
Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	41.001	1.603		25.574	.000
Collaboration strategy	.224	.095	.135	2.353	.019

*p<.05

Table 1 is a Simple Linear Regression Analysis: Collaboration Strategy and Administrative Effectiveness - R-value: 0.135- R-squared value: 0.018 (1.8% of variation in administrative effectiveness explained by collaboration strategy). Regression equation: $y = 41.001 + 0.224x$ (where x = collaboration strategy, y = administrative effectiveness). Conclusion: Collaboration strategy significantly predicts administrative effectiveness.

Hypothesis two

The use of mediation strategy in the management of conflicts does not significantly predict administrative effectiveness of heads of department tertiary institutions in Cross River State. In order to carry out the statistical analysis, simple linear regression analysis was executed with use of mediation strategy as the predictor variable and administrative effectiveness as criterion variable. The results obtained from the test statistical analysis are summarised and presented in Table 2

Table 2

Regression of administrative effectiveness on mediation strategy in management of conflicts						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	
	.117 ^a	.014	.010		10.21251	
Sources of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	
Regression	434.880	1	434.880	4.170	.042 ^b	
Residual	31184.329	299	104.295			
Total	31619.209	300				
Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	p-value	
(Constant)	47.910	1.765		27.140	.000	
Mediation strategy	-.186	.091	-.117	-2.042	.042	

*p<.05

Table 2 Simple Linear Regression Analysis: Mediation Strategy and Administrative Effectiveness R-value: 0.117- R-squared value: 0.014 (1.4% of variation in administrative effectiveness explained by mediation strategy)- Regression equation: $y = 47.910 - 0.186x$ (where x = mediation strategy, y = administrative effectiveness) - Regression constant: 47.910 (significant contribution)- Coefficient: -0.186 (significant contribution, though the provided coefficient in the text is -.422 for the constant's t-value mention seems inconsistent). Conclusion: Mediation strategy significantly predicts administrative effectiveness.

Conclusion

To improve academic achievement in schools, education stakeholders should consider students' learning style preferences. By directing resources and efforts towards understanding and catering to these preferences, stakeholders can potentially enhance student outcomes. This approach may help address concerns about dismal academic performance and promote more effective learning.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Conflict Prevention: Educational managers in tertiary institutions should prioritise preventing conflicts and fostering a peaceful environment. This can be achieved by promoting values and skills like cooperation and tolerance within the school culture.
- Encouraging Competition: Managers can create a competitive environment to motivate employees or groups to work harder. This can be done through contests, incentive plans, or bonuses, which can spark voluntary effort and drive participants to excel.

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