

Analysis of Management Strategies of Staff-Authority Conflicts in Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko and Rufus Giwa Polytechnic Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the possible causes of conflicts in our tertiary institutions. The effects of conflicts were highlighted while the strategies to be employed in handling conflicts were extensively discussed. The survey design of the descriptive research type was employed in the study which was limited to two of the tertiary institutions owned by the Ondo State Government i.e. Adekunle Ajasin University Akungba-Akoko and Rufus Giwa Polytechnic Owo. 400 subjects were selected by stratified random sampling technique from the two institutions of the total staff and students' population. The instrument used in gathering data is titled "Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire" (CMSQ). The data collected were subjected to t-test analysis to test the two hypotheses generated at 0.05 level of significance, the results showed that there were no significant differences in the strategies employed by the Management of the University and the Polytechnic in managing Staff-Authority conflicts. The study revealed that conflict is inevitable in any organization but that it could be managed. Some recommendations were made to stem the tide of conflicts in our tertiary institutions of which attending to the needs of subordinates promptly by institutional leaders should be taken as the best strategy to curb conflicts.

Keywords: authority, conflict, management, strategy, strike

1. Introduction

Management in any organization is concerned with the manipulation of human and material resources towards the attainment of organizational goals. In the process of managing human resources, conflict becomes inevitable in an organization particularly when it is not very easy to predict human behavior. Human beings always disagree or agree because of individual differences. Individuals interact within an organization by playing different roles in order to achieve an hierarchy of authority and division of labor while carrying out such functions. In the process of individuals performing the different functions in an organization, clash of interest, misunderstanding as well as other forms of conflicts are unavoidable. This is simply because of the complex nature of human beings. Human behavior is difficult to slot into theoretical pigeonholes of certainty (Ibukun, 1997). Thus, conflict often becomes inevitable in any organization or society. (Coser, 1956; Gbadamosi, 2006)

Commenting on the theories of human behavior as postulated by Getzels and Guba (1957), Ibukun (1997) explained that an individual reacts to situations in his organizations by considering the goals, purposes and demands of his role towards the organization as well as the supreme position of his personality needs. Individual behavior is therefore, a result of the extent to which the organizational goals and functions help the individual to achieve his needs for physical growth, protection, security of job and self-actualization. If the goals of the

organization conform with the needs of the individual, the group member strives to exhibit maximum co-operation and discharge his duties effectively towards the achievement of the organizational goals. The reverse is the case when an organizational goal and the situation surrounding a job are not in conformity with the individual's expectation. Conflict has therefore become an integral part of human existence and inevitable in any organization as the stakeholders have different goals (Sanda, 1992). From the foregoing, conflict has therefore become wide-spread in human society. Any organization with a structure that allows at least two units to share functional boundaries is bound to experience conflicts. In tertiary institutions like those under this study, the organizational structure is such that staff and students share functional boundaries, that of exchange of knowledge.

Some scholars such as Zahidat and Sumaira (2014) posit that it will be impossible to see a conflict less society or organization contrary to the makeshift belief of some authors that a classless society or organization will end conflicts all over the world. In fact, an absence of any conflict in an organization may suggest that such organization is tightly run or that the members of the organizations are too homogeneous for its own good.

2. Literature Review

Blake et al. (1964) defined organizational conflict as disagreement situations, which occur between organizational groups when interchanges are necessary to achieve a desired result. They agreed that conflict in an organization may be internal (that is disagreement among members of the organization), or organization and external interest groups such as labor unions and other external influence. Thus, conflict is widely conceptualized as an interactional dynamic in which parties strive to achieve their individual goals. (Folger et al., 2001; Roloff & Jordan, 1992; Wilson & Putnam, 1990). Conflict can range in intensity from a mere difference of opinion to a battle of life or death into even war between two nations. Ositoye et al. (2012) opined that conflict can be a disagreement that exists between one or two parties. According to them, it creates a situation where both parties perceive a situation in different directions in reaching compromise on issues of common interest. Thus, it may lead to protest, strikes, and disruption of work activities.

In a recent study on conflict management in tertiary institutions in the South-Western Nigeria, Osakede et al. (2018) defined conflict as a misunderstanding that arises when one or two people have different views to pursue different goals in an organization. It is what usually occurs between students and staff (management) who are the University Stakeholders.

Kerr (1965) and Arije (2004) posited that conflict between labor union and management manifests itself in various ways like boycotts, sabotage, sit-in, work-to-rule, restriction of output, absenteeism, personnel turnover, strike actions and lock-out. However, the most important index of industrial conflict which is of major concern to most scholars is strike actions. Strikes have remained the most cherished weapon of last resort in the hands of labor. Every democratic system recognizes strike action as a potent instrument through which the principles of checks and balances are given effect. To buttress this, Mimiko as cited by Arije (2004) avers that: "A labour movement is a moribund labor movement robbed of the strike option in capitalist political economy that will hardly be capable of performing its historical function as a watchdog expected to keep the state focused, especially when perceived in the context of a weak civil society in which labor remains the only viable organ that operates between the realm of the individual and that of the state."

Some scholars have claimed that conflict is perceived as negative, dysfunctional and destructive (Geoffrey 1997; Olaleye & Arogundade 2013; Posigha & Oghuvwu 2009). Other

scholars like Akorede (2005), Bercovitch (2011), as well as Fatile and Adejuwon (2011) concluded that conflict serves as a catalyst for innovation, creativity of production and efficiency. However, other scholars such as Oladele (2011) and Adesina (2010) opine that conflict engenders interaction of persons or a group of people in relation to different expectations, interests and backgrounds in society. By this assertion of the above scholars, conflict can be seen as unavoidable and a normal part of any organization or society.

2.1 Causes of conflicts in Tertiary Institutions

In the case of tertiary institutions which are for teaching, research and social community services oriented, the staff would want improved conditions of service, welfare packages, a relaxed working atmosphere devoid of strict regulations and sanctions. The authorities of tertiary institutions on the other hand, would want both the staff and students to operate within the ambit of regulations while in some cases, the authorities cannot meet the demands of staff and students due to limited resources and budgetary control. Lack of enabling papers from the government may also incapacitate the management of tertiary institutions to honor the demand of their employees or unions to pay certain entitlements. For example, the non-implementation of the Federal Government Monetization Policy in Adekunle Ajasin University and Rufus Giwa Polytechnic is a case at point here (Adeleke, 2010).

However, Otobo (2000) and Okotoni (2002) categorized sources of conflict in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria into two main folds; the internal and external sources. The internal sources Otobo noted includes: Management styles, nature of physical environment of the work place, consciousness of workers, other conditions of service, efficiency or otherwise of the promotion system, cumbersomeness of grievance and dispute procedure, trade union non-recognition, victimization and other anti-union discrimination. External sources include: Government's industrial and economic policy, nature of national economic management, general distribution of wealth and power structure in society. Other sources of conflicts in Nigeria tertiary institution are attributed to erosion of institutional autonomy by government, poor funding in the face of gross expansion of population and the contraction of facilities, poor conditions of service of staff in tertiary institutions, structural breakdown of institution sub-system that function for integration, the wider anomic and corrupt social climate under the military dictatorships, and the consequent negative socio-psychological pressures on the tertiary institution stakeholders (Onyeonoru, 1996).

Despite the various causes of organizational conflicts, a high degree of personal satisfaction as earlier observed with the internal climate of one's unit would decrease the likelihood of a member initiating conflict in any organization.

Table 1: Some industrial actions in the form of strikes that had taken place in Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba and Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo between 2009 – 2022 are as highlighted below.

S/ N	Institution	Nature of action and period	Causes
1	Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko (AAUA)	National Strike (ASUU) July 2013 – November 2013	Academic Staff Union of Universities, Adekunle Ajasin University Joined the ASUU National Strike
2	AAUA	Indefinite strike (ASUU) 5th July, 2016 – 16th Oct., 2016	• Unpaid salaries • Non-payment of 3months outstanding salaries • Non-remittance of 7 months deductions made in their wages.

3	AAUA	Threat of strike (ASUU) 20th Oct., 2016 after the suspension of 3months strike	- Appointment by Authority of Acting Deans, HODs during strike without following due process. - Appointment of academic staff above 70years against the 2009 ASUU/FGN Agreement and the Ondo State Government white paper/official gazette
4	AAUA	A 14-day warning strike (NASU/SSANU) wef December 12, 2020 declared by Joint Action Committee (JAC)	- Six months unpaid outstanding salaries - Non-implementation of the new minimum wage - Non-release of co-operative deductions and check off dues.
5	AAUA	National Strike ASUU/SSANU/NASU Wef 14th February, 2022 and still on as at May 30th, 2022	- Joined Nigeria Universities National Strike for non-implementation of 2009 agreement with the Federal Government of Nigeria. - Non-payment of arrears of hazard allowance to university workers
6	Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo (RUGIPO)	Strike ASUP/SSANIP/NASU wef July 2009 – March, 2010	Non-payment of 10months monetization arrears
7	RUGIPO	Indefinite Strike (ASUP) Wef 31st August, 2017	- Debilitating and precarious situation of the welfare of academic staff of the institution - Collapsing state of infrastructures in the Polytechnic.
8	RUGIPO	Indefinite Strike ASUP Wef 4th September, 2017 <i>Union ready for dialogue with management and State Government.</i>	- Protest the State Government non-payment of 2.1billion naira to the institution. - Government to pay the arrears of 1.7billion naira unpaid salaries of all staff in the institution in the last ten years. - Non-payment of sixteen months of Consolidated Polytechnic Salary Structure (CONPOCASS) allowance long overdue.
9	RUGIPO	Indefinite Strike SSANIP/NASU Wef October 2021 <i>This lasted for one(1) week and suspended with the intervention of the governing council</i>	- Unpaid salaries of eleven months - Suspension of ASUP and dismissal of its chairman - Non-payment of three years promotion arrears due to workers for 2019, 2020 and 2021 - Non-remittance of co-operative societies deductions from staff to the appropriate quarters. - Non-representation of the Polytechnic congregation on Council in discordant with the Polytechnic Acts. - Demotion of some members of staff.
10	RUGIPO	Indefinite Strike ASUP/SSANIP/NASU Wef January 2022	- Proscription of Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP), Senior Staff Association of Nigeria Polytechnics (SSANIP) and Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU) - Unpaid salary arrears of 13months
11	RUGIPO	Indefinite Strike ASUP Wef May 16th, 2022	- Non-payment of sixteen (16) months CONPOCASS arrears - Payment of 10months of unpaid salaries from June 2016 to January 2017 and July and August 2017. - Non-payment of 2015 and 2016 promotion arrears - Total compliance with court order in respect of ASUP members that suffer political persecution.

Source: Website links via Google.

2.2 Conflict Management Strategies

Conflict cannot be eradicated, but it can be effectively managed (Johnson, 2000). Conflict management refers to the process of communication between two or more groups that are resolving a dispute through the help of a mediator. The mediator seeks to terminate the conflict and restore social relations between the groups to some level of legitimacy (Vaught, 1997). Conflict management strategies refer to the broad, overarching objectives interaction used to resolve conflict; whereas, tactics are the specific behavior they use to actualize the strategy. (Newton & Burgoon, 1990). The management of conflicts in the sustainability of Nigerian Tertiary Institutions of higher learning is therefore central to the achievements of the mission of the institutions. Onakorhoraye (2000) observed that crisis management in tertiary institutions at this period of incessant crisis suggest the need for those in charge of the universities to sharpen their management tools and capabilities. Dialaekwe (2000) as cited by

Oyebade (2003) also identified the management style and philosophy of the vice chancellor as being crucial in resolving conflicts in the Universities. This position is also applicable to the Polytechnics and other Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria.

Different conflict management strategies have been identified by researchers. Blake et al. (1969 in Oyebade, 2003) identified conflict management strategies like forcing, structural changes, avoidance, compromise and smoothing. However, Alabi (2002) posited that conflict should be managed by minimizing structural changes in order to maintain stability with both the individuals and the institutions. Filley (1975, quoted in Oyebade, 2003) also identified three basic strategies for managing conflicts. These are win-lose strategy, domination, forcing, coercion, the lose-lose strategy (compromise, third party) and the win-win strategy (problem solving, democratic). Nwiria (1992) identified democratization of decision making within universities through wider representation of staff in key university governing bodies and their having more say in deciding who top university administrators will be as being capable of reducing conflicts. e.g., Item 1 in serial number 3 and item 5 in serial number 9 of Table 1. Regular and informal contact and more consultations between the top university administration and staff as well as more information flows between the administration and staff are also indicated as potentially beneficial in resolving conflicts. Ibukun (1997) however identified conflict resolution strategies to include problem solving, appeal to superior organizational goals, prevention and avoidance, expansion of opportunities and resources, use of authority and command in changing the behavior of people involved in conflict (behavior modification), changing the structure of the organization and compromise and agreements. Ladipo (1997) identified two broad strategies for conflict management. These are preventive and curative. The former involves a decided and calculated monitoring of events and situations in the organization and taking counter steps to avoid or eliminate situations that could lead to crisis. The other strategy involves finding solutions to crises that occur.

In essence, conflict management entails the establishment of various mechanisms to eliminate the misconception or negative feeling aspects of conflict to enhance learning and group outcomes so as to pave the way for people to achieve their goals (Adeniji, 2009; Albert, 2010; Goldman, 1996). Another major way of managing conflict is through dialogue between the parties involved. This aligns with the view of Adaeze (2014), that conflict is a diagnostic process or dialogue where strategies and intervention are designed to curtail the conflict. The management of organizational conflicts according to Robins (1978) can take the form of stimulating conflict (stimulation techniques) and resolving conflicts (conflict resolution techniques).

It should be noted that while some strategies are specifically applicable to resolving interpersonal conflicts, some strategies too are mostly applicable to management of organizational conflicts.

The perception of any of the conflict management strategies depends on the organizational structure, the situation under which the conflict prevails, the resolution method, and the conflict type. Any strategy that assumes only leadership effectiveness without taking the above-mentioned factors into consideration is defective.

3. Objectives of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the various factors responsible for conflict situations in our tertiary institutions. Specifically, the study will examine conflicts between management and staff in the two state owned institutions. The study also aims at investigating the conflict

management strategies that are being used by the authorities of these institutions and determining the effectiveness of strategies in managing conflicts.

4. Statement of the problem

Tertiary institutions in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, had been litigating academic advancement as a result of ever-increasing conflict that constitutes a significant factor in the organization and the society (Olajide 2011). Conflict has become inevitable as an integral part of human existence causing friction in any organizational structure as the stakeholders have different incompatible goals (Sanda, 1992; Ibukun 1997).

The frequency of occurrence of violent conflicts and crises in tertiary institutions have almost paralyzed our educational system, with such resultant effects like prolonged strike action, wanton destruction of institutions property, killings, outright removal of institutional heads and indefinite closure of affected institutions. Examples here are the Ondo State University, Akungba-Akoko 2001 January crisis in which the pioneer Vice Chancellor was removed. Similarly, the Provost of Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo was removed after prolonged Staff-Authority conflicts in 2004/2005. Also, the third substantive Vice Chancellor of Adekunle Ajasin University was removed in 2008 due to unmanageable staff – students – authority conflicts. However, a conflict must always be managed and handled constructively; else it will threaten the very existence of the organization, and the nation and society at large (Olaleye & Arogundade, 2013).

It is against this background problem that this study investigates causes of conflicts and the relationship in the strategies applied in the management of Staff-Authority Conflict in Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko and Rufus Giwa Polytechnic Owo both which are owned by the Ondo State Government.

4.1 Research Questions

The following Research Questions were raised to guide the study.

1. What are the causes of conflict in tertiary institutions?
2. What are the conflict management strategies often used to resolve conflicts between the management and staff?
3. Is there any relationship between the conflict management strategies employed in resolving Staff-Authority conflicts in the Rufus Giwa Polytechnic and the Adekunle Ajasin University?

4.2 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were generated and tested

1. There is no significant difference between the strategies employed by the Polytechnic Management in resolving conflicts with the Academic staff and strategies employed by the University Management in resolving conflicts with the Academic staff.
2. There is no significant difference in the strategies employed by the Rufus Giwa Polytechnic Management in resolving conflicts with the Non-Academic staff and strategies employed by the University Management in resolving conflicts with the Non-Academic staff.

5. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population of this study comprised all members of Academic staff, Non-Academic staff and students in Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko and Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria.

The sample of this study is 400 staff respondents selected by stratified simple random sampling technique from the two institutions. A self-developed questionnaire titled Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (CMSQ) was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire contains section A, B, and C. Section A elicits Bio-Data information of the respondents while section B elicits information on causes of conflict and section C elicits information on conflict management strategies employed by the authority of each institution in managing various conflicting situations. A 4-point Likert rating scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree with scale values of 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively was adopted for the study. The instrument was validated by experts in Test and measurement in the Faculty of Education, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko. The reliability of the instruments was determined using the test-retest technique in a pilot survey. With a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.83$, the instrument was adjudged to be highly reliable and appropriate for the study.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics while the hypotheses were subjected to t-test analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

6. Results

6.1 Research Question 1: What are the causes of conflict in tertiary Institutions?

Table 2: Causes of conflict

S/ N	Items	R E S P O N S E S								Total	
		Freq. Strongly Agree	%	Freq. Agree	%	Freq Dis- Agree	%	Freq. Strongly Disagree	%	Freq.	%
1	Conflict arises when students are not ready for examinations	110	27.5	140	35.0	85	21.3	65	16.3	400	100
2	The casual factor of conflict is the school authority	125	31.3	135	33.8	120	30.0	20	5.0	400	100
3	When too many students are made to share too few amenities, conflict emerges	130	32.5	240	60.0	10	2.5	20	5.0	400	100
4	Conflicts arise in an organization when orders for action are given by the head (super ordinate) without questioning	100	25.0	195	48.8	90	22.5	15	3.8	400	100
5	Adolescent characteristics are the causal factors of conflicts in Ondo State Tertiary Institutions.	20	5.0	170	42.5	180	45.0	30	7.5	400	100
6	Inconsistency in the administrative strategies of Institutional administrators is often a major cause of conflict	105	26.3	240	60.0	55	13.8	0.0	0.0	400	100
7	Other factors responsible for conflicts in our tertiary institution are nonchalant attitudes of workers	55	13.8	175	43.8	135	33.8	35	8.8	400	100
8	The erosion of the autonomy of tertiary Institutions by the Government is a major cause of conflicts.	55	13.8	210	52.5	105	26.3	30	7.5	400	100
9	Poor feeding of tertiary Institution is a major cause of conflicts.	230	57.5	105	26.3	50	12.5	15	3.8	400	100
10	Poor conditions of service for staff is a cause of conflict in our tertiary institutions	185	46.3	135	33.8	80	20.0	0.0	0.0	400	100
11	Heavy workload and poor study environment for staff and students.	160	40.0	160	40	80	20.0	0.0	0.0	400	100
12	Poor facilities and infrastructures.	265	66.3	120	30.0	5	1.3	10	2.5	400	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Research question 1: summary in percentages

I T E M S		1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	6 (%)	7 (%)	8 (%)	9 (%)	10 (%)	11 (%)	12 (%)
POLYTECHNIC & UNIVERSITY	DISAGREE	37.5	34.9	7.5	26.2	52.5	13.7	42.4	33.7	16.2	19.9	20	3.7
	AGREE	62.5	65.1	92.5	73.8	47.5	86.3	57.6	66.3	83.8	80.1	80	96.3

From Table 2 above, it is evidently seen that 96.3% of the respondents indicated that "poor facilities and infrastructures" is the first factor that always precipitates conflict in our tertiary Institutions. This was followed by the item which stated that "when too many students are made to share too few amenities, conflicts emerge" as also agreed to by 92.5% of the respondents. This is very closely related to the problem of "poor facilities and infrastructures." 86.3% of the respondents also indicated that "inconsistency in the administrative strategies of Institutional Administrators" is a major cause of conflict. Poor funding of tertiary Institutions" carried the fourth position with 83.8% of the total respondents. Despite this, one could observe and conclude that the first three causes of conflicts as agreed to above by the respondents are direct consequences of poor funding of tertiary Institutions.

6.2 Research Question 2: What are the conflict management strategies often used to resolve conflict between the management and the staff?

Table 3: analysis of conflict management strategies

S/ N	Items	R E S P O N S E S								Total	
		Freq. Strong ly Agree	%	Freq. Agree	%	Freq. Dis- Agree	%	Freq. Strongly Disagree	%	Freq.	%
1	The best strategy that could be used to resolve conflict between the management and the subordinates is to handle them with iron hand.	51	12.8	17	4.3	150	37.5	182	45.5	400	100
2	Power sharing mechanism through transfer and expulsion of non-conforming members of subordinate is the best strategy.	47	11.8	127	31.8	119	29.8	107	26.8	400	100
3	Forcing a solution on the parties is the best strategies	24	6.0	20	5.0	187	46.8	169	42.3	400	100
4	The use of authority and command is the best method to manage conflict.	47	11.8	52	13.0	211	52.8	90	22.5	400	100
5	The best strategy is to attend to the needs of the subordinates promptly	230	57.5	161	40.3	9	2.3	0.0	0.0	400	100
6	Giving subordinates a free hand to participate in the decision making processes within the school setting will go a long way in resolving conflict between the school authority and the staff	160	40.0	176	44.0	55	13.8	9	2.3	400	100
7	The (dialogue) appeal method is the most appropriate strategy particularly, where demands could not satisfied	213	53.3	146	36.5	31	7.8	10	2.5	400	100
8	The use of co-option Technique is the best strategy	42	10.5	309	77.3	49	12.3	0.0	0.0	400	100
9	Expansion of opportunities and resources is the most appropriate strategy.	131	32.8	207	51.8	41	10.3	21	5.3	400	100
10	Behavior modification strategy is the best method that can be used to modify students' behavior	127	31.8	225	56.3	42	10.5	6	1.5	400	100
11	Prevention/avoidance and problem-solving methods are the best strategy.	143	35.8	230	57.5	23	5.8	4	1.0	400	100

12	Free flow of communication will go a long way in managing conflicts in tertiary institutions.	185	46.3	154	38.5	21	5.3	40	10.0	400	100
13	The use of collective bargaining and compromise is the best strategy	142	35.5	138	34.5	61	15.3	59	14.8	400	100
14	Delegation of power and authority will go a long way in our tertiary institutions.	93	23.3	201	50.3	36	9.0	70	17.5	400	100
15	Mediation and arbitration approach is the best strategy	73	18.3	231	57.8	44	11.0	52	13.0	400	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Research Question 2: summary in percentages

I T E M S		1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	6 %	7 %	8 %	9 %	10 %	11 %	12 %	13 %	14 %	15 %
Polytechnic & University	Disagree	82.9	56.4	89	75.2	2.2	16	10.2	12.2	15.4	11.9	6.7	15.2	30	26.4	23.9
	Agree	17.1	43.6	11	24.8	97.8	84	89.8	87.8	84.6	88.1	93.3	84.8	70	73.6	76.1

Table 3 above, confirmed that institution leaders using the strategy of "attending to the needs of subordinates promptly" had the highest score of 97.8% followed by those who believed in the use of "prevention/avoidance and problem solving method" with 93.3% of total respondents. The use of (dialogue) appeal method" ranked third with 89.8%. This method becomes mostly appropriate when the prevention/avoidance method fails and the leaders cannot meet up the demands of the subordinate for obvious reasons.

The table also indicated that the least used strategy was "forcing a solution on the parties" which had 11% of the total respondents as agreed and 89% as disagreed. This was followed by the strategy of "handling subordinates with iron hands" as 83% of respondents disagreed, thus indicating both strategies least used as pointing to high-handedness and authoritarian leadership style. One could then conclude that, a leader who is unnecessarily harsh and high-handed at the face of conflict will meet with a total failure.

6.3 Research Question 3: Is there any relationship between the conflict management strategies employed in resolving staff-authority conflicts in the Rufus Giwa Polytechnic and the Adekunle Ajasin University?

Table 4: Relationship between the strategies employed in resolving Staff-Authority Conflicts in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic and Adekunle Ajasin University.

S/N	Items	Institution	R E S P O N S E S								Total	
			Freq. Strongly Agree	%	Freq. Agree	%	Freq. Dis-agree	%	Freq. Strongly Disagree	%	Freq.	%
1	The same strategy used in resolving conflict between the Management and Academic staff can be used in resolving conflict between Management and Non-Academic staff.	Polytechnic	75	37.5	75	37.5	50	25.0	0.0	0.0	200	100
		University	60	30.0	90	45.0	45	22.5	5	2.5	200	100
2	The same strategy used in resolving Management Non-Academic staff. Conflict in the University can also be applied to Polytechnic	Polytechnic	75	37.5	75	37.5	20	10.0	30	15.0	200	100
		University	45	22.5	100	50	30	15.0	25	12.5	200	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Research Question 3: summary in percentages

I T E M S		1	2
Polytechnic	Disagree	25%	25%
	Agree	75%	75%
University	Disagree	25%	25%
	Agree	75%	75%

The result presented on Table 4 above indicated that 75% of total respondents of both Institutions agreed that the same strategy used in resolving conflict between the Management and Academic staff can be used in resolving conflict between Management and Non-Academic Staff.

Similarly, 75% of the total respondents in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic and 72.5% of respondents from Adekunle Ajasin University, agreed that the same strategy used in resolving Management-Non-Academic staff conflict in the University can also be applied by the Polytechnic as against 25% and 27.5% respectively that disagreed.

Hence, there is a great relationship between the conflict management strategies employed in resolving staff-authority conflicts in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic and Adekunle Ajasin University.

6.4 Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the strategies employed by the Polytechnic Management in resolving conflicts with the Academic staff and strategies employed by the University Management in resolving conflicts with the Academic Staff.

Table 5: t-test analysis showing the differences between the strategies employed by the Polytechnic and the University Management in resolving conflicts with the Academic staff.

Institution	N	Mean	S.D.	Df	t-cal	t-cri	
Polytechnic	50	42.72	2.491	98	-0.058	1.645	Not Significant
University	50	42.76	4.158				

$P > 0.05$

At 0.5 significance level with df of 98, the t- critical value of (1.645) is seen to be greater than the t-calculated value (-0.058). Thus, the stated hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference between strategies employed by both the Polytechnic and University Management in resolving conflicts with the Academic Staff.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the strategies employed by the Polytechnic Management in resolving conflicts with the Non-Academic Staff and the strategies employed by the University Management in resolving conflicts with the Non-Academic Staff.

Table 6: t-test showing differences between the strategies employed by the Polytechnic and University Management in resolving conflicts with the Non-Academic Staff.

Institution	N	Mean	S.D.	Df	t-cal	t-cri	
Polytechnic	50	44.42	3.302	98	1.794	2.326	Not Significant
University	50	43.22	3.388				

$P > 0.05$

From the table above, it can be seen that the t- computed value (1.794) is less than the t-table value (2.326) at 0.01 significance level with 98 df. This implies that the formulated hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in the strategies employed by both the Polytechnic and University Management in resolving conflicts with the Non-Academic Staff. The closeness of the mean values (44.42 and 43.22) also justifies this.

7. Discussion of findings

Three research questions were raised for this study and two hypotheses were generated. The two null hypotheses were tested and were accepted. The findings from research question 3 revealed that 75% of total respondents of both institutions agree that the same strategy used in resolving conflict between the Management and Academic staff can be used in resolving conflict between Management and Non-Academic Staff.

Similarly, 75% of the total respondents in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic and 72.5% of respondents from Adekunle Ajasin University, agree that the same strategy used in resolving Staff-Authority conflict in the University can also be applied by the Polytechnic. This shows that there is a relationship between the conflict management strategies employed in resolving Staff-Authority conflicts in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic and Adekunle Ajasin University.

Hypothesis one states that “there is no significant difference between the strategies employed by the Polytechnic Management in resolving conflicts with the Academic staff and the strategies employed by the University in resolving conflict with the Academic Staff”. This hypothesis is accepted as the t-critical value of (1.645) is greater than the t-calculated value of (-0.058). To support this, Nwiria (1992) identified democratization of decision making within Universities through wider representation of staff in key university governing bodies and their having more say in deciding who top institutional administrators will be as capable of reducing conflicts. He also identified effective information flow between the administration and staff as potentially beneficial in resolving conflicts. This is in agreement with Ibukun (1997) who also identified that conflict resolution strategies include among others; problem solving, appeal to superior organizational goals, expansion of opportunities and resources, compromise and agreements.

Hypothesis two states that “there is no significant difference between the strategies employed by the Polytechnic Management in resolving conflicts with the Non-Academic staff and the strategies employed by the University Management in resolving conflicts with the Non-Academic Staff.” This hypothesis was accepted as the t computed value of 1.794 is less than the t-table value; of 2.326 indicating that there is no significant difference in the strategies employed by both the Polytechnic and the University management in resolving conflicts with the Non-Academic Staff.

This is in agreement with Blake, Shepard and Mouton (1964) who identified conflict management strategies like forcing, structural changes avoidance, compromise and smoothing. Also in support again was the views of Nwiria (1992) who identified democratization of decision making within universities; and effective information flow, as potentially beneficial in resolving conflicts. Another major way of managing conflict is through dialogue between the parties involved. This aligns with the view of Adaeze (2014). Finally, the findings from the two hypotheses agree with the work of various scholars like Kelley (1980), Nwiria (1992), Ibukun (1997), Ladipo (1997), Alabi (2002) and Oyebade (2003).

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions could be made. Conflicts are bound to occur and so they are inevitable in any human organization. Man lives on conflicts (Igbokwe citing Tony Blair, 2005). Group performance tends to increase where there is conflict rather than extreme conformity (Hall & Williams, 1966).

A total absence of conflict would be unbelievable, boring and would reveal that such conflicts are being suppressed. Conflicts either in Adekunle Ajasin University or Rufus Giwa Polytechnic both owned by the Ondo State Government are often precipitated by common or similar causes, the major one being lack of funding. Attending to the needs of subordinates promptly, is the best strategy that could be used to handle conflicts in the two institutions while the worst strategy is handling the subordinates with “iron hands” which would eventually do more harm than good.

Based on the findings from this study, the following recommendations are made.

- i. For smooth administration and hitch-free academic sessions, the authorities of tertiary institutions should always endeavor to attend to the needs of the subordinates “staff and students” promptly to avoid conflicts.
- ii. Where the needs of subordinates could not be met due to financial constraints or Government directive, the authorities of tertiary institutions should employ the dialogue/appeal method to curb possible conflicts in our tertiary institutions as revealed in the study. This is recommended rather than ditching out of order without questioning, coercion of subordinates or handling them with “iron hand”.
- iii. Although the study revealed that the same conflict management strategies could be applied to the various conflict situations in both institutions, it is still recommended that the authorities of each institution should endeavor to study the circumstances peculiar to their institution and adopt the appropriate strategies relevant to such a situation. This is the contingency approach to management of conflicts.
- iv. The training of institutional leaders on management of conflicts become imperative through seminars, conferences and workshops.
- v. Finally, it is also recommended that Ondo State tertiary institutions should be well funded by the proprietors – the State Government.

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