

**CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES BY ADMINISTRATORS OF
UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH WEST GEOPOLITICAL ZONE, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated conflict management strategies by university administrators in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The study investigated differences among school ownership on conflict management strategies adopted by the universities administrators. One research question was answered while one hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was employed. From a population of 3,211 administrators of the universities in the South West Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria, a sample of 900 university administrators representing 28% from the universities (federal, state and private) was drawn from the six (6) states (Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ekiti and Ondo) in the South West Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. A researcher developed instrument titled: Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (COMSTAQ) was used to collect the data. The Split-Half reliability alpha (α) for the scales are: 0.86 for conflict management strategies and 0.74 for effective conflict management strategies. The data collected after administration were analysed using Means ($\bar{X}$), Standard Deviation (S.D) and rank-ordering while the hypothesis was tested using the Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistic and Sidak Multiple Comparison Post-Hoc test for the three independent sample means was done. The results showed that accommodating and avoiding were the most prominent and most effective strategies adopted by university administrators of the universities in the management of conflict in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It was recommended that effective interpersonal relationships between student and students, lecturers and lecturers, non-academic and non-academic staff, student and lecturer and students' and non-academic staff should be encouraged through the use of the democratic management style and participative decision making among the aforementioned groups by the university management.

Keywords: Conflict, Management, Strategies, University administrators.

1. INTRODUCTION

The nature and character of the university as an academic organization entails the achievement and maintenance of a harmonious environment conducive for the working together of various groups of staff and the management team as well as students for the attainment of pre-selected missions and objectives. However, in recent years, the industrial relations terrain in the Nigerian University system has been saturated with series of industrial conflicts with consequent adversities on the advancement of knowledge (Ndum & Okey, 2013). In the same vein, students' crises seem to become more rampant in our tertiary institutions requiring the best techniques to manage them, hence, achieving the goals of the university education becomes gloomy.

Conflicts in the modern day organizations and universities in particular, are inevitable. The university as an organization has a structure that allows two or more units or groups to share

functional boundaries in achieving its set objectives. In universities, people with different background and orientation: students, lecturers and administrative staff - have to work harmoniously together. Hence, the organizational structure of the university system is such that staff and staff, students and students, and staff and students share functional boundaries of exchange of knowledge. The exchange of knowledge sometimes results in various areas of conflict. These areas of conflict as observed over the years, range from one or more conflicts between: academic staff and the government; students and students; non-teaching staff and the government; academic staff and university authority; non-teaching staff and university authority; school authority and host communities; students and the government; teaching staff and students on academic issues.

There are five stages of conflict namely: latent stage, perceived stage, felt stage, manifest stage and conflict aftermath. The latent stage is the beginning stage of every conflict in which the factor that could become a cause of potential conflict exist. This exists in autonomy divergence of goals, roles, role conflict and the competition for scarce resources. The perceived stage is a stage of conflict in which one party perceives the others to be likely to thwart or frustrate his or her goals. The felt stage is when the conflict is not only perceived but actually felt or recognized. For example, 'A' may be aware that he is in a serious argument with 'B' over some policy. But this may not make 'A' tense or anxious and it may not have no effect whatsoever on 'A's' affection towards 'B'. The manifest stage is when the two parties engage in behaviour which evokes response from each other. The most obvious of these responses are open aggression, apathy, sabotage, withdrawal and perfect disobedience to rules. The last stage is the conflict aftermath. The aftermath of a conflict may have positive or negative repercussion for the organization depending on how conflict is resolved. If the conflict is genuinely resolved, to the satisfaction of all participants, the basis for more cooperative relationship may be laid. On the other hand, if the conflict is merely suppressed but not resolved, the latent conditions of conflict may be aggravated and explode into a more serious conflict until they are rectified. This conflict episode is called conflict aftermath. Hence, this shows that every dispute, strife disagreement, crisis and argument requires proper handling through management or conflict management.

Management and conflict management are two terms that go hand in hand. The former (management) is the coordination of all the resources of an organization (material, finance, time and human) through the process of planning, organizing, directing and controlling in order to attain organizational objectives. It is the guidance or direction of people towards organizational goals or objectives. It can also be seen as supervising, controlling and coordinating of activities to attain optimum results within the limits of organizational resources. From the foregoing, it is clear that conflict management simply refers to the coordination of all resources through the process of planning, organizing, directing and controlling in order to prevent, avoid or resolve conflict.

2. REVIEW

Conflict management has been identified as a critical technique for university leadership style. In the university system, the conflict management strategies adopted by universities administrators may be defined, in part as the extent to which academic units are successful in efforts to respond to organizational and environmental change, to resolve operational problems, to acquire needed resources, and to develop and implement strategies in competitive manner. Vice-Chancellors are expected to provide curricular leadership, support scholarship and services, hire

and mentor new faculties, and assess students' outcomes, faculty performance, and also avoid or reduce the occurrence of conflict.

In order to reduce the occurrence of conflict, universities administrators (Administration and Academic), often have to manage the day-to-day activities of all units in the university environment that are increasingly turbulent, uncertain and competitive. This is expected because the university management team is expected to respond to environmental pressures, align unit goal with the mission of the institutions, and co-ordinate interdependent activities related to the end purpose of the university, its members, and the organization increasingly under conditions of financial exigency.

Responsibilities for effective conflict management in the context of turbulent organization and external environment may be redefining the role of Vice-Chancellors' leadership in ways that make the position increasingly unattractive. Vice-Chancellors are called upon to address a range of non-routine, poorly defined problems and may be expected to encounter some problems in discharge of their duties in relationships that may become more pronounced under conditions of task interdependence and asymmetric power distribution. Conflict management among other roles of Vice-Chancellors may produce the highest level of stress as they express high levels of role-related dissatisfaction, when questioned about responsibilities for dealing with problems of inter-faculty conflict and student management.

Vice-Chancellor and his management team depend on a spectrum of conflict management techniques and managerial alternatives as they respond to the demands of conflict-laden work environment. There is no shortage of proposed approaches for managing conflict in an organizational setting. The approaches employed are often portrayed on a continuum with flight ("I'm catching the first bus out of town!") and fight ("Fire the trouble maker!") at the extremes. Obviously neither extreme is satisfactory since a win-lose orientation to conflict is present, characterized by the fact that contesting parties view their interests to be mutually exclusive. Hence, parties to the conflict come to believe that the issue can be settled in only one of three ways: (1) a power struggle, (2) intervention by a third party who possesses some sort of power greater than either of them, or (3) fate (Kolawole, 2015). Clearly, an effective approach to conflict management commonly referred to as the contingency approach lies somewhere between these extremes.

This approach to conflict management is predicated upon the idea that diagnosis of the situation is necessary as basis of action. The contingency view is that there is no one best way of managing conflict under all conditions, but that there are optimal ways of managing it under certain conditions. An important aspect of conflict management, then, is to consider (a) alternative ways of managing conflict and (b) the kinds of situations in which each of these various alternatives might be expected to be the most effective. According to Nakatsugawa and Takai (2013), studies in the conflict management arena have generally proclaimed that the most effective strategy is a collaborative win-win strategy in which both parties in a conflict seek a constructive and mutually satisfying resolution. At the opposite end of the spectrum, however, is the avoidance strategy, in which individuals are passive, or reluctant about resolving the problem. Avoidance is considered to be a thought lose strategy, and has been regarded as the most ineffective way to deal with a conflict. From a Western individualistic perspective, avoidance is particularly considered detrimental because problems are put up on a shelf to be resolved later over time. However, from a collectivistic viewpoint, avoidance may serve to maintain a harmonious relationship, especially

when the relationship is deemed important enough to justify making self-sacrifices.

Conflict management strategies refer to the internal mechanisms used by the various authorities in resolving conflict. Many scholars have identified different conflict management strategies being used in organizations. Adeyemi and Ademilua (2012) identified conflict management strategies to include forming structural changes, avoidance, compromise and smoothing. Conflict management strategies could also include suppression, smoothing, avoiding, compromise, third-party intervention, cooperation, democratic process, job rotation as well as confrontation. Other strategies identified were effective communication which they described as the best because it would make the group aware of the kind of communication which can lead to problem solving. Most effective management strategies of resolving conflict between professional administrators and academic in Nigerian universities are dialogue strategy, prevention strategy, mediation strategy, avoidance strategy, participatory decision making strategy, emergency strategy, use of ad-hoc committee and persuasion strategy.

Thomas and Kilmann (1976) noted that there are five (5) major conflict management strategies or effective conflict management strategies which any manager may resort to use in any given conflict situation. These strategies are: accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, competing and compromising. The first (accommodating) refers to conflict management style whereby a conflict manager chooses to cooperate to a high degree with the warring parties in order to resolve a conflict. Using this conflict strategy of accommodating, usually requires the manager to do the bidding of the warring parties even when it is against his wish, objectives, and desired outcomes. The second (avoiding) requires that the manager resolves conflict by ignoring the request of the one or more warring parties involved in the conflict. The third strategy identified by Thomas and Kilmann (1976) is collaborating which is a conflict management style that requires the conflict manager to pair up with significant others that can assist to achieve both of their goals and the bidding of others without making either parties involved in the conflict "better off" or worse off". The fourth and fifth strategies are competing and compromising. Competing is the 'win-lose' approach whereby a manager acts in a very assertive way to achieve his or her goals, without seeking to cooperate with others while compromising is the 'lose-lose' scenario whereby none of the parties involved in the conflict are really allowed to achieve what they want. According to Adeyemi and Ademilua (2012), the application of the five conflict management strategies depends on the areas and sources of conflict. They added that the areas of conflict and use of the five conflict management strategies in universities in Nigeria differ by school ownership.

Basically, universities in Nigeria can be distinguished with respect to their ownership status. This is in recognition of Private-Public Partnership (PPP) at all levels of education by the federal government which thereby allows individuals, private organisations, ministries, among significant others, the right to establish, manage and fund universities; having met with the stipulated requirements by the National Universities Commission (NUC). Consequently, universities in Nigeria can be described along the pedestal of: federal, state and private universities. Public universities are universities, established, funded and managed by the federal or State government while private universities are those established and managed by an individual, or a group of institutions coming under one management, organisation or ministry. For instance; Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife is a Federal University, Olabisi Onabanjo University Ago-Iwoye is a State University while Bowen University, Iwo (Missionary), Lead City University,

Ibadan (Individual) are private universities.

One unique feature that distinguishes private universities from federal and state universities is the vision that births their establishment by their owners. For instance, the motto of one Samuel Adegboyega University, Ogoja of Oyo State is “Knowledge, Service and Discipline” while that of Covenant University Ogun State and Bowen University, Ogun State are “Raising New generation of Leaders” and “Excellence and Godliness” respectively. These mottos do not only reflect knowledge and discipline founded on godly doctrines but also explains the deep crave of the management team of the aforementioned private institutions towards raising disciplined and God-fearing leaders for the future. Adeyemi and Ademilua (2012) argued that their crave for raising disciplined leaders using godly doctrines does not only distinguish most private universities from public universities; but also often informs the decision of their management team on control and management of strife and hostility among staff and students, students and lecturers, teaching staff and non-teaching staff among significant other groups.

An important point must be borne in mind when attempting to deal effectively with organizational conflict, namely, that any one method will not apply to all situations or all personalities. Given the various approaches to conflict management currently in existence, a major question becomes 'Which approach is best?' While it appears that the integrated (collaborative) procedure has the most to offer, each of the other approaches can also be effective in selected circumstances.

In general, it can be concluded that conflict has been effectively managed when it no longer interferes with the ongoing activities of those involved. Conflict management is therefore the process of removing cognitive barriers to agreement. Depending on the situation, conflict management techniques often focus on changing structure, changing process or both. Sometimes structural modifications are not very creative, and the response to conflict is simply more rules and hardening of the role structure. Such efforts can improve the situation outwardly but not without consequences, the hardening of the role structure which is an organization's best defence against the inroads of individual irrationality gives equal protection against failing and against success.

However, the foregoing situations implied that conflict has become part and parcel of organizations including universities and all other levels of educational institutions. It also implies that in as much as these conflicts continue to manifest, researchers have continued to carry out survey and researches in multifarious dimensions with a view to exploring the best strategies for managing conflicts effectively in universities. It is, therefore, important to find out how best conflicts are managed by the university management team of federal, state, private universities. A closer examination of public and private universities would reveal that both are ridden with crises, but how the university management is able to handle the situation would determine the resultant effect whether a full blown crises is imminent or not.

It has been observed that Nigeria universities have for decades been faced with so many crises ranging from conflict between academic staff and university administrators, students versus academic staff, students versus university administrators, and non-academic staff versus university management. Most of these crises had led to closure of universities for months at different times with academic activities put on hold. However, there are allegations that some major consequences include the nearly perpetual disruption of academic calendar of universities, destruction of university, public and even private properties, loss of studentship, termination of the jobs of both academic and non-academic staff as fall outs of conflict, among others and destruction of

properties by students and most often upsurge of violence resulting in injuries of various degrees and loss of lives (Ada & Akinde, 2015; Olaleye & Arogundade, 2013; Ajibade, 2006). It seems therefore that the strategies adopted by university Vice-Chancellor and his management team may not have been effective. Conflicts in universities have given rise to distrust and hostility among professionals and academics thus contributing to hampering smooth, effective and efficient administration in the universities.

Studies on conflict management strategies by administrators of universities abound in literature (Hotepo, Asokere, Abdul-Azeez and Ajemunigbohun, 2010; Awan and Saeed, 2015; Obasan, 2011). Awan and Saeed (2015) examined conflict management and organizational performance among workers in Pakistan. The study was conducted among all the employees of Askari banks in the district of Multan. Results showed that the conflict management strategies used includes: improvement in communication, constant dialogue, accommodating, compromising, avoidance and re-orientation. Also, Lazarus (2014) examined the role of conflict management strategies on employees' productivity in a Nigerian civil service. Four conflict management strategies were considered which include collective bargaining, negotiation, avoidance and imposing. Descriptive survey design was adopted and self-developed questionnaire tagged: Conflict Management Strategies and Employees' Productivity Questionnaire was used in the data collection. Result showed that the conflict management strategies used by administrators in the institution include: collective bargaining, negotiation, avoidance and imposing.

Aja (2015) investigated conflict management approaches principals adopt for effective administration of secondary schools in Ebonyi State. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Result showed that principals found accommodation, competition, dialogue resort to rule and changing the individuals or ring leaders in the conflict as the effective conflict management strategies while use of deterrence in boxing, arbitration, majority rule and restructuring the organization were not effective conflict management strategies in the management of conflicts in secondary schools.

Ezepue (2015) determined the management strategies to be adopted for conflict Resolution in Federal and State Universities in South East Nigeria. Findings revealed that management strategies for conflict resolution that should be adopted include measures such as constant supply of electricity; reduction in fees; building and equipping library for students and staff for learning and research. For the identified strategies to be effective, they should be applied preventively and proactively. In another study Rafiq (2016) investigated the conflict management strategies of the Principals of Secondary schools Islamabad (Pakistan) with reference to their gender and school location. Result showed that conflict management strategies differ with respect to school ownership.

Analysis of effectiveness of conflict management strategies adopted by universities in Nigeria has been largely ignored. In the western part of the country, researches on analysis of effectiveness of conflict management strategies adopted by universities in Nigeria seem not to be effective due to observable internal conflict. In cases like this, the University Management may only resort to finding solutions to suppressing the conflict from escalating.

It also appears that despite this situation, the education industry, especially universities, seem to develop nonchalant attitude towards effective management of these conflicts. If these conflicts are not checked, they may be destructive as people involved will often see one another as enemies. This is unwholesome for the university community and Nigeria educational system as

a whole. Common observation in universities in Nigeria has shown that occurrences of conflicts seem to be frequent despite the existence and use of various strategies by the authorities in managing them. Observations also show that the strategies being used by the authorities in managing or mismanaging these conflicts might have some relationship with the administrative effectiveness of the institution (Adeyemi & Ademilua, 2012). How effective are the conflict management strategies adopted by universities in Nigeria?

From the foregoing, many of the aforementioned studies covered only public (federal and state) universities in Nigeria; ignoring private universities. The seemingly lack of empirical evidence of conflict management strategies on private universities is the knowledge gap that this research sought to fill. It therefore becomes expedient that conflict management strategies among federal, state, private universities in Nigeria and the South West Geopolitical zone in particular be investigated to identify feasible strategies for minimizing, reducing or avoiding disruptive conflicts in universities.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the conflict management strategies adopted by administrators of the universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria?
2. Is there any difference among the administrators of federal, state and private universities on conflict management strategies adopted by their university administrators in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

Hypothesis

One hypothesis was tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference among the administrators federal, state, and private universities on the conflict management strategies adopted by their university administrators in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria

3. METHOD OF STUDY

Design of the Study

This is a descriptive study that was based on survey research design. According to Sekaran (2013), descriptive survey is a research design in which the researcher interacts with the participants through interview or questionnaire to collect the necessary information. This survey design was considered most appropriate for the study because it allowed the collection of original data from the respondents themselves. This design was adopted for this study because it is geared towards establishing the conflict management strategies used by the university management team without any form of manipulation.

Population, Sample and Sampling

The population for this study consisted of three thousand 3,211 university administrators in South West Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The university administrators comprised of Vice Chancellors, Deputy Vice Chancellors (Administration and Academic), Registrars, Bursars, University Librarians, Deans of Student Affairs, Provosts of Colleges, the Chief Security Officer,

Deputy Registrar, Deans of Faculties, Heads of Departments and Directors in the universities (federal, state and private) in the six states (Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ekiti and Ondo) that make up South West Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

A sample size of 900 university administrators representing 28% was drawn from the universities (federal, state and private) in the six (6) states (Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ekiti and Ondo) in South West Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. A total of six Federal universities (Obafemi Awolowo University, Osun State, University of Ibadan, Ibadan Oyo State, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta Ogun State, University of Lagos, Akoka Lagos State, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State and Federal University of Technology Akure, Ondo State), State universities (Osun State University Osogbo, Osun State, Ladoke Akintola University, Ogbomosho, Oyo State, Olabisi Onabanjo University Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Lagos State University Ojo, Lagos State, Ekiti State university Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Adekunle Ajasin University and Akungba Akoko, Ondo State) and private universities (Bowen university, Iwo, Osun State, Ajayi Crowther University Oyo, Oyo State, Babcock University, Ikene-Remo, Ogun State, Crawford university, Atan-Agara Road Igbesa, Ogun State, Afe Babalola University Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State and Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State) were drawn from the six States. The choice of 28% as sample size is supported by scholars O'Sullivan, Rassel & Berner, 2008; Sekaran, 2013) who noted that perspectives on the ideal sample size vary and could be influenced by one or more factors namely; degree of accuracy needed by the researcher; proximity to respondent; extent of geographical openness of the study area and time factor among others.

To obtain the sample, three universities were selected from each state to give a total of 18 universities. This included one federal, state and private. A sample of 50 respondents was purposively selected from each of the 18 universities. The choice of purposive sampling technique for this study is supported by Leedy and Ormrod (2005) who contended that purposive sampling technique is ideal when the researcher is interested in drawing a sample of objects or persons of fairly homogenous characteristics within a fairly distinct group. By using purposive sampling technique for the work, it becomes very clear that the researcher was target directed and very objective in selecting an equal representative sample of the university administrators from each university.

Instrument Validation and Reliability

The instrument that was used for collection of data was the questionnaire titled: "Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (COMSTAQ)". This instrument (COMSTAQ) was developed by the researcher. The instrument consisted of two parts "A" and "B". The Part A included bio-data of the respondents such as name of institution while Part "B" looked at conflict management strategies in universities. Information on name of institution collected in Part A helped the researcher to classify the institution according to their ownership status of federal, state, private universities. Part B consisted of 16 items to elicit responses from respondents on conflict management strategies employed in universities. The items under five group of conflict management strategies (CMS) namely: accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, competing and compromising. The items were rated as Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1.

The questionnaire was validated by three experts in the field of Educational Administration. The split-half reliability method was adopted for this study. This was done by

administering copies of the questionnaire to a group of 10 respondents comprising principal staff of University of Benin (federal university), Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma (State university) and Samuel Adegboyega University Ogwa (private university) in Edo State. Edo State was chosen in order not to include participant on the pilot test in the main administration of the instrument. The data retrieved was collated and split into two equal halves using odd and even numbers. The Split-Half reliability analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 21). The overall Split-Half alpha (α) for the scales are: 0.86 for conflict management strategies and 0.74 for effective conflict management strategies.

Method of Data Analysis

The research questions were answered descriptively using Means ($\bar{X}$), Standard Deviation (S.D) while the hypothesis was tested using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistic and Sidak Multiple Comparison Post-Hoc test for three independent sample means. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

4. RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the conflict management strategies adopted by administrators of the universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and standard score of university administrators on the conflict management strategies adopted by administrators of universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria

s/n.		N=888		
Conflict Management Strategies		$\bar{X}$	S.D	Remark
Conflict between....				
1	Effective communication: allowing free flow of information among all parties.	2.89	.917	Agreed
2	Dialogue strategy: calling for round table discussion between and among parties involved.	2.85	.904	Agreed
3	Lumping: tolerating the situation without public comment	2.60	1.077	Agreed
Overall mean on accommodating = 2.78				
4	Avoidance strategy: preventing conflict from occurring by settling all organs involved or using clique heads to resolve issues before they escalate.	2.91	.841	Agreed
5	Participatory decision making strategy: recognizing individual worth within the group through democratic leadership practices	2.89	.984	Agreed
Overall mean on avoiding = 2.90				
6	Forming structural changes: this involves rearrangement of the internal structure of the organization	2.53	.842	Agreed

7	Cooperation: ensuring or allowing all to work together for a common goal.	2.03	.959	Disagreed
8	Emergency strategy: approaching issues promptly before they degenerate to violence.	2.70	.673	Agreed
9	Negotiation: trying to find a common ground among parties in conflict	2.52	.882	Agreed
10	Collaborating: managers become partners or pair up with each other to achieve both of their goals in this style	2.41	.707	Disagreed
Overall mean on collaborating = 2.44				
11	Persuasion strategy: by using logical and convincing argument to win the other parties involved in a conflict.	1.93	.860	Disagreed
12	Suppression: trying to suppress tension or pretend that nothing is happening.	2.47	.692	Disagreed
13	Competing: This is the 'win-lose' approach	2.43	.848	Disagreed
Overall mean on competing = 2.28				
14	Compromise: entering into agreement by using arbiter e.g. court	2.43	.807	Disagreed
15	Third-party intervention: allowing third-party to mediate in the conflict	1.90	.837	Disagreed
16	Use of ad-hoc committees: the use of committees like staff disciplinary committee or students' disciplinary committee to settle disputes.	2.59	.813	Agreed
Overall mean on compromising = 2.31				

Note: * Significant mean($\bar{X} \geq 2.50$)

The results in Table 1 showed that the university administrators agreed on item 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 16 at a mean score range of 2.91 to 2.52 while they disagreed in items 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 at a mean score range of 2.47 to 1.90 respectively. The results in Table 5 on the conflict management strategies means among the various categories of respondent ranged from 2.60 to 2.89. Furthermore, result showed that dialogue strategy is 2.85 respectively. The overall mean score on items 1 to 3 bordering on accommodating was 2.78; items 4 and 5 bordering on avoiding was 2.90; items 6 to 10 bordering on collaborating was 2.44; items 11 to 13 bordering on competing was 2.28; while items 14 to 16 that constitute items on compromising management strategy was 2.31. This showed that accommodating and avoiding were the most prominent strategies adopted by the administrators of universities in the management of conflict in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference among the administrators of federal, state, and private universities on the conflict management strategies adopted by their university administrators in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria

Table 2: Analysis on Conflict Management Strategies with respect to School Ownership in Universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Accommodating	Between Groups	23.186	2	11.593	25.453	.000
	Within Groups	403.098	885	.455		
	Total	426.284	887			
Avoiding	Between Groups	48.808	2	24.404	43.113	.000
	Within Groups	500.952	885	.566		
	Total	549.760	887			
Collaborating	Between Groups	18.531	2	9.266	38.586	.000
	Within Groups	212.517	885	.240		
	Total	231.049	887			
Competing	Between Groups	11.795	2	5.898	21.484	.000
	Within Groups	242.943	885	.275		
	Total	254.739	887			
Compromising	Between Groups	.613	2	.306	1.138	.321
	Within Groups	238.176	885	.269		
	Total	238.788	887			

*F-value is significant at 0.05 alpha level

Note: $p < 0.05$

Results in Table 2 showed that the F-value of 25.453 for accommodating, 43.113 for avoiding, 38.586 for collaborating, and 21.484 for competing were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) while the f-value of 1.138 for compromising was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was a significant difference among the Federal, the State, and the Private universities in conflict management strategies (accommodating, avoiding, collaborating and competing) adopted by their administrators in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Determining the conflict management strategy on which the three universities (private, state and federal) differed was pertinent, hence, a Post-Hoc test using Sidak was conducted on the omnibus test of variance (ANOVA). The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Analysis on Sidak Post-Hoc test on conflict management strategies used by administrators of universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria

Dependent Variable	School ownership (I)	School ownership (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	p-value
Accommodating	Private University	State University	-.375*	.057	.000
		Federal University	-.318*	.056	.000
	State University	Private University	.375*	.057	.000

Avoiding	Federal University	Federal University	.057	.055	.656
		Private University	.318*	.056	.000
		State University	-.057	.055	.656
	Private University	State University	-.558*	.063	.000
		Federal University	-.436*	.062	.000
	State University	Private University	.558*	.063	.000
		Federal University	.122	.061	.132
	Federal University	Private University	.436*	.062	.000
Collaborating	Federal University	State University	-.122	.061	.132
		Private University	-.080	.041	.146
	Private University	Federal University	-.335*	.040	.000
		State University	.080	.041	.146
	State University	Federal University	-.255*	.040	.000
		Private University	.335*	.040	.000
	Federal University	State University	.255*	.040	.000
		Private University	.190*	.044	.000
Competing	Private University	Federal University	.279*	.043	.000
		State University	-.190*	.044	.000
	State University	Federal University	.088	.042	.109
		Private University	-.279*	.043	.000
	Federal University	State University	-.088	.042	.109
		Private University	-.031	.043	.859
	Private University	Federal University	-.064	.043	.347
		State University	.031	.043	.859
Compromising	State University	Federal University	-.034	.042	.810
		Private University	.064	.043	.347
	Federal University	State University	.034	.042	.810

* Mean differences significant at 0.05 alpha level

Note: $p < 0.05$

The results in Table 3 indicated that the mean differences on accommodating in the private universities (-.375*, -.318*), state universities (.375*) and those in federal universities (.318*) were all statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). The mean differences on avoiding in private universities (-.558*, -.436*), state universities (.558*) and federal universities (.436*) were all statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). The mean differences on collaborating in private universities (-.335*), state universities (-.255*) and federal universities (.335*, .255*) were all statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). The mean differences on competing in private universities (.190*, .279*), state universities (-.190*) and federal universities (-.279*) were also statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) while the mean differences on compromising in private, state and federal universities were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). This indicated that there was a significant difference among private, state and federal universities on accommodating, avoiding, collaborating and competing conflict management strategies in universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria

($p < 0.05$), while no significant difference existed among private, state and federal universities on compromising as a conflict management strategy in the universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

5. DISCUSSION

The result from the study showed that accommodating and avoiding were the most prominent strategies adopted by administrators of the universities in the management of conflict in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The result from this study agrees with that of Awan and Saeed (2015) that the conflict management strategies used included: improvement in communication, constant dialogue, accommodating, compromising, avoidance and re-orientation. The result in this study also agrees with that of Hotepo, Asokere, Abdul-Azeez and Ajemunigbohun (2010) that avoidance, collaboration, power-play, bargaining, confrontation and compromise were the strategies used in conflict management.

The result in this study is in consonance with that of Obasan (2011) that putting machineries in place to address the sources of conflict; effecting necessary changes in the process and procedure management were the measures by which conflict managers resolved conflict. The result agrees with that of Okon (2008) that compromise and collaboration options, were widely used by the principals in the secondary schools.

The result in this study collaborates the findings of Agwu (2013) that consulting with workers in order to resolve the conflict; intimidation of workers and enforcing strict disciplinary rules on workers were the conflict management strategies used in the institution. The result in the study disagrees with that of Ogbuehi (2001) that inadequate funding, over-stretched capital and deteriorating equipment were some the causes of conflict in the institution, the results showed that compromising, competing and collaboration were the major strategies used by the university administrators to resolve conflict. The result from this study also support that of Olaleye and Arogundede (2013) that dialogue and participatory strategies were often used to control conflict while emergency strategy and violence strategy were often ignored. The result in this study is in consonance with that of Adeyemi and Ademilua (2012) that the conflict management strategies used by the administrators included dialogue strategy, force strategy, emergency strategy, negligence strategy, mediation strategy, prevention strategy, participatory decision-making strategy and avoidance strategy.

The results in this study agrees with that of Ozkalp, Sungur and Ozdemir (2009) that first, integrating, and second, compromising, were the most preferred conflict management styles of Turkish managers. The other important finding was that preferring obliging styles of conflict management changed according to the status of the managers. Obliging was mostly used when the conflict partner had an upper level status. The result in this study also supports that of Adomi and Anie (2006) that interpersonal conflicts were the dominant conflicts in Nigerian libraries, and accommodation ranked highest as technique of conflict avoidance.

The result in this study is in agreement with that of Lazarus (2014) that the conflict management strategies used by the administrators in the institution included collective bargaining, negotiation, avoidance and imposing. The results in this study is in support with that of Olaleye and Arogundade (2013) that dialogue, force, emergency, mediation and prevention strategies were the measures used in resolving and managing conflict in the institution. The result in this study also supports that of Oboegbulem and Alfa (2013) that strategies used for resolving or managing

conflicts included: agreeing on the procedure taken for the resolution of conflicts, encouraging parties to work together, taking staff and students' comments and suggestions, and involvement of the school disciplinary committee and the public complaint commission, among others.

The results in this study agrees with that of Adomi and Anie (2006) that interpersonal conflicts were the dominant conflicts in the Nigerian libraries, and that accommodation ranked highest as technique of conflict avoidance. The results in this study also supported that of Osisima and Chukwuemeka (2012) that integrating, accommodating and compromising were the commonly used strategies in managing conflict while dominating and avoiding were the least used strategies for managing conflict. The adoption of the Creative-Contingency Model of Conflict Management as an enduring answer to conflict situations in firms was suggested based in their findings.

The results in this study agrees with that of Aigboje and Omoregie (2013) that the principals of the secondary schools mainly used the dialogue, arbitration, negotiation, problem solving, and compromise and neglect strategies in resolving conflict. On the other hand, the forcing strategies were used once in a while or never used by the principals. The result in this study is in agreement with that of Olowo and Oladimeji (2013) that the strategy used to resolve and manage conflict was often collaborative.

The result in this study is in line with that of Ughamadu and Okaforocha (2013) stated the university authorities in Nigeria used communication process; structural and formal dispute strategies in the management of inter group conflicts. Formal dispute strategy was perceived to be mostly utilized, followed by the process strategy and next was the communication strategy. It also corroborates that of Madumere-Obike, Ukala and Nwabueze (2013) that peace and conflict management strategies used in the secondary schools in the area included: the dialogue strategy, force strategy, emergency strategy, mediation strategy, prevention strategy, participatory decision-making strategy and avoidance strategy.

The result showed that avoiding, and accommodating were the two major strategies used in the management of conflict in the universities in South West Geo-political Zone of Nigeria. The conflict management strategies among others were as a result of the ability to wade-off or prevent possible tension strife, argument, inter-personal and inter-going conflict among significant members of the university community. Furthermore, the adaptability and preference of the administrators of the universities for these conflict management strategies could be rooted in their ability to create a learning environment that accommodates and affords members of the university community the opportunity of while operating within the ambits of the university rules and regulations.

School ownership and Conflict Management Strategies Adopted in Universities

The result from the study showed that there was a significant difference among the private, the state and the federal universities on accommodating, avoiding, collaborating and competing conflict management strategies in the universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria while no significant difference existed among the private, the state and the federal universities on compromising as a conflict management strategy the in universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The result in this study disagrees with that of Babajide (2013) that conflict management strategy preference did not differ by ownership status of institutions.

The results in this study agrees with that of Ezepue (2015) that those management strategies

for conflict resolution that should be adopted included measures such as constant supply of electricity; reduction in fees; building and equipping library for students and staff for learning and research. For the identified strategies to be effective, they should be applied preventively and proactively. The result in this study agrees with that of Adeyemi and Ademilua (2012) that school ownership and location predicted conflict management strategies in the universities. It was also in line with that of Ghaffar, Zaman, Naz, Mehmood, and Idrees (2013) that conflict management strategies and ownership structure of schools were related. The result in this study disagrees with that of Rafiq (2016) that conflict management strategies differ with respect to school ownership. It also corroborates that of Hamayun, Wei, Muhammad, Khan, and Attia, (2014) that Conflict Management Strategies in the public universities differ by school ownership.

The result from the study showed that there was a significant difference among the private, the state and the federal universities on accommodating, avoiding, collaborating and competing conflict management strategies in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria, while no significant difference existed among private, state and federal universities on compromising as a conflict management strategy in universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Perhaps this is as a result of differences in institutional leadership, culture, management principles, visions and missions guiding the universities. These concerns with the argument of Rafiq (2016) that the differences in visions that birth various universities (private and public) may directly or indirectly after their leadership of their principal officers, and the strategy they adopt in managing conflict issues as well as their styles.

6. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

It was concluded based on results that the areas of conflict (interpersonal and intergroup) and conflict management strategies (accommodating, avoiding, collaborating and competing) adopted by the university administrators differed by school ownership. Collaborating, competing and compromising were found to be ineffective conflict management strategies as perceived by the university administrators. This in implication is clearly indicative of the fact that the best way to solve a prospective problem is to avoid it by using appropriate approaches. In this light, avoiding recurrent areas of conflict requires that the students, the lecturers, the academic and non-academic staff and the significant others within the university community should identify potential causes of conflict (at the latent stage) before it becomes wide-blown (at the manifest stage).

It was recommended that conflict management unit/division should be manned by skilled manpower who are certified experts on conflict management issues. It should be established by the university management to looking critically at internal conflict issues. This division should also serve an advisory body to the Student Union Government (SUG) staff associations such as Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities (NASU), and Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) on matters of intragroup and intergroup conflicts.

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