

Conflict Management Strategies for Effective Goal Attainment in Rivers State Owned Public Universities

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Abstract

Education provides the foundation for gaining the knowledge, skills, habits, and values required to make a constructive contribution to society. This study examined conflict management strategies for effective goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities. Effective communication, win/lose and smoothing were used as the dimensions while effective goal attainment was used as the measure. This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of this study consist of the two public universities owned by Rivers State, namely: Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE). There were a total of 1519 lecturers from the two Rivers State owned public universities. This consists of 1046 staff from Rivers State University and 473 staff from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (Source: University Digest, 2017). The sample for this study was 456 respondents which were drawn from the two Rivers State owned public universities. To achieve this, proportionate stratified sampling technique was use to select 271 lecturers from Rivers State University and 185 lecturers from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The instrument that was used for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire. To ensure content validity of the instrument, the instrument was given to the lecturers and two experts in the specialty of measurement and evaluation for examination and scrutiny. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha method. Reliability index of 0.73 was considered adequate for the study. Among other the findings revealed that to a high extent effective communication can be used in managing conflict in school through allowing free flow of information. This study concluded that the tertiary institutions workforce can be adequately effective in the delivery of their services only when the proactive conflict management strategies are sincerely employed. This study recommended among others that staff of Rivers State owned public universities should develop proper channel and skills by maintaining cordial relations with their subordinate by providing proper communication and distributing circulars on changes to those concern.

Keywords: *Conflict Management Strategies, Effective Goal Attainment, Effective Communication, Win/Lose and Smoothing*

INTRODUCTION

Education provides the foundation for gaining the knowledge, skills, habits and values required to make a constructive contribution to society. Because of this, education equips people with the intrinsic talents needed to both survive and progress civilization. Global socioeconomic and political developments are increasingly being driven by the advancement and use of knowledge (education). Adeyemi (2010) said the foundation of any advancement against poverty, ignorance and illiteracy in society must be a solid education. One important component in achieving educational goals is how well the educational system prevents conflicts from arising between institutional administrators and instructors, instructors and other instructors, instructors and students, and students themselves.

The school is a formal organization with a formal chain of command. It is made up of several people with diverse points of view and behavioural traits who work together or in synergy to attain an educational goal, and as such, there will inevitably be conflicts. Conflict can arise between administrators and their subordinates, between lecturers and lecturers, between students and students, or between students and lecturers. It may also be between the management and the host community's parents or residents. Adeyemi (2010) found that conflicts occasionally arise in the Nigerian educational system. He asserts that conflict is an art of colliding, clashing, or being opposed to one another.

Conflicts among staff members have a number of negative effects. They breed animosity, have an impact on their mental health, kill collaboration, which is meant to bring co-workers together, and rob them of the satisfaction they formerly felt from carrying out their responsibilities in the school. It hinders performance, skews the calm or private environment required for successful teaching and learning to flourish, and causes pupils to disobey established authority. Nigerian universities are supposed to accomplish the aforementioned goals by teaching, research, distribution of new and existing information, pursuit of community service, and by serving as a repository of knowledge.

However, study by Aluede et al., (2005), have demonstrated that disputes that have rocked several higher education institutions in Nigeria are making it harder for them to accomplish the goals that have been underlined. When compared to other social vices like cultism, test fraud, drug misuse, and so on that result in permanent school closures and other difficulties, such disputes have recently come to be regarded as one of the most evident persistent problems of relevance. (Aluede, et al., 2005).

Magagula (2007) in Fatile, & Adejuwon, (2011), argued that the primary goals of higher education institutions should be to teach students and impart knowledge, develop critical and analytical skills, instill appropriate values, norms, and attitudes, create and extend the body of knowledge with a view to establishing "facts" and "truths" through critical reflection and objective thinking, and enhance the quality of life of community members through community service projects. It is impossible to overstate the value of higher education for the advancement of a country. However, no meaningful development can take place in a conflict -ridden system torn apart by conflicts as witnessed in the educational institutions in the country today. University education is the third level of the Nigerian educational system.

Conflict is a phrase used to describe situations when activities that are incompatible take place. It can be used to describe situations where disputes arise. The phrase can also be used to refer to aims that appear to be incompatible, but are really supported from one side to the detriment of the other. Conflicts can arise when activities and responses inside the organization are interfered with one another. Conflicts have also been defined as any forms of oppositional or hostile encounters, such as disputes or conflicts over concepts, ideals, or lifestyles. Due to the frequent weakening and usurpation of people or organizational operations that are aimed at goal fulfillment, conflicts may entail sabotage and frustration. The success of an organization depends on the abilities of the members to understand themselves. Such understanding is capable of facilitating team work enhance support to each other. Conflicts between schools have grown to be one of the nation's biggest issues today, according to many Nigerians. This is especially true given how many individuals believe that escalating conflict via acts of violence, riot, unrest, and indiscipline is a good way to solve problems. The history of student disputes in the nation demonstrates that the issue predates even the country's oldest educational institution. Conflicts in schools have reached their peak, which has been the biggest challenge in school administration recently. Studies have shown that conflict/conflict in any organization is inevitable and is as old as the higher institutions in Nigeria itself. Today, students' militancy in the nation's higher institutions have come to be an issue for serious concern. This is more so in an organization as a higher institution with a structure that allows two or more units or groups to share functional boundaries in achieving its set objectives.

In addition, effectively managed conflicts helps to minimize or in some cases, eliminate some of the problems which creates untold difficulties for the schools, such as disagreements between staffs and university administrators (in some situations where some university administrators favour some lecturers over others and other times, outright nepotism), lecturer and lecturer (in cases where a staffs time table clashes with another staff, in duty roster it poses jealousy, etc) lecturer and student (this bothers on discipline, abuse and academic performance), university administrator and host communities and even school administrators and the university commission, which can come in the form of outburst of anger, exchange of words violent behaviors and other disciplinary problems. Effectiveness in managing conflicts involves ability to accurately identify and understand the issues. This then calls for university administrators to possess skills in comprehending sources of conflicts and conflicts management strategies.

Conflicts management strategies for effective goal attainment in public universities is very important because the goals of the school cannot be achieved if the conflicts that arise in the school system are not well managed. The vice chancellor, as an administrator, should be able to maintain a free flow communication process to give room for cordial interaction in the school system. It is expected that university administrators and staff should work as a team for the growth and development of the school.

As is expected in the higher institution settings, members and groups are bound to engage in conflicts due to one interest or the other, and the conflicts resolution and adequate consultation and communication among all parties cannot be underestimated for smooth, effective and peaceful

result in the institution. It is on this premise that the researcher intends to examine conflict management strategies for effective goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities to close the lacuna.

Statement of the Problem

Conflicts are common occurrence at Nigerian universities, which have raised alarm among educators. However, it is important to note that the rise in disputes at Rivers State institutions have repercussions. The numerous disagreements occurring in the local institutions may make this clear. It is a worrying problem that requires the thoughtful attention of well-meaning Nigerians and pertinent educational stakeholders to devise a solution. Among these disputes are student rioting over charge increases, demonstration by students due to unfavorable school policies, quarrels among students due to lack of school facilities for learning, invading of the school by the community due to bullying of students by students, staffs, lecturers being in a particular faction due to elective positions, school administrators of public universities witch haunting lecturers they feel that are not in their own camp or faction etc.

The reasons for these conflicts could be due to lack of administrative competence of the institutional administrators, indiscipline on the part of the staff and students, communication gap, inadequate facilities in institutions, inadequate basic amenities, frequent change in school policies and programmes, disagreement with school's authority, incompetent managerial skills of the school's administrators, types of leadership style adopted by the administrator and many more. Effective goal attainment in university education appears to be marred by conflicts, lawlessness and instability have taken over the entire school system with its attendant dire consequences where nobody is stable, safe or even feel motivated to teach and learn. Despite the strategies used in curbing the conflicts, common observation shows that conflicts seem to be on an increase in the universities. In the face of conflicts, it is doubtful if the school system can be an agent of transformation. From the above analysis, there is a gap in literature in the subject matter as a result of no or limited works on it. Thus, this has made the researcher to investigate conflict management strategies for effective goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate conflict management strategies for effective goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities. Specifically, the objectives of study are to:

1. Determine the extent effective communication conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities.
2. Ascertain the extent win/lose conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities.
3. Examine the extent smoothing conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent does effective communication as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers state owned public universities?
2. How does win/lose as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers state owned public universities?
3. What extent does smoothing as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers state owned public universities?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were postulated and tested at 0.05 level of confidence.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between effective communication as a conflict management strategy and goal attainment in Rivers state owned public universities.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between win/lose as a conflict management strategy and goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between smoothing as a conflict management strategy and goal attainment in Rivers state owned public universities

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Concept of Conflict

Conflict is defined in different ways by different scholars as a state of disagreement. It is the tension between two or more social entities that arise due to incompatibility of actual and desired responses (Ebong, 2013). Peretomode (1995) viewed it as a struggle for control of another person's behavior or action. Uya in Lazarus (2014) described conflict as a circumstance in which there are incompatible goals, cognitive or emotion within or between individuals that result to opposition.

The concept of conflict is viewed as a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources which is aimed at neutralizing or eliminating their rivals. Thomas (1976) refers to it as the process which begins when an individual or party perceives that the other is frustrated, or is about to be frustrated. Amason in Angela (2014) described conflict as a form of socialization. He emphasized that people in organization have both personal and role preferences about the organizations actions and policies.

Deutsch & Coleman (2000) saw conflict as that which exists because people have different needs, ideas, views and values. Hoy & Miskel (2008) argued that conflict may arise as a result of power play in an organization. Legitimate power is more likely to promote commitment and compliance, whereas illegitimate power produces conflict and alienation. Thesaurus (1993) defined conflict as

synonymous with antagonism, opposition, disagreement, discord, and combat. Nkwonta (2014) defined it as disagreement between people with different ideas or beliefs. It is a disagreement in which parties involved perceives a threat to their needs, interests or concern. He maintains that it is a breakdown in the standard mechanism of decision making in which persons or group of persons encounter difficulty in choosing or selecting an alternative action. Zwei (1997) posited that conflict is a major disagreement that generates antagonism and opposition in the relations between persons, groups and organizations. It does occur when some persons because of differences, interfere with, in terms of obstruction, counteraction and opposition, the attainment of other goals and interest of others. It is the obstruction of others incompatible, healthy, positive competition, which is a contest for some prized values, but rather involves, attempts by each other to obtain it. Gardiner & Simmons in Andrew (2016) defined conflict as that which arise as a result of divergence of interests, objectives or priorities between individuals, groups, or organizations, it could also exist as a result of nonconformity to requirements of a task, activity or process.

Educational Conflict

Conflict in school is seen as a state of disagreement that affects performance in the school and hampers teaching and learning process. Lagat (2013) described it as that which bring about opposition or hostility which lead to either passive or violent resistance in educational management by the school administrator, members of staff and students.

Omboko (2010) in his conceptualization, referred to conflict in school as that which may reduce strength and resources such as social support and integration among teachers and all those involved in education which ultimately increase problem among students in the school. He argues that conflict does not only threaten school functioning, but may also induce a chain of other educational and social problems which includes: abuse of office, disagreement, quarrels, hostility and violent fights which may adversely affect the propitious or smoothing running of the school. Nayereh (2014) posited that conflict between students is a major problem in schools. If they are not properly supervised or handled in a pragmatic manner or approach, could prevent schools from reaching or obtaining its goals, and in turn have negative impact on the school climate. Conflict between teachers and the school administrator or school administrator occur frequently in the school. Ezegbe (1997) affirmed that conflicts between school administrators and teachers have the potential of creating administrative inefficiency, fighting, breakdown in teaching and learning process, indiscipline amongst staff and students and general failure in the delivery of education.

Nature of Conflicts in Schools

In any education institutions conflicts are common and often occur when school administrators, teachers or students are engaged in activities that are incompatible with those of their counterparts in their various offices or classes. This can be explained in broad category that conflict is a result of the interactive process rising from incompatibility, misunderstanding or disagreement between individuals, groups or institutions and organizations. According to Kirkwood (2002), there are several types of conflicts that may exist in an institution or organization including tertiary schools. Such conflicts include data conflicts, structural conflicts, relationship conflicts and interest

conflicts. It is stressed that conflicts may result into disputes, complaints, disciplinary actions and strikes which may further lead to loss of property, deaths, lawsuits as well as grievances. The types of conflicts identified by Kirkwood (2002) are:

Interpersonal conflict: This occurs when two people in a school have incompatible needs, goals or approaches in their relationship. The source of interpersonal conflict is observed in communication breakdown between individuals who are part of the conflict.

Personality conflict: It refers to very strong differences in motives, values or styles in dealing with people whose conflict is not resolvable. This is the case when two parties are over ambitious for power and each of them want to dominate the other, hence leading to power struggle.

Role conflict: This arises over different interpretations of what is; that is discrepancies in the various roles we play. In broad sense, it involves differences in role definitions, expectations or even responsibilities among the individuals who are interdependent in a social system. Role conflict occurs when there are no clear boundaries of responsibilities in an institution leading to friction between the parties involved.

Inter-group conflict: This occurs where there is a collection of people living together in groups, and such groups can either be religious or ethnic groups, departments or levels of decision making in the same institution or organization. The main cause of inter-group conflict is competition for scarce resources. To avoid further disruption various mechanisms should be applied to regulate such conflicts and these may include bargaining and mediation.

Multi-party conflict: This appears in societies where different groups and organizations have varying priorities over resource management and policy development. The major sources of multiparty conflicts include a combination of power, value and economic sources. Various approaches are required for resolving such conflicts.

International conflict: This occurs between nations or States at the global level. Competition for resources is the major cause of this type of conflict. However, such differences are resolved through diplomatic means.

Causes of Conflicts in Rivers State Universities

Unimpressive Conditions of Service

This type of conflicts arises in universities with poor working conditions and lack of clear work and remuneration policy by the government. Some schools face a lot of difficulties in providing the necessary facilities and even teaching materials. Some schools did not have basic facilities including staffroom and teaching materials while some head teachers lack even offices to transact official duties. Okotoni & Okotoni (2003) indicate that teachers work in highly de-motivating conditions due to poor pay by the government coupled with lack of clear increments in salaries.

Administrative Incompetence Head of Department

Some head of departments were unable to adopt and respond to complexities in their institutions that fast as found out by Yee & Cuba (1996). Some boards got impatient because they expect quick positive change, and when change fail to occur that fast, the head teacher is accused of being low performer. The head teacher was quickly ejected out of the school and a new one brought in. Rono (2001) shares the above views and indicates that some head of department display poor leadership qualities that created conflicts in schools. Gordon (1991) indicates that inexperienced department heads sometimes ran into serious problems when they fail to use their scarce resources properly. Meagre resources available in the school may be used on trivial projects while major ones were untouched.

Misappropriation and Embezzlement of Funds

Rono (2001) further reveals that some department heads have been locked out of their schools due to poor financial accountability. Some department heads are not transparent in their financial matters of their school. The department heads do not discuss financial issues of their school with their boards. When financial issues are brought in the agenda of the board meeting, it is usually the last item of the agenda when the member was tired and unable to discuss the item in detail, he further asserts. Members authorize use of school finance hurriedly without counter checking the implications. This gives a leeway to some department heads to misappropriate school funds. Parents go to such schools and evict such department heads withdrawing their children and sponsorship to the school. Some department heads are not transparent and accountable in financial issues of the school. They do not let people see value for money and how the money collected in school is used. The findings of the Republic of Kenya (2001) indicate that department heads create conflicts in their schools because of applying wrong managerial skills in planning, budgeting and expenditure control. In some cases, department heads do not apply proper use of accounting instructions provided by the Ministry of Education. This leads to misallocation of resources resulting to lack of essential commodities and services. The Report also indicates that some department heads are not transparent and accountable in handling the financial issues of their schools (Republic of Kenya, 2001).

Indiscipline on the Part of Students

Discipline of students has greatly contributed to a lot of instabilities in management of schools. Whenever a case of indiscipline arises in schools, the department heads will always be blamed for being insensitive to the students' welfare. In such cases, the head teacher can be transferred as a remedial measure because students demand for removal of such head teacher. In some cases, the students receive the support of PTA and teachers in the indiscipline pursuit.

Indiscipline on the Part of Lecturers and Administration

Over working cause conflicts in educational administration with lecturers who are unmotivated in their work. Some lecturers go into teaching profession as a last resort when other alternatives are

absent. These teachers will never settle in their jobs as professionals. They work to earn a salary with the hope that they will soon leave the profession. The unmotivated lecturers will not produce good results. Complaint, laxity, grumbling and fighting the head-teacher characterizes their work. The department heads will always be in the centre of blame. He or she will not get anything done without running into trouble with the teachers. Kingala (2000) concurs with the above authors and indicates that men and women who have no calling to teaching vocation take up the training lecturers but have no interest in looking after the young people. These lecturers find themselves inside the classroom doing a job they do not like but because they need money, they stick. He also indicates that due to lack of interest in teaching, the teachers become increasingly brutal to the students. Such lecturers also become patronize to the politicians and receive protection. A lecturer in this category causes trouble to the department heads because he is sure of protection from the politician who will use the lecturer to tilt scales in the political battlefield.

Conflict Management Strategies in Universities

According to Akanji cited in Lazarus (2013) constructively managed conflicts induces a positive performance while poorly managed conflicts creates an atmosphere of pandemonium and tension in the environment which leads to dislocation of the entire group and polarization, reduced productivity on job performance, psychological and physical injury, increases malice and hostility.

Effective Communication Strategy

Effective communication is a very good strategy for managing conflicts. It is a process where all the necessary information needed by groups are communicated to them in due time, acted upon and provision of appropriate feedback. Effective communication has a big role to play in conflict management because it has been observed that poor communication results in misunderstanding and ultimately conflicts. Communication has to be clear and precise to avoid conflicts (Oboegbulem & Onwurah, 2011). Effective Communication is a strong conflict management strategy because it can be used to avoid many problems that would have engulfed organization. Organization must at all times conduct meeting with all different cadres of their employees. By so doing they would be able to explain organizational policy and also listen to complaints and problems of members of staff. In addition, management should not fold their arms to rumours. Each time a rumour emanates, it must be confronted with relevant facts clearly communicated to all levels of units, departments and organizations (Obi, 2004). Ogonor (2004) posited that conflict resolution is meant to change attitude and perception of disputants and enables them to obtain new information and engage in a process of creative problem-solving through the perception and “reframing” of the conflicting situation using controlled communication.

Win/Lose Strategy

This is a give –and-take style, it is less assertive and cooperative. Win/lose can be viewed as bargaining or trading. Victor in Andrew (2016) asserted that this strategy can be employed when the goals and the power of both sides are equal in terms of importance and when there is need for momentary or short-term solution. Ebong (2013) views the strategy as a balance between the needs

of organization and those of the individuals. The focus is on negotiating, looking for a common ground, trade off, and searching for solution that is acceptable to both parties. McShane and Glinow (2000) maintain that, conflicts tend to escalate when the parties develop a win/lose strategy because they rely on powers and politics to gain advantage. A win/lose strategy may occasionally be appropriate when the conflict really is over a fixed resource. To varying degree the opposing groups can gain by believing that their positions aren't perfectly opposing and that creative solutions are possible. Adopting a win-win or win-lose strategy influences the way we approach the conflict, including our actions towards the other person. Lagat (2013) sees win/lose strategy as one that each party to the conflict gives up something of value like money, promotion, opportunities and office space then expansion of the resource can create a win-win solution. Similarly, Miriam (2013) sees Win/lose style as that which is based on intermediate concern for self and others. It involves give and take among disputants or aggrieved parties, with each giving up something to arrive at a mutual agreement or solution. According to Andrew (2016), this strategy is useful when the goals of conflicting parties are mutually exclusive or when both parties for instance labour and management, are powerful and have reached an impasse in their negotiation process. The strategy may not be right or suitable in dealing or handling complex problems.

Smoothing Strategy

This strategy is characterized by low assertiveness and high cooperation. The school administrators give in to the demand of the subordinates; it is a submissive and complaint approach. The strategy is sometimes appropriate in circumstance or situation when an individual wish to show reasonable attributes, develop performance, create good will or maintain peace (Andrew, 2013). The smoothing strategy can be problematic when one uses the mode to keep counts. The astute administration or manager employing this style tries to get his /her own goals, objectives and desired outcomes to allow partners to achieve their goals and outcomes. It is essential if one wants to maintain a healthy relationship in future or in time to come.

This style is associated with an attempt to diminish differences and emphasize commonalities for the purpose of satisfying the needs of the other party. It can be used as a strategy when an individual is willing to make a concession with the hope of getting something in return.

Review of Empirical Studies

Ukpabi (2000), investigated crises management techniques used by school administrators of secondary schools in Abia State with a view to establish the type of crises that are common and how best to avoid crises and the techniques most preferred by school administrators in resolving crises. To achieve these two research questions, hypotheses were posed to guide the study. A sample of 17 school administrators and 170 teachers out of 279 school administrators and 1250 teachers were selected. Questionnaires was constructed. The mean and rank order were used to answer the research questions. Some major findings were: there is no significance difference between the opinions of RSU Lecturers' and IAUE Lecturers'' school administrators' on how best to avoid crises. Structured inter-reference group and inter-role crises were the main type of crises existing in secondary schools in Abia. Compromise and avoidance are the most adopted techniques

for crises resolutions in schools. The researcher, therefore, concluded that the most common type of crises in schools were structural crises. Crises should not be ignored; rather, school administrators should develop appropriate management techniques and skillfully apply the findings in order to achieve the purpose for which they are established to achieve educational aims.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of this study consist of the two public universities owned by Rivers State, namely: Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE). There were a total of 1519 lecturers from the two Rivers State owned public universities. This consists of 1046 staff from Rivers State University and 473 staff from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (**Source:** University Digest, 2017).

The sample for this study was 456 respondents which were drawn from the 2 Rivers State owned public universities. To achieve this, proportionate stratified sampling technique was use to select 271 lecturers from Rivers State University and 185 lecturers from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The 456 lecturers that were sampled for the study represent 30% of the total population of lecturers in the 2 Rivers State owned public universities. The instrument that was used for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire. To ensure content validity of the instrument, the instrument was given to the lecturers and two experts in the specialty of measurement and evaluation for examination and scrutiny. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha method. Reliability index of 0.73 was considered adequate for the study.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Presentation of Data

Research Question 1: To what extent does effective communication as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers state owned public universities?

Table 1: Mean responses and standard deviation of the respondents on the extent effective communication as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers state owned public universities

S/N	ITEMS	\bar{X}	S. D	DECISION
1	Allowing free flow of information will help school administrators to manage conflict.	2.76	1.17	High Extent
2	school administrators maintain cordial relation with their subordinate by providing the right channel of communication and distributing circulars on changes in curriculum to teachers	2.85	1.17	High Extent

3	Informing subordinates on appropriate sanctions or penalties for faulting the school rules can help school administrators in managing conflicts in schools	2.71	1.02	High Extent
4	School administrators using the right communication skill, not using abusive Statements, not attacking, not threatening and not making accusation can help in managing conflicts in schools	2.91	.60	High Extent
5	Disseminating information to parents and guidance on impending dangers that may erupt from students' behaviour can help school administrators in managing conflicts	2.01	1.18	Low Extent
Grand Mean		2.65	0.83	High Extent

Source: Survey Data 2024

Legends:

\bar{X} : Mean
S.D: Standard Deviation

Scales:

1.00 - 2.49: Disagree
 2.50 - 4.00: Agree

Data on table 1 show the mean responses and standard deviation of the respondents on the extent effective communication as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities. The data shows that majority of the respondents to a high extent agreed that allowing free flow of information will help school administrators to manage conflict, school administrators maintain cordial relation with their subordinate by providing the right channel of communication and distributing circulars on changes in curriculum to teachers, informing subordinates on appropriate sanctions or penalties for faulting the school rules can help school administrators in managing conflicts in schools and School administrators using the right communication skill, not using abusive Statements, not attacking, not threatening and not making accusation can help in managing conflicts in schools are effective communication strategy that enhance goal attainment in Rivers state owned public universities as seen on items 1, 2, 3 and 4, having mean values of 2.76, 2.85, 2.71 and 2.91 respectively. But to a low extent disseminating information to parents and guidance on impending dangers that may erupt from students' behavior can help school administrators in managing conflicts as agreed by the respondents on item 5 with the mean value of 2.01.

Furthermore, the grand mean of 2.65, indicates that the answer to research question one is that effective communication as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities.

Research Question 2: How does win/lose as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers state owned public universities?

Table 2: Mean responses and standard deviation of the respondents on the extent win/lose as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities.

S/N	ITEMS	\bar{X}	S. D	DECISION
6	School administrators allowing parties to look for trade off or middle grand that is acceptable can help in managing conflicts in schools	2.87	0.95	High Extent
7	Win/lose strategy help in creating understanding among individuals on conflicting issues.	3.08	1.03	High Extent
8	Win/lose strategy help school administrators in managing conflicts by allowing conflicting parties to let some issues off in the process of negotiation	2.57	1.20	High Extent
9	Win/lose strategy help school administrators in strengthening intra group relationship to avoid conflict situation.	2.96	1.04	High Extent
10	Win/lose strategy help school administrators in managing conflicts in schools by arriving at immediate agreement on pressing issues.	2.91	0.99	High Extent
Grand Mean		2.88	1.04	High Extent

Source: Survey Data 2024

Data on table 2 show the mean responses and standard deviation of the respondents on the extent win/lose as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities. The data shows that majority of the respondents to a high extent agreed that school administrators allowing parties to look for trade off or middle grand that is acceptable can help in managing conflicts in schools, Win/lose strategy help in creating understanding among individuals on conflicting issues, Win/lose strategy help school administrators in managing conflicts by allowing conflicting parties to let some issues off in the process of negotiation, win/lose strategy help school administrators in strengthening intra group relationship to avoid conflict situation and win/lose strategy help school administrators in managing conflicts in schools by arriving at immediate agreement on pressing issues as seen on items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 having mean values of 2.87, 3.08, 2.57 2.96, 2.91 respectively.

Furthermore, the grand mean of 2.88, indicates that the answer to research question two is that win/lose as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities.

Research Question 3: What extent does smoothing as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers state owned public universities?

Table 3: Mean responses and standard deviation of the respondents on the extent smoothing as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities.

S/N	ITEMS	\bar{X}	S. D	DECISION
11	Sometimes the school administrator of my school sometimes tells teachers in conflict to forget about the matter even without listen to the problem.	3.02	0.99	High Extent
12	The school administrator of my school does not encourage some staffs in conflict to change their own point of view and consider those of their opponent.	2.85	1.08	High Extent
13	The school administrator of my school sometimes uses his position of authority to put to end, conflict between some teachers	3.21	1.17	High Extent
14	The school administrator of my school always like singling out the teacher responsible for conflict to blame.	2.76	1.04	High Extent
15	The school administrator of my school often advises teachers to have high concern for themselves rather than others.	2.21	1.95	Low Extent
Grand Mean		2.81	1.03	High Extent

Source: Survey Data 2024

Data on table 3 show the mean responses and standard deviation of the respondents on the extent smoothing as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities. The data shows that majority of the respondents to a high extent agreed that sometimes the school administrator of my school sometimes tells teachers in conflict to forget about the matter even without listen to the problem, the school administrator of my school does not encourage some staffs in conflict to change their own point of view and consider those of their opponent, the school administrator of my school sometimes uses his position of authority to put to end, conflict between some teachers, The school administrator of my school always like singling out the teacher responsible for conflict to blame as seen on items 11, 12, 13 and 14 having mean values of 3.02, 2.85, 3.21 and 2.76 respectively But to a low extent agreed that the school administrator of my school often advises teachers to have high concern for themselves rather than others as seen on item 15 with the mean value of 2.21. Furthermore, the grand mean of 2.81, indicates that the answer to research question three is that smoothing as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of RSU Lecturers' and IAUE Lecturers' on the extent effective communication as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers state owned public universities

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis of the mean responses of RSU Lecturers’ and IAUE Lecturers’ on the extent effective communication as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers state owned public universities

Groups	N	S.D	df	Sig 2-(ta P-Value	Decision
RSU Lecturers’	231	2.65	1.15	386 .504	0.05
IAUE Lecturers’	157	2.78	.20		
N=	388				

Level of significance = 0.05

Legends:

- n : Number of respondents
- \bar{x} : Mean
- S.D : Standard Deviation
- 0.05: Level of significance
- df : Degrees of freedom

Data on Table 4 shows summary of t-test analysis of the mean responses of RSU Lecturers’ and IAUE Lecturers’ on the extent effective communication as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities. The calculated significant value used in testing the hypothesis stood at .504 at the p-value 0.05 level of significance using 386 degrees of freedom. This shows that .504 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, hence there is a significant difference between the mean responses of RSU Lecturers’ and IAUE Lecturers’ on the extent effective communication as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities. Based on the foregoing, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis, and confirmed that there is a significant difference between the mean responses of RSU Lecturers’ and IAUE Lecturers’ on the extent effective communication as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities.

HO2: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of RSU Lecturers’ and IAUE Lecturers’ on the extent win/lose as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers state owned public universities

Table 5: Summary of t-test analysis of the mean responses of RSU Lecturers’ and IAUE Lecturers’ on the extent win/lose as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers state owned public universities

Groups	N	S.D	Df	Sig 2-(ta	P-value	Decision
RSU Lecturers’	231	2.51	1.09	386	.000	Accepted Significance
IAUE Lecturers’	157	2.93	1.13		0.05	
N=	388					

Data on Table 5 shows summary of t-test analysis of the mean responses of RSU Lecturers’ and IAUE Lecturers’ on the extent win/lose as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities. The calculated significant value used in testing the hypothesis stood at .000 at the p-value 0.05 level of significance using 386 degrees of freedom. This shows that .000 is lesser than 0.05 level of significance, hence there is no significant difference between the mean responses of RSU Lecturers’ and IAUE Lecturers’ on the extent win/lose as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities. Based on the foregoing, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis, and confirmed that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of RSU Lecturers’ and IAUE Lecturers’ on the extent win/lose as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities.

HO3: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of RSU Lecturers’ and IAUE Lecturers’ on the extent smoothing as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers state owned public universities

Table 6: Summary of t-test analysis of the mean responses of RSU Lecturers’ and IAUE Lecturers’ on the extent smoothing as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers state owned public universities

Groups	N	S.D	Df	Sig 2-(ta	P-value	Decision
RSU Lecturers’	231	3.43	1.06	386	.242	Rejected No Significance
IAUE Lecturers’	157	3.81	1.02		0.05	
N=	388					

Data on Table 6 shows summary of t-test analysis of the mean responses of RSU Lecturers’ and IAUE Lecturers’ on the extent smoothing as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities. The calculated significant value used in testing the hypothesis stood at

.242 at the p-value 0.05 level of significance using 386 degrees of freedom. This shows that .242 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, hence there is a significant difference between the mean responses of RSU Lecturers' and IAUE Lecturers' on the extent smoothing as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities. Based on the foregoing, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis, and confirmed that there is a significant difference between the mean responses of RSU Lecturers' and IAUE Lecturers' on the extent smoothing as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities.

Discussion of Findings

The discussions of findings were done under the following headings:

The extent effective communication as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities.

The findings revealed that to a high extent that effective communication can be used in managing conflict in school through allowing free flow of information, providing the right channel of communication and distributing of circulars on changes in curriculum to teachers, maintaining cordial relation with their subordinates, informing subordinates on appropriate sanctions and penalties for faulting the school rules, using the right communication skill, not using abusive statements, not attacking, not threatening and not making accusations and disseminating information to parents and guidance on impending dangers that may erupt from students' behavior. In the same manner, a similar finding from the hypotheses testing reveals that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of RSU Lecturers' and IAUE Lecturers' on the ways effective communication can be used in managing conflicts in Rivers State owned public universities.

These findings are in line with Adeyemi (2009) who notes that allowing free flow of information (effective communication) within the school is a veritable tool used in managing conflict in school. The findings agreed with Meyer (1994) who posits that effective communication is the greatest means of managing conflict in school because it creates awareness to people on communication that could lead to problem solving. It also upholds the view of Sutton (2007). The rationale behind this position may be in the fact that most of the school administrators who responded to the instrument may have used this strategy in managing conflicts in their various schools this implies that lecturers can make use of their communication skill to resolve or manage conflicts in schools.

The extent win/lose as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities.

The findings revealed that to a high extent that school administrators allowing parties to look for trade off or middle ground that is acceptable can help in managing conflicts in schools, Win/lose strategy help in creating understanding among individuals on conflicting issues, Win/lose strategy help school administrators in managing conflicts by allowing conflicting parties to let some issues off in the process of negotiation, win/lose strategy help school administrators in strengthening intra group relationship to avoid conflict situation and win/lose strategy help school administrators in managing conflicts in schools by arriving at immediate agreement on pressing issues. finding of

the study is that lecturers win/lose strategy can be used in managing conflicts in public universities in River State by fostering cooperation among conflicting parties, allowing conflicting parties arrive at win-win outcome, allowing parties share ideas and information risk and responsibilities of outcome and allowing conflicting parties to work together to achieve a desired result. A corresponding finding from the hypotheses testing reveals that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of lecturers in urban and rural areas on ways lecturers win/lose strategy can be used in managing conflicts in Rivers State owned public universities. These findings agreed with findings of Andrew (2016), Kilmann (1970), Ebong (2013) and Angela (2014) who posits that win/lose strategy which is also known as problem solving can be used in managing conflicts in schools. The finding is also consistent with previous findings of Athiambo and Simatwa (2011) that identifies lecturers win/lose strategy as effective in managing conflicts in schools. A possible rationale behind this trend may be in the fact that these lecturers must have used this strategy in resolving or managing conflicts. This implies that in time of conflict in school lecturers can adopt this measure or strategy to handle or manage the situation.

The extent smoothing as a conflict management strategy enhance goal attainment in Rivers State owned public universities.

The findings revealed that to a high extent that sometimes the school administrator of my school sometimes tells teachers in conflict to forget about the matter even without listen to the problem, the school administrator of my school does not encourage some staffs in conflict to change their own point of view and consider those of their opponent, the school administrator of my school sometimes uses his position of authority to put to end, conflict between some teachers, The school administrator of my school always like singling out the teacher responsible for conflict to blame. These findings agreed with Andrew (2016), Ladipo (1997) who affirms that smoothing strategy is viable in managing conflicts in schools. The findings also support the finding of Bodin & Crawford (1997) who views the school as an institution which is made up of people with different chronological age and school heads must overlook certain issues and accommodate them for educational goals to be accomplished. A possible justification for this development or trend may be in the in fact that these lecturers must have used this strategy in their various schools to ameliorate or manage conflicts. This implies that smoothing strategy if well applied by lecturers can be used in managing conflicts in schools.

CONCLUSION

This study has established various crises management strategies that are used by university administrators for effective goal attainment of Rivers State owned public universities. These includes joint problem-solving approach, third party, win/lose, containment, effective communication and smoothing approach. The findings of the study indicated that various crises management approach could be adopted to manage crises in public universities. However, school administrators should see the need to have a crises management team to immediately tackle crises situation whenever crises arise. The study identified that conflict is an unavoidable occurrence in organizational existence. This is because, organizations are made up of people with diverse needs, values, beliefs, opinions, and interests working together to achieve common goals. Conflicts in

tertiary educational institutions have been noted to occur mostly between the teaching staff and the management class or the non-teaching staff and the management. Despite the fact that conflict situations have negative influence on tertiary institutions for effective goal attainment, the strategies for its containment have not been given adequate attention in tertiary institutions in Rivers State particularly. Therefore, a major conclusion of this study is that the tertiary educational institutions workforce can be adequately effective in the delivery of their services only when the proactive conflict management strategies are sincerely employed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study and conclusion, the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. Staff of Rivers State owned public universities should develop proper channel and skills by maintaining cordial relations with their subordinate by providing proper communication and distributing circulars on changes to those concern.
2. Staff of Rivers State owned public universities should at times adopt win/lose strategy in managing conflicts in schools in order to give everyone or conflicting parties in the school a sense of belonging.
3. Staff of Rivers state owned public universities should try as much as possible to adopt smoothing strategy by calming down harsh situations when the need arises
4. Staff of Rivers state owned public universities must be abreast with the nature of the conflict before applying any one of them for effective result. This is so because there is no one best strategy but as determined by circumstance and the ability of the principal.

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