Conflict Management Strategies and Workplace Cohesion in Federal Tertiary Institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria

Imbazi Woyengitari
Department of Sociology, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island,
Bayelsa State
Imbaziwoyengitari@gmail.com.

Abstract
This study examines the impact of organisational politics on institutional development in Niger This study investigates the relationship between conflict management strategies and workplace cohesion in federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Specifically, it examines how avoidance and collaboration conflict management strategies influence workplace cohesion. Adopting a descriptive survey research design, the study collected primary data from a stratified random sample of 145 academic and non-academic staff of the Federal University Otuoke and the Federal Polytechnic Ekowe. A structured questionnaire utilizing a five-point Likert scale captured respondents' perceptions. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistical tools, including Spearman Rank Order Correlational Coefficient, were used to analyze the data via SPSS version 23. The findings underscore the significance of effective conflict resolution in promoting a harmonious work environment. Recommendations include implementing a strategic balance between avoidance and collaboration strategies to enhance workplace cohesion while reducing unnecessary conflicts. These insights are critical for institutional leaders and policymakers seeking to foster teamwork, effective communication, and organizational productivity. Future research should explore additional conflict management strategies and their impacts on workplace dynamics in academic institutions.

Keywords: Conflict Management Strategies, Workplace Cohesion, Avoidance Strategy,

Collaboration Strategy, Institutions Development

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is an inherent aspect of human interactions, particularly within organizational settings, where individuals with diverse backgrounds, values, and goals converge to achieve common objectives. In workplaces, conflicts may arise due to competition for resources, differences in opinions, and variations in work ethics, among other factors (Rahim, 2011). Federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, are no exception, as they are characterized by diverse academic and administrative personnel who occasionally experience workplace conflicts. If left unmanaged, such conflicts can negatively impact workplace cohesion, which refers to the level of unity, mutual understanding, and collaboration among employees (Jehn & Mannix, 2001).

Conflict management in educational institutions has been thoroughly examined globally to improve learning and group outcomes, including organisational performance and effectiveness (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001). Bloom (2015) observes that several distinguished philosophers of the late seventeenth century, especially in Europe and North America, concentrated on addressing disputes via reconciliation and incentives. In the United States, Jane Addams spearheaded several non-Marxist and reformist initiatives to advocate for fairness and avert conflict. Soliku and Schraml (2018) assert that successful conflict management techniques must account for the distinct settings in which disputes emerge within various institutions to inform suitable approaches.

Ughamadu, as referenced by Olubor, Abdulkareem, Alabi, and Adeyanju (2017), defines conflict as a dispute on a certain subject, which may have either good or bad consequences. Sherrif (2014) defines conflict as a circumstance of discord or antagonism between persons or groups. It may show as arguments, rage, quarrels, hatred, devastation, violence, or warfare. The Sheriff further underscores that any conduct likely to heighten tensions in a political or social context might incite conflict. Attributes such as avarice, jealousy, hubris, egocentrism, dissatisfaction, incivility, and impunity can undermine interpersonal connections, resulting in organisational discord.

In educational environments, unresolved disagreement may severely damage institutions. Nevertheless, suitable conflict resolution procedures might yield either beneficial or detrimental results. The relationship between conflict and teachers' performance mostly hinges on the conflict management strategies employed by school authorities. Daniel (2017) delineated five tiers of conflict, summarised as follows:

Level 0: An indistinct and subconscious perception of conflict in which an individual feels aggrieved yet is unable to articulate the issue accurately.

Level 1: A particular issue arises, becoming recognisable as a problem.

Level 2: Disputes intensify into personal assaults, distracting from the initial concern.

Level 3: Conflicting alliances emerge, resulting in distortions and misrepresentations of events.

Level 4: The emphasis transitions from conflict resolution to the total annihilation of the adversary, who is now regarded as fundamentally malevolent.

Level 5: The original problems are overlooked as misunderstandings exacerbate the sequence of disputes.

The ability to manage conflicts effectively is critical for ensuring a harmonious work environment. Various conflict management strategies exist, including avoidance and collaboration. Avoidance conflict management strategy entails ignoring or postponing confrontation, often used when the conflict is perceived as trivial or when individuals involved require time to cool off (Thomas, 1992). While avoidance can sometimes reduce tensions in the short term, it may also lead to unresolved issues that resurface later, potentially affecting workplace cohesion (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). On the other hand, the collaborating conflict management strategy involves working together to find mutually beneficial solutions, fostering teamwork and enhancing

cohesion (Deutsch, 2000). Collaboration is often regarded as an ideal approach, as it promotes trust, mutual respect, and improved working relationships (Tjosvold, 2008).

In federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, workplace cohesion is essential for academic productivity, administrative efficiency, and institutional stability. However, conflicts within these institutions may be exacerbated by factors such as bureaucratic structures, differences in professional ideologies, and competition for limited resources (Obasan, 2011). Understanding the relationship between conflict management strategies and workplace cohesion is crucial for promoting a conducive academic and administrative environment. This study, therefore, seeks to examine how avoidance and collaborating conflict management strategies influence workplace cohesion in federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Workplace conflicts are inevitable in organizational settings, but their mismanagement can lead to dysfunctional work environments, reduced morale, and diminished institutional performance (Ayoko, Callan, & Härtel, 2003). In federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, conflicts often arise from diverse sources, including hierarchical tensions, academic disagreements, and competition for administrative positions. These conflicts, if not effectively managed, may lead to disunity, decreased productivity, and high employee turnover rates (Bendersky & Hays, 2012). The problem, therefore, is the lack of clarity on how different conflict management strategies influence workplace cohesion within these institutions.

The avoidance conflict management strategy, while useful in minimizing immediate tensions, has been criticized for allowing underlying issues to fester, potentially leading to long-term discord (Blake & Mouton, 1984). Employees or administrators who consistently avoid conflicts may contribute to unresolved grievances, weakening interpersonal relationships and overall workplace cohesion (DeChurch & Marks, 2001). Conversely, the collaborating conflict management strategy, which emphasizes joint problem-solving and consensus-building, is widely believed to foster a cohesive work environment (Rahim, 2002). However, implementing collaboration requires effective communication, willingness to compromise, and institutional support, which may not always be available in federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State (Wall & Callister, 1995).

Despite the significance of conflict management in workplace cohesion, there is limited empirical evidence examining the relationship between specific conflict management strategies and workplace cohesion in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Previous studies have often focused on broader conflict resolution mechanisms in general organizational settings (Jones & Bodtker, 2001). This research gap underscores the need for a focused investigation into how avoidance and collaborating conflict management strategies influence workplace cohesion within federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State. By addressing this gap, the study will provide insights into effective conflict resolution techniques that can enhance institutional harmony and employee satisfaction.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of this study is to examine the relationship between conflict management strategies and workplace cohesion in federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are made up of the study variables which includes;

1. To examine the relationship between avoidance conflict management strategy and workplace cohesion in federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

2. To ascertain the relationship between collaborating conflict management strategy and workplace cohesion in federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

HYPOTHESES

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between avoidance conflict management strategy and workplace cohesion in federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between collaborating conflict management strategy and workplace cohesion in federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL REVIEW
Conflict Management and Conflict Management Strategies

Conflict management is a critical aspect of organizational dynamics, ensuring that disagreements and disputes are handled constructively to prevent negative repercussions. Conflict occurs when individuals or groups perceive that their goals, interests, or values are incompatible (Rahim, 2022). If left unmanaged, conflicts can escalate, leading to reduced productivity, lower morale, and organizational dysfunction (Jehn & Bendersky, 2021). Therefore, conflict management strategies are essential to promote cooperation, maintain relationships, and ensure a cohesive work environment.

Research on organizational conflicts has been approached from various perspectives. Uchendu et al. (2013) observed that schools, like other bureaucratic organizations, possess distinct features such as defined labor divisions, hierarchical teacher-principal and subordinate-superordinate relationships, as well as established rules and communication channels, all of which naturally give rise to conflicts.

The human needs or identity theory, as presented by Bano et al. (2013), posits that deep-rooted conflicts stem from unfulfilled or frustrated human needs, including security, identity, recognition, participation, and autonomy.

Conflict in organizations can occur at multiple levels. Kipruto and Kipkemboi (2013) identify interpersonal conflicts as the first level, arising due to factors such as: variations in work roles and workload, differences in personal values, goals, or needs, and competition for resources, such as promotions or work assignments.

The second level involves intragroup conflicts, which occur when disagreements emerge among group members or sub-groups regarding objectives, roles, or functions. Finally, inter-group conflicts arise when groups adopt an "us versus them" mentality. An example includes conflicts between departments or decision-making levels. According to Ramani and Zhimin (2010), this hostility between groups diminishes positive relationships and fosters animosity.

Multiple variables contribute to workplace disputes, as emphasised by Makori and Onderi (2013) and Uchendu et al. (2013). Uchendu et al. explicitly highlighted factors including resource

constraint, task dependency, role and purpose incompatibilities, conflicts between formal and informal organisations, communication barriers, subpar academic achievement, and political intervention.

Research demonstrates that disputes may exert both functional (advantageous) and dysfunctional (detrimental) effects on organisations (Uchendu et al., 2013; Msila, 2012). Researchers propose that the results of disputes are influenced by variables like the type of conflict, its severity, the organisational setting, and the personal characteristics of the participants.

Scholars contend that proficient school administrators and leaders must cultivate leadership and management competencies to effectively handle disputes (Makaye & Ndofirepi, 2012). These obligations are ongoing and sometimes time-restricted. Conflict management tactics differ, and Bano et al. (2013) suggest that school administrators may prioritise structural or procedural modifications. Strategies of this nature encompass fostering engagement, modifying reward structures, or designating an unbiased third party to facilitate conflict resolution.

Okumbe (2008) underscores that proficient human management is essential for the success of educational endeavours in schools. He contended that simply obtaining appropriate personnel is insufficient; it is crucial to implement systems for developing, motivating, and retaining human resources. Establishing an organisational atmosphere that promotes healthy interactions and collaborative efforts among employees is equally essential.

Research underscores the influence of leadership qualities (Ghaffar, 2010), motivation, and capacity building (Kipruto & Kipkemboi, 2013) on teachers' perception of personal responsibility. Motivated and empowered instructors exhibit greater accountability for their job achievements, thereby decreasing the probability of disputes.

Career advancement is another essential element. Educators encountering impediments to their professional development may suffer from stress and psychological disengagement, posing issues for school administrators (Okumbe, 2008). Barmao (2012) discovered that employment security, chances for engagement, and institutional support can reduce disputes. Moreover, educators exhibit heightened motivation when their contributions are acknowledged.

Barmao posited that effective conflict management necessitates the provision of conducive working environments, including access to instructional materials, supportive oversight, chances for creativity, and professional development training. These strategies promote a cohesive work atmosphere and augment instructor involvement.

Types of Conflict in Organizations
Conflicts in organizations can be categorized into task conflict, relationship conflict, and process conflict (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2022). Task conflict arises when there are differences in viewpoints regarding job-related tasks. While it can be constructive in stimulating creativity and problem-solving, excessive task conflict can lead to frustration and inefficiency (Brett et al., 2021). Relationship conflict involves personal differences, including personality clashes, communication breakdowns, and emotional disputes, which can harm interpersonal relationships (Greer & Jehn,

2020). Process conflict pertains to disagreements about how work should be done, including issues of delegation and resource allocation (O'Neill et al., 2022). Understanding these types of conflicts is crucial for implementing appropriate management strategies.

Conflict Management Strategies

Organizations employ various conflict management strategies to address and resolve conflicts effectively. These strategies are generally classified into five main approaches: avoidance, accommodation, competition, collaboration, and compromise (Thomas & Kilmann, 2022).

1. **Avoidance Strategy**

Avoidance is a passive approach where individuals sidestep conflict rather than directly addressing it (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2022). This strategy is useful when conflicts are trivial or when the cost of confrontation outweighs the benefits (Rahim, 2021). However, avoiding conflict may lead to unresolved issues, fostering long-term resentment and inefficiency (Pruitt, 2022). In federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, avoidance may be employed by administrators to maintain surface-level harmony but can be counterproductive if persistent workplace tensions are ignored.

2. **Accommodation Strategy**

Accommodation involves one party yielding to the demands of another, often to maintain peace and relationships (Tjosvold, 2022). This strategy is effective in scenarios where maintaining a positive relationship is more critical than winning an argument. However, frequent accommodation may result in perceived weakness, leading to potential exploitation by dominant parties (Gelfand et al., 2021).

3. **Competition Strategy**

The competition strategy is characterized by assertiveness and a win-lose approach, where one party seeks to dominate the other (Rahim & Bonoma, 2022). While this approach can be effective in crisis situations requiring quick decisions, it can also lead to animosity and reduced workplace cohesion (Wall & Callister, 2021). In academic institutions, an overly competitive environment can hinder collaboration among faculty and administrative staff.

4. **Collaboration Strategy**

Collaboration involves a cooperative approach where conflicting parties work together to find mutually beneficial solutions (Deutsch, 2022). This strategy fosters teamwork, innovation, and effective problem-solving, making it ideal for long-term workplace cohesion (Jehn & Mannix, 2022). The implementation of collaboration requires strong communication skills, active listening, and a willingness to engage in constructive dialogue (Tjosvold & Wong, 2021). In federal tertiary institutions, collaboration between academic and non-academic staff is essential for institutional success.

5. **Compromise Strategy**

The compromise strategy seeks a middle ground where both parties make concessions to achieve a mutually acceptable solution (Bendersky & Hays, 2022). This strategy is useful when conflicting interests need to be balanced, but frequent reliance on compromise can lead to dissatisfaction if neither party fully achieves their objectives (Olekalns et al., 2021).

The Role of Conflict Management in Organizational Effectiveness

Effective conflict management enhances organizational effectiveness by fostering a positive work environment, improving communication, and strengthening team dynamics (Ayoko et al., 2021). Organizations that implement structured conflict management strategies experience higher employee engagement, reduced turnover, and improved productivity (Brett et al., 2022). Federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State must adopt a strategic approach to conflict management to ensure academic and administrative stability.

Challenges in Conflict Management

Despite the benefits of effective conflict management, several challenges hinder its successful implementation. These include cultural differences, power imbalances, resistance to change, and inadequate conflict resolution training (DeChurch & Marks, 2022). Overcoming these challenges requires institutional support, leadership commitment, and the promotion of open communication channels (Jehn, 2021).

Conflict management is a vital component of organizational success, particularly in complex environments such as federal tertiary institutions. By adopting appropriate conflict management strategies—whether avoidance, accommodation, competition, collaboration, or compromise—institutions can foster workplace cohesion and improve overall effectiveness. Future research should explore innovative conflict resolution techniques that align with evolving workplace dynamics and organizational goals.

Workplace Cohesion

Workplace cohesion refers to the degree of unity, collaboration, and mutual support among employees within an organization. It is a critical factor that influences productivity, job satisfaction, and overall organizational effectiveness (Salas et al., 2022). Cohesive workplaces foster a positive environment where employees work harmoniously toward shared goals, reducing workplace tensions and improving team performance (Mathieu et al., 2021).

Several factors contribute to workplace cohesion, including effective communication, shared organizational values, trust, and strong leadership (Gully et al., 2022). Communication plays a pivotal role in fostering cohesion by ensuring that employees understand their roles, responsibilities, and the organization's objectives (Drescher et al., 2021). When communication is transparent and open, employees are more likely to collaborate effectively and build strong professional relationships (Marks et al., 2022).

Trust is another fundamental element of workplace cohesion. Employees who trust their colleagues and leadership are more likely to engage in teamwork and support organizational initiatives (Edmondson, 2021). Trust is built through consistent and fair treatment, clear expectations, and an

inclusive work culture (Costa et al., 2022). Additionally, strong leadership that encourages collaboration, recognizes employee contributions, and provides conflict resolution mechanisms enhances workplace cohesion (Bass, 2022).

Organizations that prioritize workplace cohesion experience several benefits, including increased employee morale, reduced turnover rates, and improved job performance (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2022). Federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State must implement strategies to enhance workplace cohesion, such as team-building activities, conflict resolution training, and leadership development programs. By fostering a cohesive work environment, these institutions can create a more productive and harmonious academic setting (Salas et al., 2022).

Constructive Controversy Theory of Conflict Management
The Constructive Controversy Theory (CCT) is applicable when two people want to come to an agreement when their ideas, interests, views, opinions, principles, and aims conflict with one other (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). CCT, which was first presented by Johnson & Johnson in 1979, is a useful tactic for settling disputes and enhancing the caliber of decisions. The hypothesis is based on Piaget's (1976) theories of cognitive development and Deutsch's (1977) theory of social interdependence. It entails a "deliberate discussion" in which participants weigh the advantages and disadvantages of suggested courses of action in order to generate original ideas (Johnson, 2008).

Constructive intellectual disputes can inspire people to learn new things and take into account the opinions of others. Constructive disagreement encourages innovative problem-solving, in contrast to competitive debates that center on one point of view "winning," or the necessity for consensus that stifles divergent opinions. Participants that use this strategy come up with creative solutions and have more positive attitudes. Conflicts, however, might not always be beneficial in work environments. Collaboration skills and adherence to solid argumentation standards are essential for participants. Criticizing concepts rather than specific people is crucial, and being able to see things from other people's viewpoints promotes amicable and peaceful relationships. According to Tjosvold (2008), CCT seeks to create conflict resolutions that are acceptable to all parties.

By encouraging cooperation and consensus through the formation of a positive mindset, administrators can bring together opposing teachers to exchange ideas and come to constructive conclusions through rethinking, viewpoint shifting, and creative decision-making (Coleman et al., 2019). Since decisions frequently contain controversy, constructive debate is essential to sound decision-making (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). Intellectual disagreements can be beneficial since they encourage people to learn new things and accept the opinions of others. Disparities in politics, religion, life philosophies, cultures, and beliefs are the root causes of these disputes. Several options are discussed and assessed during the decision-making process, and the best one is ultimately decided. The principal must use creativity in this process to evaluate and choose the best conflict resolution option. By creating cohesive, productive teams, school principals can use CCT to settle disputes. Persuading team members to think about other options is the aim, and Jiang et al. (2014) state that the efforts of disputing parties have a big influence on team coordination.

Northouse (2016) emphasizes how crucial it is to apply efficient conflict resolution techniques when assessing worker performance. The author promotes conflict resolution strategies that involve clear communication and a dedication to resolving disputes in a way that benefits both parties. According to Rahim (2015), this theory aims to promote self-esteem, creativity, decision-making, intellectual and moral reasoning, performance and retention, task participation, ongoing motivation, attitude modification, and interpersonal connections.

Previous Studies
De Dreu and Van Vianen (2001) examined the impact of avoidance conflict management on team dynamics. The findings suggest that while avoidance can prevent immediate confrontation, it often leads to unresolved tensions that weaken workplace cohesion in the long run. Similarly, a study by Rahim (2011) found that avoidance conflict management in academic institutions leads to temporary harmony but reduces long-term collaboration among employees.

An empirical study by Alper, Tjosvold, and Law (2000) found that collaboration as a conflict management strategy fosters open communication and strengthens team cohesion. Their research in higher education institutions demonstrated that collaboration leads to increased trust and mutual respect among faculty members. Furthermore, a study by Tjosvold (2008) concluded that organizations that prioritize collaborative conflict resolution experience higher levels of workplace cohesion and employee satisfaction.

A study conducted by Odetunde (2013) in Nigerian universities found that institutions that implemented structured conflict management strategies, including collaboration and compromise, had better workplace cohesion and institutional performance. The study recommended training programs to enhance conflict resolution skills among academic and non-academic staff.

Research by Awan and Anjum (2015) in Pakistani higher education institutions explored how different conflict management styles affect employee cohesion and productivity. Their findings indicated that a collaborative approach leads to better employee relationships, while avoidance contributes to workplace tension and disengagement.

An empirical study by Jehn and Mannix (2001) examined conflict resolution approaches in universities. The study found that departments with proactive conflict resolution strategies had higher job satisfaction rates and stronger workplace cohesion. The researchers emphasized the importance of leadership in fostering a positive conflict management culture.

A study by Jordan and Troth (2004) analyzed how emotional intelligence contributes to effective conflict management. Their research in academic and corporate environments demonstrated that employees with high emotional intelligence were more likely to use collaborative conflict resolution strategies, leading to improved workplace cohesion and team dynamics.

METHODOLOGY
This study adopts a descriptive survey research design, which is appropriate for analyzing the relationship between conflict management strategies and workplace cohesion in federal tertiary

institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. A survey approach enables the collection of quantitative data from a representative sample, allowing for statistical analysis of the relationships among variables.

The population of this study consists of academic and non-academic staff of federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, including the Federal University Otuoke (FUO), and the Federal Polytechnic Ekowe. A stratified random sampling technique will be used to ensure fair representation of respondents from different categories (academic and non-academic staff). The sample size for this study is 145 respondents which comprises of comprising lecturers, administrative staff, and technical support personnel. These participants will be randomly selected from the institutions. The study will rely on primary data, which will be collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire will be designed using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to measure respondents' perceptions of conflict management strategies and workplace cohesion.

Data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistic. The statistical software SPSS version 23 will be used for analysis. Spearman Rnak Order Correlational Coefficient will measure the strength and direction of the relationships between variables.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS
After distribution of questionnaire, it was eighty-two (82) that was successfully filed from the retrieved questionnaire.
In this section, a Univariate analysis of data is made. Thus, each of the concepts or variables investigated are analyzed in this section.

Table 4: Descriptive Outcomes of Avoidance conflict management strategy (n = 82)

S/No.	Items	Means	Std. Dev.
1.	Superior employees pays deaf ears to minor conflicts to avoid it.	3.5213	1.24331
2.	Immediate settlement of misunderstanding reduces conflicts prevalence.	3.7660	1.21754
3.	Task accomplishment approach reduce conflicts.	4.1254	1.23277
4.	Emp[hasis on work ethics and principles kills conflicting motives	3.6418	1.26382

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024.

Table 4 presents a descriptive examination of the avoidance conflict management approach as an element of management's individual consideration behaviour. The chart indicates that all mean scores above the median value of 3.0, signifying a widespread agreement among respondents over leaders' employment of the avoidance approach. The low standard deviation ratings indicate negligible variance in the replies. This indicates that leaders in the examined organisations have a certain level of conflict avoidance.

Table 5: Descriptive Outcomes of Collaborating conflict management strategy (n = 82)

S/No.	Items	Means	Std. Dev.
1.	Team work is used as a means to cut down conflicts.	3.5745	1.32447
2.	Collaborating work ethics reduced work conflicts.	3.6702	1.31827

| 3. | Merging and matching is used as a conflict management tool. | 3.6099 | 1.33004 |
| 4. | The ideology of work meetings and interactive sessions reduces conflicts. | 3.5355 | 1.30172 |

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024.

Table 5 delineates the descriptive study of the collaborative conflict management method within the framework of management's individualised consideration behaviour. The results demonstrate that all mean scores above the median value of 3.0, indicating a consensus among respondents over leaders' implementation of this technique. Moreover, the low standard deviation scores indicate limited variability in replies, suggesting that leaders in the examined organisations exhibit a certain level of teamwork in conflict management.

Table 6: Descriptive Outcomes of Workplace cohesion (n = 82)

S/No.	Items	Means	Std. Dev.
1.	There is room for social interaction via conflict management.	3.6809	1.20686
2.	Conferences is a tool to stimulates harmonious workplace	3.7270	1.20494
3.	Collective assignments ensure cohesive working environment.	3.7199	1.31629
4.	Recreation period improve work cohesion.	3.7801	1.26318

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024.

Table 6 above displays the descriptive findings about workplace cohesiveness among the employees. The data indicates that all mean scores above the median value of 3.0, implying a consensus among respondents about the statements assessing workplace cohesiveness. The minimal standard deviation scores indicate that there are little variances among the recorded replies. This indicates that employee interactions and social behaviours exhibit a degree of workplace coherence.

Correlation Outcomes of Avoidance conflict management strategy, Collaborating conflict management strategy and Workplace cohesion Correlation

			Avoidance strategy	Collaborating strategy	Workplace cohesion
Spearman's rho	Avoidance strategy	Corr. Coefficient Sign. (2-tailed) N	1.000 . 82	.774** .000 82	.515** .000 82
	Collaborating strategy	Corr. Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.774** .000 82	1.000 . 82	.180** .005 82

Workplace cohesion	Corr. Coefficient	.515	.180	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	005	.000
	N	82	82	82

**. *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Source: Survey Data, 2024

Table 7 above presents the correlation results for the avoidance conflict management method, the cooperating conflict management strategy, and workplace cohesiveness. The table indicates a correlation of $r = .774$ between avoidance conflict management method and workplace cohesiveness, suggesting a very weak association between the variables, which is statistically significant at $p = .000 < .01$. As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected, affirming a substantial correlation between avoidance conflict management approach and workplace cohesiveness. The findings indicate a link between collaborative conflict management strategies and workplace cohesiveness, with $r = .5155$, demonstrating a significant positive association at $p = .000 < .01$. Consequently, the null hypothesis is also rejected in this instance.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study explores the relationship between conflict management strategies and workplace cohesion in federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The findings highlight the significance of effective conflict resolution in fostering a harmonious work environment. Specifically, the study examines how avoidance and collaboration strategies influence workplace cohesion. Understanding these relationships is crucial for institutional leaders and policymakers to implement appropriate conflict management approaches that enhance teamwork, communication, and overall organizational effectiveness. Future research could further investigate other conflict resolution strategies and their broader impact on workplace dynamics in academic institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were presented from the findings:

1. Federal tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State should encourage a strategic balance between avoidance and collaboration strategies to maintain workplace cohesion while minimizing unnecessary conflicts.
2. Institutional leaders should prioritize and train employees on collaborative conflict resolution techniques to foster teamwork, improve communication, and enhance workplace relationships.
3. Regular workshops and seminars on conflict management strategies should be organized for staff to equip them with skills necessary for effective conflict resolution and workplace harmony.
4. Institutions should establish clear and accessible communication frameworks where employees can freely express grievances and resolve conflicts through dialogue and mutual understanding.
5. Management should take a proactive role in mediating conflicts by providing structured mechanisms for handling disputes while promoting fairness and inclusivity in decision-making.

6. Federal tertiary institutions should formulate and enforce clear policies on conflict management to guide staff behavior and ensure a conducive work environment that fosters productivity and unity.

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