

## Original Research Article

### **A Comparative Analysis of the Adoption of Conflict Resolution Model for Conflict Management in Colleges of Education and Universities in South-East Nigeria**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

**Aims:** This study compared the adoption of conflict resolution model for conflict management in colleges of education and universities in South-east Nigeria.

**Study design:** The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study.

**Place and Duration of Study:** Academic staffs of Nwafor Orizu College of Education and Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, between November 2022 and February 2023.

**Methodology:** Simple random sampling technique of balloting with replacement was used to select 1,046 academic staffs from the accessible population of 5,225 academic staffs of Nwafor Orizu College of Education and Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. The standardized instruments adopted for data collection was conflict management style assessment by Reginald Akins. The psychometric properties of the instrument were validity and a reliability coefficient of 0.74; also the instrument was administered using the direct delivery approach. Data collected was analysed using arithmetic mean and standard deviation. A table of real limit of numbers was used to interpret the respondents' response. Rarely - 1.00 - 1.49, Sometimes - 1.50 – 2.00, Often - 2.50 – 3.00, Always - 3.50 – 4.00. Analysis for this study was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

**Results:** The findings revealed that academic staffs in colleges of education always adopt competing mode of conflict resolution for conflict management. While, academic staffs in universities often adopt competing mode of conflict resolution for conflict management. Furthermore, academic staffs in colleges of education often adopt avoiding mode of conflict resolution for conflict management, while academic staffs in universities always adopt avoiding mode of conflict resolution for conflict management among others.

**Conclusion:** Conflict is inevitable in all organisations and the tertiary institutions being a formal organisation have intricate network of members with divergent needs that trigger conflicts. The findings of this study revealed that academic staffs in colleges of education and universities adopt conflict resolution model for conflict management.

*Keywords: Adoption, Conflict, Conflict Resolution, Model, Conflict Management*

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

“Education involves among others the acquisition of knowledge and its use for the benefit of the society. Universities as centre for learning should be committed to freedom in relation to the search for and use of knowledge. In the pursuit of this search for knowledge, a university in the performance of her duties may experience conflicts. Conflict is the perceived incompatibility of goals, actions and outcomes within a person or between two or more people. Conflict can also be described as a struggle over claims, values and scarce resources; it is inevitable among individuals and in organisations because of the nature of human beings who differ in value orientation, attitude and level of understanding. Conflicts have become part of human organisations the world over. There are two major types of conflicts- internal and external conflict. Internal conflict occurs between employees and their employers while external conflict occurs between employees and other bodies outside the organisation such as the government. Examples of internal conflicts abound between

management and their employees in the workplace, while external conflict occurs between university union and the federal government. External conflicts seem to be the crux of the crises in universities because they occur in alarming rates due to the diverse nature of the parties involved" [1-3].

The political nature of man together with the fact that conflict is a global phenomenon in organisations has made its occurrence in universities an inevitable situation. But what seemed an aberration is the constant return to the resolution table with seeming unending resolutions. The various unions in the federal universities are always in constant conflict with either the management or the federal government. These unions are the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the Non- Academic Staff Union of Universities (NASU) and the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU). According to [1], "conflict is an inevitable phenomenon which occurs every day in human life". "It is often said that no organization (both private and public) can effectively carry out its day to day activities without encountering conflict" [2]. The United Nations International Children Emergency Fund cited in [1] emphasized that "conflict when not dealt with constructively explode into violence. Conflict should not be totally seen as evil, but rather a challenge to effect change. Schools like other human organizations are prone to one or other types of conflict. They are neither constructive nor disruptive, but the ways these are handled make them either positive or negative".

[3] claimed that "schools are made up of people with different attitude, beliefs, abilities and personality, therefore conflict is inevitable. Conflict in school settings is a daily occurrence simply because a consensus of opinion concerning rules governing the school occasionally exists among the participants for instance; administrators, students, teachers/lecturers, parents and other stakeholders in education. These parties, particularly students and administrators often time see one another as adversaries not as those working to ensure a common goal and that is why there is a tendency of conflict in practically every decision which the administrator must make. Researchers have paid much attention to the issue of conflict in organizations due to its large costs and benefits". [4] pointed out that "in all human interactions especially organizations, conflicts are bound to occur". "Like other organizations, conflicts are inevitable in schools due to the collection of people with diverse personalities. Conflict may be destructive if it leads to ineffective communication, breakdown of work relationships, tension, argument, low performance of team members and hostility which in turn affects the smooth running of the schools" [5].

"However, if conflicts are properly handled benefits may accrue; contributing to solidarity within conflicting groups and reconciliation of legitimate interests where relationships are strengthened, and in turn there is enhanced identification of problems and solutions, increased knowledge/skill, and peace is safeguarded" [5]. "Ability to manage or resolve conflict is therefore important for school leaders for the smooth running of schools. Nevertheless, studies focusing on conflicts show that working with people in organizations involves dealing with different kind of problems" [6]. Like organizations, the consequences of conflict between teachers and school leaders have been regrettable. this has been as [4] pointed out that "part where conflicts disrupt academic programs, inadequate staffing due to unplanned transfer, hostility among staff members, suspicion and withdrawal from active participation in school activities. These problems affect professional work of the staff in a way that they are unable to concentrate as they are pre-occupied with other activities".

In teaching and learning process, individuals interact in order to realize educational objectives within schools, as such; there are various reasons for conflicts to occur within the schools. For instance, a study by [7] on "conflict management and leadership stated that majority of school leaders lack understanding of their leadership roles". However, a study in Malaysia by [8] identified "insufficient resource such as finances and lack of facilities as well as heavy workload and dissatisfaction with management as some of the sources of conflicts". Similarly, a study by [9] conducted "in Nigeria cited sources of conflicts as; inadequate facilities and funding, conflicts among staff members, personality factors, and

role conflicts". "Besides, the researchers also argued that highly connected teachers break school rules and regulations and absent themselves from school which makes school management a problem for leaders. The role of school leaders in conflict management and resolution is therefore central to effective and efficient organization of school management" [10]. Since conflict is natural in any organization, the management ought to devise means to rationally deal with it so as to create ways which maximize its benefits and minimize its dysfunctional consequences. There exist a number ways for conflict resolution, and in order to develop a workable environment in the workplace there is need to resolve all pending and intending conflict within the workplace.

The Thomas and Kilmann's Conflict Model is a powerful way of looking at conflict management. Thomas and Kilmann studied how people managed conflicts, through which they were greatly inspired by the daily lives of individuals. They further observed that most people use one of the five approaches to resolving interpersonal conflicts. These approaches are competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding and accommodating. According to [11], "competing as an indices of conflict management model implies that there exist high assertiveness and low cooperation. This means that we use competing as a conflict resolution strategy when we resort to being assertive. Additionally, individuals in the workplace also become uncooperative with the opposing party. However, this strategy is not as evil as it sounds. This mode may be more appropriate when there is need for speedy resolution and at higher position of power. It is also imperative to use this mode when faced with tough calls. On the other hand, avoiding mode reflects passivity in conflict management. Although, from an ideal perspective, it is agreed that individuals face problems, head on. However, the most confident among the individuals would have been in situations where confrontation was best avoided. Also, some problems are so trivial, they are not worth one time. This approach is shunning the conflict and withholding one's views and opinion. Individuals also employ this approach when the cost of confrontation and resolution is far more than the cost of living with the conflict. However, avoiding does not resolve the conflict. On the downside, it just buries it below the surface and may potentially lead to future conflicts. The act of accommodating draws closer to a more amicable means of resolving conflicts. Perhaps, accommodating mode is so considerate of the opposing party that one is ready to call it a truce at the cost of giving up once position. It may be worthwhile in situations when the conflict is a total waste of your time. The Thomas and Kilmann Conflict Model positions this mode as high in cooperativeness and low in assertiveness".

The collaborating mode of conflict resolution is adopted when on the same page as the opposing party. This is an ideal solution, it happens when both parties are sensible, have similar power authority, and are ready to be cooperative with each other. This is easier in a decentralized organization structure. This process involves understanding one another's view point through detailed discussion. Through this there is deeper analysis of the situation. Finally, compromising stands at the literal middle ground in the Thomas Kilmann conflict model. At this point the individual is moderately assertive and moderately cooperative, through this certain resolution are extended. It is observed that collaborating takes time and also one tries not to be confrontational. Also, there are some conflicting situations where one knows that the best potential solution would be to satisfy all parties [11]. In such situations, one typically approaches the conflict as a compromise. Each conflicting party gets something they want. Meanwhile, they also give up something they and this results in a mix win for all. Nevertheless, conflicting parties in the colleges of education and universities have prevailed despite efforts made and certain rules guiding the workplace. Hence this comparative analysis is conducted to determine the adoption of conflict resolution model for conflict management in colleges of education and universities in South-east Nigeria. specifically, this study compared;

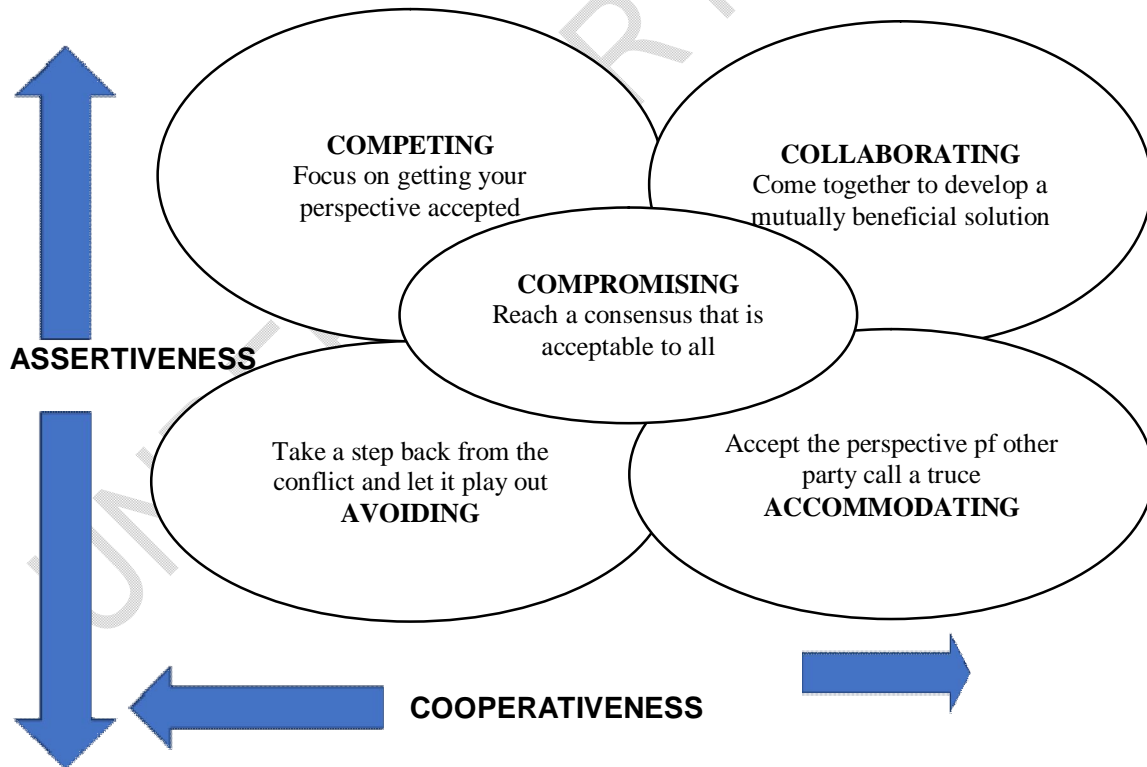
1. The adoption of competing mode of conflict resolution for conflict management in colleges of education and universities.

2. The adoption of collaborating mode of conflict resolution for conflict management in colleges of education and universities.
3. The adoption of avoiding mode of conflict resolution for conflict management in colleges of education and universities.
4. The adoption of accommodating mode of conflict resolution for conflict management in colleges of education and universities.
5. The adoption of compromising mode of conflict resolution for conflict management in colleges of education and universities.

**1.1 Research Questions**

1. What is the mean rating of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of competing mode of conflict resolution for conflict management?
2. What is the mean rating of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of collaborating mode of conflict resolution for conflict management?
3. What is the mean rating of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of avoiding mode of conflict resolution for conflict management?
4. What is the mean rating of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of accommodating mode of conflict resolution for conflict management?
5. What is the mean rating of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of compromising mode of conflict resolution for conflict management?

**Fig. 1 Thomas Kilmann Conflict Resolution Model (1974)**



## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. According to [12], descriptive survey research design is one which aim at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. This design is considered appropriate for the present study which seeks the opinion of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of Thomas and Kilmann's Conflict Model for conflict management. The accessible population for this study comprises 5225 academic staffs in Nwafor Orizu College of education and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. The sample for the study was drawn using the simple random sampling technique of balloting with replacement to select 1045 (400 college of education, 645 university).

The instrument for data collection was an adopted conflict management style assessment by Reginald Akins. The 15-item assessment was structured on a 4-point scale of rarely - 1, sometimes - 2, often - 3 and always – 4. The psychometric properties of the instrument were validity and a reliability coefficient of 0.74, in collecting data, the instrument was administered directly with the help of three research assistants. These research assistants were briefed on the essence of the study, that the purpose, administration of the instrument and retrieval of the instrument. Data collected were analysed using arithmetic mean and standard deviation. A table of real limit of numbers was used to interpret the respondents' response. Rarely - 1.00 - 1.49, Sometimes - 1.50 – 2.00, Often - 2.50 – 3.00, Always - 3.50 – 4.00. Analysis for this study was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Research Question 1:** What is the mean rating of academic staff in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of competing mode of conflict resolution for conflict management?

Result relating to research question 1 is presented in Table 1. Table 1 shows the data analysis on the mean rating of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of competing mode of conflict resolution for conflict management. The grand mean score revealed that academic staffs in colleges of education rated to always (3.13), adopt competing mode of conflict resolution for conflict management. Furthermore, academic staffs in universities rated to often (2.64), adopt competing mode of conflict resolution for conflict management. The standard deviation scores revealed homogeneity in the rating of the respondents on the adoption of competing mode of conflict resolution for conflict management in colleges of education and universities in South-east, Nigeria. This finding slightly conforms with the findings of [9] "which was also conducted in Nigeria and cited sources of conflicts as; inadequate facilities and funding, conflicts among staff members, personality factors, and role conflicts. Furthermore, the researchers also argued that highly connected teachers break school rules and regulations and absent themselves from school which makes school management a problem for leaders".

**Research Question 2:** What is the mean rating of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of collaborating mode of conflict resolution for conflict management?

Table 2 reveals the data analysis on the mean rating of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of collaborating mode of conflict resolution for conflict management. The grand mean score revealed that academic staffs in colleges of

education rated to always (3.17) adopt collaborating mode of conflict resolution for conflict management. Furthermore, academic staffs in universities rated to often (2.64) adopt collaborating mode of conflict resolution for conflict management. The standard deviation scores revealed homogeneity in the rating of the respondents on the adoption of controlling mode of conflict resolution for conflict management in colleges of education and universities in South-east, Nigeria. This finding aligns with [4] who pointed out that “part of the outcome related with conflicts is disruption of academic programs, inadequate staffing due to unplanned transfers, hostility among staff members, suspicion and withdrawal from active participation in school activities”. Hence the need to employ collaborating mode of conflict resolution model for conflict management.

**Research question 3:** what is the mean rating of academic staff in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of avoiding mode of conflict resolution for conflict management?

Table 3 reports the data analysis on the mean rating of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of avoiding mode of conflict resolution for conflict management. The grand mean score revealed that academic staffs in colleges of education rated to often (2.63) adopt avoiding mode of conflict resolution for conflict management. Furthermore, academic staffs in universities rated to always (3.18) adopt avoiding mode of conflict resolution for conflict management. The standard deviation scores revealed homogeneity in the rating of the respondents on the adoption of avoiding mode of conflict resolution for conflict management in colleges of education and universities in South-east, Nigeria. This finding disagrees with [8] who identified “insufficient resource such as finances and lack of facilities as well as heavy workload and dissatisfaction with management as some of the sources of conflicts”.

**Research question 4:** What is the mean rating of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of accommodating mode of conflict resolution for conflict management?

Table 4 shows the data analysis on the mean rating of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of accommodating mode of conflict resolution for conflict management. The grand mean score revealed that academic staffs in colleges of education rated to always (3.81) adopt accommodating mode of conflict resolution for conflict management. Furthermore, academic staffs in universities rated to often (2.75) adopt accommodating mode of conflict resolution for conflict management. The standard deviation scores revealed homogeneity in the rating of the respondents on the adoption of accommodating mode of conflict resolution for conflict management in colleges of education and universities in South-east, Nigeria. This aligns with the findings of [7] on “conflict management and leadership which found that majority of school leaders lack understanding of their leadership roles. Hence it becomes pertinent to employed accommodating mode of conflict resolution for conflict management”.

**Research question 5:** What is the mean rating of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of compromising mode of conflict resolution for conflict management?

The grand mean score revealed that academic staffs in colleges of education rated to often (2.56) adopt compromising mode of conflict resolution for conflict management. Furthermore, academic staffs in universities rated to often (2.43) adopt compromising mode of conflict resolution for conflict management. The standard deviation scores revealed homogeneity in the rating of the respondents on the adoption of compromising mode of conflict resolution for conflict management in colleges of education and universities in South-

east, Nigeria. This in agreement with the study of [3] who reported that “schools are made up of people with different attitudes, beliefs, abilities and personality, therefore conflict is inevitable. Conflict in school settings is a daily occurrence simply because a consensus of opinion concerning rules governing the school occasionally exists among the participants”. Hence the need to adopt the use of compromising mode of conflict resolution for conflict management.

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of competing mode of conflict resolution for conflict management**

S/N	Competing Mode	College of education (n=400)			University (n=645)		
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
1	I would argue my case and insist on the advantages of my point of view	2.74	.68	Often	2.58	.94	Often
2	I try to negotiate and use a give-and-take approach to problem situations	3.09	.74	Always	2.47	.88	Often
3	I try to meet the expectations of others	3.56	.85	Always	2.89	.85	Often
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.13</b>		<b>Always</b>	<b>2.64</b>		<b>Often</b>

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of collaborating mode of conflict resolution for conflict management.**

S/N	Collaborating Mode	College of education (n=400)			University (n=645)		
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
4	I discuss issues with others to try to find solutions that meet everyone needs	3.60	.77	Always	2.91	1.01	Often
5	I find conflict exhilarating; I enjoy the battle of wits that usually follows	3.51	.63	Always	2.40	.78	Often
6	I can figure out what needs to be done and I am usually right	2.40	.95	Often	2.62	.77	Often
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.17</b>		<b>Always</b>	<b>2.64</b>		<b>Often</b>

**Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of avoiding mode of conflict resolution for conflict management.**

S/N	Avoiding Mode	College of education (n=400)			University (n=645)		
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
7	When I find myself in an argument, I usually say very little to leave as soon as possible	2.60	.91	Often	2.79	.78	Often
8	Being in a disagreement with other people makes me feel uncomfortable and anxious	2.51	.81	Often	3.48	.93	Always
9	I avoid hard feelings by keeping my disagreement with	2.78	.75	Often	3.10	1.01	Always

	others to myself						
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.63</b>		<b>Often</b>	<b>3.18</b>		<b>Always</b>

**Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of accommodating mode of conflict resolution for conflict management.**

S/N	Accommodating Mode	College of education (n=400)			University (n=645)		
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
10	I try to meet the expectations of others	2.67	1.05	Often	2.68	.82	Often
11	I try to meet the wishes of my friends and family	2.87	.95	Often	2.40	.79	Often
12	I may not get what I want, but it is a small price to pay for keeping the peace	2.89	1.17	Often	3.17	.91	Always
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.81</b>		<b>Always</b>	<b>2.75</b>		<b>Often</b>

**Table 5: Mean and standard deviation of academic staffs in colleges of education and universities on the adoption of compromising mode of conflict resolution for conflict management.**

S/N	Compromising Mode	College of education (n=400)			University (n=645)		
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
13	I try to negotiate and use a give-and-take approach to problem situations	2.87	.64	Often	2.29	.82	Often
14	I prefer to compromise when solving problems and just move on	2.49	1.15	Often	2.50	1.01	Often
15	To break deadlocks, I will meet people halfway	2.32	.91	Often	2.49	1.14	Often
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.56</b>		<b>Often</b>	<b>2.43</b>		<b>Often</b>

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The persistent conflicts in the Nigerian tertiary institution system with seemingly unending solutions have necessitated the tendency to evaluate its influence on staff morale thereby ascertaining the relevance of the resolution strategies employed. Conflict is inevitable in all organisations and the tertiary institutions being a formal organisation have intricate network of members with divergent needs that trigger conflicts. The findings of this study revealed that academic staffs in colleges of education and universities adopt conflict resolution model for conflict management.

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