

ASSESSMENT OF PREVALENCE OF SCHOOL RELATED CONFLICTS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AND ITS RESOLUTION MECHANISMS IN NORTH- WEST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the prevalence of school related conflict among Undergraduate Students and its resolution mechanisms in North-west, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted; stratified sampling technique was employed to select 8 universities in the region. Proportionate sampling technique was used to sample 650 undergraduate students in the selected universities in North West Nigeria. Information was elicited from the respondents through questionnaire adapted from Ambrose and Veronica (2014) and Ken and Liu (2010), the instrument was subjected to validity and reliability, it was found to have reliability index of 0.62. The raised research questions were answered through descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentage. The findings of the study revealed that majority of respondents sampled for this study strongly agreed that student-related conflict is frequently occurred in universities in North West Nigeria, different resolution mechanisms were found to be adopted in curbing school related conflicts in universities in North-West, Nigeria. Based on the findings of this study, various recommendations were made for instance, numerous resolution mechanisms should be employed in tackling school related conflicts among undergraduates in North-West Nigeria, and Peace and conflict education programme should be introduced into university academic curriculum in North West, Nigeria.

Keyword: School Related Conflicts, Resolution Mechanisms, Undergraduates, North-West, Nigeria,

Introduction

Man is the primary vital agent of development in any society; therefore, he needs to be intellectually equipped through the process of education. Onwumere (2006) cited in Bibire (2016), described education as the springboard for social, political, economic and cultural development. It is in recognition of this that the international community and the government, all over the world, have made a commitment to citizens to access education. Ajayi (2003) stated that university is an institution at the highest level of education where the high-level manpower is developed. It is a place where students across the states come together to acquire knowledge. Therefore, university promotes the development of intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate their societies. University education, which falls under higher education in Nigeria, has five primary functions as spelt out in the National Policy on Education (2013). These features include teaching, undertaking research, disseminating information, serving the community, and existing as a storehouse of knowledge. University education is seen as an instrument for the development of high level manpower in the context of the needs of the nation: making professional course contents to reflect the national requirements, making all students as part of general programme of all round importance in university education, making university research to be relevant to the nation developmental goals; inculcating

community spirit in the students through projects and action research (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN; 2013).

Universities in Africa, Nigeria inclusive face a lot of issues that always amount to student protests and demonstrations. These conflicts negatively affect the smooth running of academic activities and destabilize the school environment (Lukman, 2021). There are many contributitional factors that cause such institutional conflicts, among are changing of educational policies and political reforms. There is no doubt that conflicts within universities across the globe are inevitable, for the fact that, the composition of human resources within the school environment, comprise people with different religious, social-economic, political, and cultural backgrounds; thus reflecting their attitude to work, temperament and frame of reference (Owan, & Agunwa, 2019).

It has been observed that conflicting situations occurred as a result of differences in faiths, beliefs, philosophies, thoughts, perception, ideology, ethnicity, interest, and views as well as opinions. Meanwhile, conflict occurs wherever incompatible activities take place such that benefits to one side come out at the expense of the other (Ambrose & Veronica, 2014). Abdulrahman (2001) opined that conflict is unavoidable in people's life, it is a part of growth and development, as individuals live with it, learn it, make choices and seek to transform it in a reasonable and creative way; or they can live in it and allow it to undermine objectives or become destructive. Ubi (2007) stated that conflicts are part and parcel of human's existence. He explained further that disagreements among people are natural as people must disagree to agree and contrarily it becomes logical that they should agree to disagree. Meaning that, such agreement or disagreement does not in themselves result to conflict. Conflicts permeate all sectors of the society involving individuals, groups and nations, and are deep in history; often emanating from contestations regarding interests, needs, ideology, values and beliefs, identities, actions and inactions, viewpoints of opposing forces or powers that cumulate into strife, violence, sharp disagreements, battle, among others (Benson, 2022). Conflicts encompass situations of incompatible goals, thoughts, emotions or needs that occur among people that lead to opposition (Halevy & Cohen, 2020).

According to Okotoni and Okotoni (2003), there are numerous causes of conflict which include the following, sharing of scarce resources, interdependency, incompatible personalities, competition for scarce resources, personality clashes, negligence of duty by some officials, poor condition of service, compulsory retirement and indiscipline. According to Kirkwood (2002), different types of conflict that commonly found in organizations include structural conflicts, interest conflicts, data conflicts, and relationship conflicts. Conflict can lead to disputes, grievances, lawsuits, complaints, strikes, and disciplinary actions.

Essentially, if education is to be managed effectively and efficiently for sustainable peace and harmony, economic, and mental development among Nigerian citizens, then education at all levels (primary, secondary, and higher education) should be managed free of conflict (Ambrose & Veronica, 2014). Conflicts are bound to occur and to be resolved in any working organization such as schools among others. It is worthy to note that if conflicts are not properly resolved or managed, it will be difficult to accomplish the set aims and objectives of the organization as most of the activities therein would be highly jeopardized. The extent, to which a conflict is resolved, depends upon the extent to

which the parties to the conflict perceive their negotiated gains and losses during bargaining to be relatively equitable (Omoluabi, 1995 cited in Ambrose & Veronica, 2014). Conflict resolution is the process or method of facilitating interpersonal communication to get parties to a conflict to reduce the differences in their ideals and perception through arbitration, bargaining and negotiation. Conflicts resolution involves methods and processes that are used to facilitate the peaceful ending of a conflict and retribution (Forsyth, 2009). According to Wallenstein (2015), conflict resolution is a social engagement where armed conflicting parties in a voluntarily agreement, resolve to live peacefully with each other by dissolving their basic incompatibilities, and henceforth ceasing to use arms against one another. According to Bayazit and Mannix (2003), conflict resolution is the process by which two or more parties in disagreement reach an agreement regarding its resolution. Therefore, conflict resolution involves the use of nonviolent methods by conflicting parties in their bid to promote peaceful ending of the feud between or amongst them (Roberts & Ash, 2009).

According to Bannon and Paul (2003), conflict resolution encompasses the use of non-violent resistance measures by conflicting parties as an attempt to promote effective resolution. Similarly, conflict resolution is the process of attempting to settle a dispute or a conflict. Successful conflict resolution occurs by listening to and providing opportunities to meet the needs of all parties and to adequately address interests, so that, each party is satisfied with the outcome (Weaver, 2003). The various forms of conflict according to Dupe (1999) cited in Dauda (2021) include: intra-personal, interpersonal, intra-groups, inter-group and intra-organizational conflict. Intrapersonal conflict occurs to individuals and it usually leads to psychological stress. According to Dubin and Rose (1995) cited in Dauda, (2021), there are three basic kinds of conflict namely: task conflict, this implies disagreement about the substance of discussion in relation to how a task is to be accomplished, interpersonal conflict which connotes personality clash which may take the form of making antagonistic remarks on the personal characteristics of other group member and procedure conflict which implies disagreement on the procedures to be adopted in accomplishing organizational goals and objectives.

Positive effects of conflict as posited by Esquived and Kleiner (1997) cited in Dauda (2021) include but not limited to the following, it promotes constructive competition; helps in analytic thinking, helps organizational development and encourages more dedication and commitment to organizational goals and objectives. Contrariwise, the negative effects of conflicts include: lack of cooperation, blockage in communication, distrust, loss of friendship and development of enmity. Conflicts according to Msila (2012) can be resolved using various methods and strategies which include: dialogue, training and re-training of students on the negative effects of conflicts, cooperation among individuals, negotiation, fair reward system, resources available should be judiciously allocated, provision of facilities to reduce conflicts for example, sufficient and enough classrooms, sports pitches or equipment, institutionalizing effective communication as a way of giving every student a sense of belonging. The resolution process encompasses a series of stages, actors, models and approaches that correspond to the kind and level of conflict in question as influenced by social and cultural dimensions (Coleman, 2011; Kellett, 2007). Murerwa and Guantai (2019) suggest three key approaches namely; domination, compromise and integration, as gateway to mitigating institutional conflicts in the surge for industrial harmony.

On this note, several empirical studies and literature review have been conducted on conflict and gender for instance, Brahnem, Margavio, Hignite, Barrier, and Chin (2005) found that female may possess more effective conflict resolution attributes than their male counterparts. Male were typically found to be more avoidant of conflict than female. As avoidance is considered more disruptive in the conflict resolution process than collaboration is helpful, In the same vein, several studies have revealed that any increase in female population in an organization may have the potential to decrease conflict and reduce aggressive behaviour simply by being present during conflicts due to the perceived influence of stereotypical gender roles. Gender roles are theoretical constructs of learned patterns of behaviour which encompass a set of norms which are socially appropriate for a certain gender within a specific culture. The masculine behavioral norms typically displayed by males tend to escalate tension in situations of conflict (Lindsey, 2015). These masculine behaviors also often increase individual aggression during conflict (Loosemore, & Galea, 2008).

In the light of the above background, series of studies have been conducted by various researchers on school related conflicts and its resolution mechanisms in relation to other variables of interest. The main problem of this study, therefore, is to examine the contradictions that have emanated from the various findings of previous researches on school related conflicts and its resolution mechanisms. Besides, from the available literature and empirical studies at the researcher's disposal, it has been discovered that those past studies left some gaps uncovered. And from the review of related literature conducted by earlier researchers, none of these studies dealt with the school related conflicts and its resolution mechanisms. As a result of the limitations observed in the past studies with particular reference to the variables covered, the area of their operation and sample size, to make up part of this study therefore, this study examined the prevalence of school related conflicts and its resolution mechanisms among undergraduates in North-west, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the prevalence of school related conflicts among Undergraduate Students and its resolution mechanisms in North-west, Nigeria. Specifically the study examines:

1. the extent that school-related conflicts occurred in universities in North west Nigeria
2. the mechanisms adopted for curbing school-related conflicts among undergraduate students in North west Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered in the context of this study:

1. To what extent does school-related conflicts occurred in universities in North West Nigeria?
2. What are the mechanisms adopted for curbing school-related conflicts in universities in North West Nigeria?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. Stratified sampling technique was employed to select Eight (8) universities in North West Nigeria, namely; Kano and Jigawa states. In each state three universities were selected. Proportionate sampling technique was used to sample Six hundred and fifty (650) undergraduates in the selected universities in the region. Proportionate sampling technique was used in line with the Sambo (2008) who posited that the best procedure for selecting a sample from an unequal population is the proportionate sampling technique. An adapted questionnaire from Ambrose and Veronica (2014) and Ken and Liu (2010) on the school related conflicts and curbing mechanisms was employed to elicit information from the respondents (undergraduates). The instrument contained two sections: A and B. Section A contained demographic data of the respondents namely: gender, and university type. While section B consists of the items of the questionnaire which embedded main variables of interest in this study. It was validated by psychologists through face and content validity. Test re-test method of reliability was adopted for it reliability; the data was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient statistical tool (PPMC) and the reliability co-efficient of 0.62 was recorded. The instrument was administered to the respondents by the researcher with the assistance of five (3) trained research assistants. The data collected were collated and analyzed using SPSS software (Statistical packages for social sciences 21 version). The raised research questions were answered through the frequency counts and percentage.

Results and Discussion

This chapter deals with the results from data analyses. The data collected on the conflicts resolution mechanism among undergraduates in North-west, Nigeria. The data gathered were analysed using frequency and percentage to answer the raised research questions. The results are presented as follows:

Answering of Research Questions

Research Question One: To what extent does school-related conflict occur in universities in North West Nigeria?

Participants' responses on extend to which school-related conflict occurred in universities in North West, Nigeria. Given that, the questionnaire contained 4 items structured in a four-response-type. The minimum, maximum and score range were 16, 64 and 48 respectively. The range score was therefore divided into 3 by responses (Frequently occurred, occasionally occurred and rarely occurred) and 16 was obtained. Therefore, respondents whose score fell within 16-32, 33-49 and 50-66 signified rarely occurred, occasionally occurred and frequently occurred respectively. The statistics of the respondents are summarized and presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Extent of School-Related Conflict Occurred in Universities in North-West, Nigeria.

Extent of School-Related Conflict	Grading	Frequency	Percentage
Rarely Occurred	16-32	3	.5%
Occasionally Occurred	33-49	138	21.2%
Frequently Occurred	50-66	509	78.3%
Total		650	100%

Results in Table 1 shows that, out of 650 sampled respondents, 3 (.5%) of respondents sampled strongly agreed that school-related conflict is rarely occurred in universities in North-West, Nigeria. The same table further indicates that 138 (21.2%) of respondents sampled strongly agreed that school-related conflict is occasionally occurred in universities in North-West Nigeria. While, 509 (78.3%) of respondents sampled absolutely concurred that school-related conflict is frequently occurred in universities in North-West Nigeria. It implied that majority of respondents sampled for this study strongly agreed that school-related conflict is frequently occurred in universities in North West Nigeria.

Research Question Two: What is the resolution mechanisms adopted for curbing school-related conflicts in universities in North West, Nigeria?

Respondents' responses on the resolution mechanisms adopted for school-related conflicts in universities in North West, Nigeria. Given that, the questionnaire contained 15 resolution mechanisms structured in a four-response-type answered the research question two. The statistics of the respondents are summarized and presented in Table 2

Table 2: Resolution Mechanisms Adopted for Curbing School-Related Conflict in Universities in North-West, Nigeria.

	S. A	A	Total	D	S. D	Total
Making conciliations when setting disputes as well.	296	290	586	7	57	64
Persuading all sides to make conciliations	278	262	540	11	99	110
Ensuring mutual give and take interactions	384	217	601	25	24	49
Encouraging all parties to admit blames and accept praises accordingly	331	283	614	12	24	36
Discouraging staff and students from	219	302	521	18	111	129

unnecessary arguments						
Treating staff and students equally	196	381	577	21	52	73
Stopping squabbles at the initial stage before it aggravates	402	178	580	12	58	70
Adopting a 'wait and see' attitude	364	241	605	13	32	45
Permitting cross-examination by both parties involved	327	254	581	30	39	69
Allowing collective resolutions to solving all controversial issues	301	311	612	15	21	36
Permitting each group to make satisfactory suggestions to solving the problems at stake	264	287	551	37	62	99
Encouraging both parties to see conflict as a 'win or lose' issue	244	298	542	39	69	108
Encouraging high concern for others and low concern for oneself	376	250	626	6	18	24
Playing down disputing issues among staff and students	240	325	565	18	67	85
Discouraging issues that lead to disagreement among staff and students	227	294	521	24	105	129
Setting grievances by bringing up ideas that have similarities to both groups	254	347	601	15	37	52
Ensuring mutual outcomes interest to both parties	324	274	598	15	37	52
Making both parties to see conflict as a creative opportunity	348	273	621	29		29
Encouraging both parties involved to invest time and resources to finding a victorious solution	292	300	592	6	52	58
Emphasizing on views or efforts to finding amicable solutions to please all parties involved	269	264	533	12	105	117
Imposing personal decision on both parties	25	22	47	371	232	603
Permitting each party to suggest satisfactory solution to the problem.	292	300	592	6	52	58

The results in the table 2 showed that 586 (90.1%) of respondents out of 650 sampled for this study strongly agreed that making conciliations setting dispute as well as a strategy for solving school-related conflict in universities while 64 (9.7%) of respondents sampled for this study strongly disagreed with this notion which implies that making conciliation setting disputes could not serve as a remedy for curbing school-related conflicts. In the same vein, 540 (83.0%) of respondents out of 650 sampled respondents agreed that persuading all sides to make conciliations will help in long way to solve school-related

conflicts while 110 (16.9) of sampled respondents concurred that persuading all sides to make conciliations could not serve as a means to the problem of student-related conflicts in universities in North West, Nigeria.

In the same vein, 601(92.5) of respondents sampled agreed that ensuring mutual give and take positive interaction to solve school-related conflict to some extent while 49 (7.5%) of the respondents sampled absolutely agreed that ensuring mutual give and take interactions cannot serve as a remedy to the problem of school-related conflict. Furthermore, 521(80.2%) of respondents sampled in this study strongly agreed that discouraging staff and students from unnecessary arguments is a main solution to the problem of school-related conflict in universities in North West, Nigeria while 129 (19.9%) of respondents sampled for this study strongly disagreed with this submission that is, discouraging staff and students from unnecessary argument does not have any negative influence on school-related conflict in Nigerian universities. Similarly, 614 (94.4%) of respondents sampled for this study also strongly agreed that encouraging all parties to admit blames and accept praises accordingly will serve as a remedy to the school-related conflict while only 36 (5.6%) of them did not agreed with this notion. That is, encouraging all parties to admit blames and accept praises accordingly have insignificant influence on school-related conflict in universities in North-West, Nigeria.

The table 2 further revealed that 577 (88.8%) of respondents sampled strongly agreed that treating staff and students equally is a best strategy to solve school-related conflict in the universities in North-West, Nigeria while 73 (11.3%) of respondents sampled strongly disagreed with equal treatment of staff and students will put an end to school-related conflict. In the same vein, 580 (89.2%) of sampled respondents agreed that stopping squabbles at the initial stage before it aggravates will solve the school-related conflict in the universities in North-West, Nigeria while 70 (10.8%) of respondents sampled strongly disagreed that stopping squabbles at the initial stage before it aggravates will not solve problem of school-related conflict. It was also established that 605 (93.1%) of respondents sampled agreed that adopting a 'wait and see' attitude is a best solution to the problem of school-related conflict in Nigerian universities while 70 (10.8%) of respondents sampled disagreed with the adoption of wait and see attitude as a solution to the problem of school-related conflict in Nigerian Universities.

The results in the table further showed that 581 (89.4%) of respondents sampled strongly agreed that permitting cross-examination by both parties involved is a good strategy to solve the problem of school-related conflict while 69 (10.6%) of respondents sampled strongly agreed that permitting cross-examination by both parties involved is not a good strategy to solve the problem of school-related conflict. In the same vein, 612 (94.1%) of respondents strongly agreed that allowing collective resolutions to solving all controversial issues is a functioning remedy to the problem of school-related conflict in Nigerian universities while only 36 (5.5%) of them did not agreed with this notion. 551 (84.8%) of respondents sampled agreed that permitting each group to make satisfactory suggestions to solving the problems at stake will handle school-related conflict as a solution while 99 (15.2%) of respondents sampled totally disagreed with permitting collective resolutions to solving all controversial issues as a solution to the problem of school-related conflict.

Furthermore, 542 (83.3) of respondents selected for this study absolutely concurred that encouraging both parties to see conflict as a 'win or lose' issue as a best technique of solving school-related conflict in Nigerian universities while 108 (16.6%) of respondents

sampled disagreed with this submission in totality. 626 (96.3) of respondents sampled agreed that encouraging high concern for others and low concern for oneself is a good yielding/accommodating strategy to curb school-related conflict in Nigerian universities. While, 24 (3.7%) of respondents sampled totally disagreed with this notion. 565 (869%) of respondents sampled also agreed that playing down disputing issues among staff and students is one of the yielding/accommodating resolution mechanisms to curb the student-related conflict but 85 (13.3%) of respondents sampled absolutely disagreed with this notion.

It was discovered through results in the same table that 521 (80.1%) of respondents sampled for this study that discouraging issues that lead to disagreement among staff and students is a good technique of curbing school-related conflict as a yielding/accommodating strategy while 129 (19.9%) of respondents disagreed. 601 (92.0%) of respondents established that setting grievances by bringing up ideas that have similarities to both groups to solve school-related conflict in Nigerian universities but only 58 (8.0%) of respondents selected agreed that setting grievances by bringing up ideas that have similarities to both groups cannot curb school-related conflict.

Table showed that 598 (92.0%) of respondents selected strongly believed that ensuring mutual outcomes interest to both parties is a good cooperative strategy to curb school-related conflict while 52 (8.0%) of respondents selected did not agreed with this submission in totality. It was indicated that 29 (4.5%) of respondents concurred that making both parties to see conflict as a creative opportunity will solve school-related conflict while 621 (95.5%) of selected respondents strongly disagreed that is, making both parties to see conflict as a creative opportunity is not a good cooperative strategy to curb school-related conflict. 592 (91.1) of selected respondents strongly agreed that encouraging both parties involved to invest time and resources to finding a victorious solution is a best strategy of cooperative to solve school-related conflict in Nigerian universities appropriately while 58 (8.9%) of respondents sampled for this study. As far as cooperative strategy is concerned, 533 (82.0%) of respondents sampled continently agreed that emphasizing on views or efforts to finding amicable solutions to please all parties involved is another effective strategy to curbing school-related conflict while 117 (18.0%) of selected respondents strongly objected this submission of emphasizing on views or efforts to finding amicable solutions to please all parties involved as a remedy to curb school-related conflict.

However, 47 (7.2%) of selected respondents strongly agreed that imposing personal decision on both parties is a good forcing strategy to curb school-related conflict in Nigerian universities. While, 603 (92.8%) of sampled respondents strongly concurred that imposing personal decision on both parties will not curb any school-related conflict in Nigerian universities. 592 (91.1%) of respondents sampled agreed that permitting each party to suggest satisfactory solution to the problem as a forcing strategy is very effective for curbing school-related conflict while 58 (8.9%) of respondents strongly agreed that permitting each party to suggest satisfactory solution to the problem is not an effective strategy to solve school-related conflict.

Conclusions

This study concludes that majority of respondents sampled for this study strongly agreed that school-related conflict is frequently occurred in universities in North West Nigeria,

and different resolution mechanisms were adopted in curbing school related conflict in universities in North-West, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were made:

1. Numerous curbing mechanisms should be employed by the school management in tackling and minimizing school related conflicts among undergraduates in North-West Nigeria;
2. Periodic workshop and seminar should be organized by the school management to sensitize undergraduates on the negative effects of school related conflicts on their academic pursuit and;
3. Peace and conflict education programme should be introduced into university academic programmes in North West, Nigeria.

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