

Situational Analysis of Conflict in Universities in the South West Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria

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Received: 30 May 2025 / Accepted: 12 Jun. 2025 / Published: 20 Jun. 2025

ABSTRACT

The study investigated situational analysis of conflict emergence in universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to find out the areas of conflict, the frequency of occurrence and the sources of the conflict in the universities in the South West, Nigeria. Descriptive study based on survey research design was employed. The population for this study consisted of 3,211 administrators of the universities in the South West Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The sample comprised 900 university administrators representing 28% from the universities (federal, state and private) in the six (6) states (Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ekiti and Ondo) in the South West Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The researcher developed an instrument titled: Conflict Survey Questionnaire (COSUQ) to collect data. The overall Split-Half alpha (α) for the scales are: 0.78 for areas of conflict, 0.82 for frequency of occurrence and 0.77 for sources of conflict. The data collected after administration were analysed using frequency count, percentages (%), Means (\bar{X}), Standard Deviation (S.D) and rank-ordering. The results showed that inter-personal conflicts were the major areas of conflict while conflicts among the students were the most frequent. It was recommended that effective interpersonal relationships between student and students, lecturers and lecturers, non-academic and non-academic staff, student and lecturer and students' and non-academic staff should be

encouraged through the use of the democratic management style and participative decision making among the aforementioned groups by the university management.

Keywords: Conflict, Universities, Management, Situational Conflict

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is an attendant feature of human interaction that cannot be eliminated, but managed. However, its proper management and transformation are essential for peace and progress in human society. In organizations, conflict is regarded as the presence of discord that occurs when the goals, interests or values of different individuals or groups are incompatible or there is an attempt to frustrate individuals' efforts to achieve their goals. Conflict is an inevitable part of organizational life since the goals of different stakeholders such as managers and staff are often incompatible (Paluku, 2013). Conflicts have both negative and positive outcomes to the individual employees and the organization at large. In social life, conflicts occur but family members, friends and relatives manage them. The same case applies to organizations, when conflicts arise; it needs to be resolved by management for the sake of the organizational growth, survival and to enhance performance (Paluku, 2013).

Akorede (2005) described conflict as a form of socialization. He stressed that people in organizations have both personal and role preferences about the organization's actions and policies. However, conflict exists whenever it is impossible for parties involved to carry out their desired action. Hence, he is of the view that conflict is the tension that is experienced when a group of people feels that their needs or desires are likely to be denied. It is argued that it could mean strife, controversy, discord of action and antagonism. Thus, Adeyemi (2010) found out that in the Nigerian school system, conflict occurs from time to time. He then submitted that conflict is the art of coming into collision, clash or be in opposition with one another. He argued that conflict situation is one in which the parties involved are unable to iron out their differences in the early stages of the collision or clash.

As noted by Amadi (2002) the areas of conflict come in three forms namely: intrapersonal, interpersonal and inter-group. Intrapersonal conflicts manifest in individuals such as students, administrators, academic staff, and non-administrators. It is a situation in which the individual concerned will be battling with self on issues concerning health, academics, feeding, making a decision, and financial problems. The second is interpersonal conflict which, in the context of the university, can occur between student and student, lecturer and lecturer, a lecturer and a non-academic staff, the vice chancellor and deputy vice chancellor. The last (inter-group conflict) refers to separate conflict between two or more groups in an organization. In a university for

instance, the non-academic staff members may disagree with the academic staff, over disparity in salaries. This can engender non-academic staff versus academic staff conflict.

These areas of conflicts in universities can be measured in terms of their rate of occurrence. Discussing the rate of occurrence of various conflicts in universities, Fatile and Adejuwon (2011) indicated that while some conflicts occur always, some occur, sometimes, seldomly and rarely. For instance, interaction between students and students in hostels, lecture rooms, departmental halls, faculties, cafeteria and so on, may lead to the emergence of “daily-life conflict” in various locations on campus while on the other hand, students’ uprising or revolt against the university management over increase in fees may be said to occur rarely since universities do not increase their tuition fees daily. Fatile and Adejuwon (2011) noted that areas of conflict can be traced to various sources and depend on the level of interaction and integration between the concerned parties.

The sources of conflict in universities are numerous and cover a range of factors. These factors as grouped by Fatile and Adejuwon (2011) include: environmental factors; sociological factors, cultural factors and communication factors. Gray and Stark (1984) identified six sources of conflict within the environmental context namely: limited resources, interdependent work activities, and differentiation of activities, communication problem, differences in perception, and the environment of the organization. Other environmental factors are individual differences, unclear authority structures, differences in attitudes, task symmetries and differences in time horizon. Sociological factors are those factors that are inherent in the social system that result in conflict, for instance the struggle for power even among students, the academic and non-academic staff in agitation for individual or group right often leads to this kind of struggle.

Cultural factors resulting to conflict often arise from differences in cultural perception, ethnicity, language, religion, and belief system of people. For instance, a lecturer from the Eastern part of Nigeria could feel marginalized in an institution that is predominantly dominated by Northerners. This may give rise to the impression that his language or ethnic group is just a minority and may not be represented in the institution. Communication gap is the last source of conflict that arises when there is no free flow of information between institutional leaders and the led. This will affect individuals’ or group’s involvement in social organization. For example: sudden increment in school fee without prior notice to students by the university management is apt to result in a protest.

Conflicts from the aforementioned sources cannot be completely eradicated but can be well-managed to avoid degeneration into violence. Since violence will not erupt without conflict as antecedents, one can assume that many of the conflicts in tertiary institutions and insecurity

degenerated because their antecedents (causes) were not properly managed or that the conflicting parties did not explore the power of communication and conflict manager's personality in resolving the crises (Agbonna, Yusuf & Onifade, 2009). Hence, this shows that every dispute, strife disagreement, crisis and argument require proper handling through management or conflict management.

It has been observed that Nigeria universities have for decades been faced with so many crises ranging from conflict between academic staff and university administrators, students versus academic staff, students versus university administrators, and non-academic staff versus university management. Most of these crises had led to closure of universities for months at different times with academic activities put on hold. However, there are allegations that some major consequences include the nearly perpetual disruption of academic calendar of universities, destruction of university, public and even private properties, loss of studentship, termination of the jobs of both academic and non-academic staff as fall outs of conflict, among others and destruction of properties by students and most often upsurge of violence resulting in injuries of various degrees and loss of lives (Ada & Akinde , 2015; Olaleye & Arogundade, 2013; Ajibade, 2006). It seems therefore that the strategies adopted by university Vice-Chancellor and his management team may not have been effective. Conflicts in universities have given rise to distrust and hostility among professionals and academics thus contributing to hampering smooth, effective and efficient administration in the universities.

Researchers on conflicts have been placed with much attention on causes and effects of conflicts in organizations (Oyebade, 2000; Awosusi,2005; Amuseghan, 2007). These researches show that various forms of conflict also occur at varying degrees and proportions in universities. Amuseghan (2007) for instance, found that the level of occurrence of student-authority conflicts in universities was high while Oyebade (2000) and Awosusi (2005) reported that the level of occurrence of staff-authority conflicts in Nigerian tertiary institutions was also high.

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

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the areas of conflict as identified by university administrators in the South

West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

2. What is the frequency of occurrence of conflict as identified by university administrators in the universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria?
3. What are the sources of conflict in the universities as perceived by university administrators in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

AREAS OF CONFLICT IN THE UNIVERSITIES

Conflict is noticed in every organization because of human interactions. The consequences of the interactions include quarrels, gossips, frictions and conflicts. Conflicts could be within individuals, between individuals and among groups. It was confirmed by Amadi (2002) and Huang, Hammer, Neal, and Perrin (2004) that the areas of conflict come in three forms namely: intrapersonal, interpersonal and inter-group.

Intrapersonal Conflict: Intrapersonal conflict is defined by Dalung (2013) as conflict that is within an individual. Milkman (2009) defined intrapersonal conflict as conflict which an individual experience when choosing between doing what they want and what they should. Waton (2007) said that the greatest conflicts are not the ones between two people, but the conflict between one person and himself. Intrapersonal conflicts manifest in individuals such as student, administrator, academic staff, and non-administrator. It is a situation in which the individual concerned will be battling with self on issues concerning health, academics, feeding, making a decision, and financial problems. Intra-personal conflict according Neal (2004) is when one is torn between choices to be made, when a person is at odds with herself or himself and when one is frustrated with his or her goals or accomplishments. The individual is not only frustrated but also suffers anxiety induced by conflict in the world of work. Intra personal conflict can chiefly be psychological.

From psychological perspective, Grigg (1998) pointed out three major types of intra-personal conflicts which have implications for the institution, personnel and student. These include: Approach-avoidance of conflicts, where the individual experiences both the desire for and the desire to avoid certain object or goal: Double-approach conflict is when the individual staff is torn between the desires to gain two similar attractive but mutually exclusive goals. An example is the problem of a lecturer who is very happy with his home but anxious to gain promotion in his job. The lecturer is offered the promotion if he will transfer to a much-desired remote institution away from his home and family, In double-avoidance conflict, the individual is surrounded by non-satisfying conditions with little hope of achieving the things he desires. An example could be a teacher choosing between the boredom of unemployment and the monotony of teaching in an ill-equipped private school with a tyrannical proprietor who pays pittance but

exacts labour from the teacher.

Conflicts within individuals may manifest in antagonism which gives way to conflict with other people. It brings in misplaced aggression. Where the individual will antagonize somebody who did nothing to him or her because of what was happening within him or her. The particular way an individual responds to conflict within himself, subjects the person to the feelings of anxiety. The relationship between conflict and anxiety is that anxiety leads the person to exhibit various defensive mechanisms. Defensive mechanisms in intrapersonal conflict are behavioural traits which manifest as conflict. They are exhibited by a person whose goals in life, or the school organization, are not satisfied. These defensive mechanisms include: aggression, compensation, identification, rationalization, projection, regression, reaction formation, fixation, negativism, fantasy, conversion, and flight or withdrawal (Denga, 1990).

Interpersonal Conflict: Interpersonal conflict is conflict seen between persons in the school environment or in any other organization. Umeron (2001) declared that the most commonly noticeable conflicts encountered in institutions by the administrators are interpersonal conflicts. Interpersonal conflict can be represented by people such as student versus student, lecturer versus lecturer, academic versus nonacademic staff and Vice Chancellor versus Deputy Vice Chancellor. Hartwick and Barki (2004) defined interpersonal conflict as a dynamic process that occurs between individuals and or groups who are in interrelationships, and is more likely to occur when a variety of background, situational and personal condition exist.

These background conditions include arguments among students’ academic and non-academic staff of the university. Aderouninu (1998) is of the opinion that every person in the school environment needs other people for effective and for a harmonious cooperative living. When these needs are not met, students or even workers react and misbehave. Human beings are very complex in their behaviours, and this makes their interactions to be rational and irrational; conscious and unconscious and verbal and non-verbal. These interactions can result in interpersonal conflict. That is why Deutsch (1991) wrote that the likelihood of conflict is enhanced between two parties when they have the opportunity to interact; their interaction makes obvious the salient differences between them which they perceive to be incompatible; and they judge that there is more to gain or less to lose by efforts to eliminate or reduce the incompatibilities. Umeron (2001) identified five indicators of potential interpersonal conflict in organizations. They include ambiguous jurisdictions, conflict of interests, barrier in communication, dependence of parties upon each other and behaviour regulation. Interpersonal conflicts indicate a high level of interrelationship between or among the persons who are engaged in it.

Intergroup Conflict: Intergroup conflict is conflict between two or more groups in an organization. Griffin (1997) opined that it is common to find disagreements occurring between one set of workers in an organization versus another set of workers. In educational institutions for instance, the non-academic staff members may disagree with the academic staff, over disparity in salaries. This can engender non-academic staff versus academic staff conflict. Another example may be a situation which students are pitted against the authorities over authorities’ high handedness in disciplinary matters.

There are four areas or categories of conflict according to Anderson (2006). These include: intrapersonal and interpersonal, intragroup and intergroup. The intrapersonal conflict has to do with incompatibilities within a person’s cognitive system. Interpersonal conflict is between people, intragroup is within a group while intergroup conflict is between groups. Differentiating conflict areas according to work types, Chukwumaeze (2008) classified it as substantive conflicts which are those rooted in the substance of the task. Affective conflict derived from the emotional affective aspect of the interpersonal relation; it deals with the individual’s emotions. Still on the types of conflict, Anih (2008) categorized them into preexisting ones which involve issues carried over from previous contents. The author also refers to spontaneous reaction which deals with reaction in a critical time in contest. Also included, are cumulative responses, which are series of calls or bad breaks that do not favor one team. Substantive conflict is associated with the job not individual while affective deals with emotion.

FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE OF CONFLICTS IN THE UNIVERSITIES

A number of research finding shows that various form of conflict also occurs at varying degrees and proportions in universities, Amuseghan (2007), for instance, found that the level of occurrence of student-authority conflicts in the United Kingdom (UK) and Canadian universities was high while Oyebade (2000) and Awosusi (2005) reported that the level of occurrence of staff-authority conflicts in Nigerian tertiary institutions was also high. For more than three decades now, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Federal government of Nigeria (FGN) have been engaged in prolonged industrial conflicts over several issues of importance to the union, including poor wages and conditions of service of academic staff members in government owned universities across the country, the problem of underfunding and infrastructural neglect in Nigerian universities as well as the lack of autonomy and academic freedom which union members claim to be limiting the quality of teaching, research, scholarship and innovation (Odiagbe, 2012).

Adeyemi (2009) examined principals’ management of conflicts in public secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. Findings showed that conflicts have not been effectively managed by

principals of schools because of their inability to effectively utilize the strategies for resolving conflicts. Results showed that disagreement over issues relating to religion had the highest number of occurrence as they occurred in 62 schools (77.5%) while conflicts over the imposition of decision by authority without due consultation with staff and students were also high (71.3%). Oleforo and Akpan (2016) investigated gender differences in the use of organizational conflict resolution strategies by Heads of Department in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. Findings revealed that conflict among students and students, university students and the host community was more recurrent than any other area of conflict. They further found that 67% of all conflicts in a session often emerge from student agitation for recognition of their right in protest.

SOURCES OF CONFLICT IN UNIVERSITIES

Conflicts come into existence in institutions and organizations because of the relationships that exists among individuals and groups which attract frictions. Conflicts are caused by multiplicity of factors (Gray & Stark, 1984). Some of these factors according to scholars (Ekpenyong, 2008; Anikpo, Ezegbe & Mohammed, 2007) include: environmental factors; sociological factors, cultural factors and communication gap. Idoko (2010) conducted a study on conflict resolution strategies in non-government secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. The major findings of the study are that unnecessary interference with the administration of the schools by proprietors, arbitrary increase of school fees by the school management among others constitutes one major source of conflict.

Adoga (2014) examined the concepts of conflict and constraints and their antecedents in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It was observed that university administrators, students, teachers, government and trade union activities may be sources of conflict for one reason or the other. Nevertheless, the outcomes of such conflicts causes prolong of academic activities, destruction of life and properties and in some cases render school environment completely insecure for serious academic activities not beneficial to students, institutions and the society at large.

Duze (2012) in a study considered the types, causes, and management of role conflict between university professional and academic administrators that may become destructive. The result showed that lack of academic freedom, role ambiguity among administrators, power tussle and insecurity challenges were the major causes of conflict between university professional and academic administrators. Fatile and Adejuwon (2011) considered conflict is an attendant feature of human interaction and cannot be eliminated; however, its proper management and transformation are essential for peace and progress in human society. The paper examined conflict and conflict management in higher institutions of learning with specific reference to

Nigerian Universities. The study observed that students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria engaged in conflict because of reasons such as imposition of one or more new institutional decisions on students or staff, differences in perception among significant others in institutions, autonomy drives, role conflict of students.

Salleh and Adulpakdee (2012) investigated the perceptions of teachers and school principals toward the causes of conflict and effective methods to conflict management at selected Islamic private secondary schools in Yala Province, Thailand. The sample of the study was 313 respondents which consist of 11 principals and 302 teachers. The instruments used were survey questionnaire and interview with the selected respondents. The data was processed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 15.0 for Windows. The results show, the principals perceived that the main cause of conflicts occurred in school was “ambiguously defined responsibilities and the teachers agreed that different perception” was the major cause of conflict in school.

Obuobisa-Darko (2014) examined the causes and effects of conflict on teachers' performance in the Tema metropolis of Ghana. Research design used was descriptive survey, with the main data collection instrument being questionnaire. Data was collected from a sample of three hundred and five (305) respondents who were randomly and purposively selected. The data was analysed using SPSS. The results indicated that conflicts were caused by personal and structural factors. The dominant personal factor was differences in perception whilst the dominant structural factor was sharing of common and limited resources. Ezeaku and Ohamobi (2013) investigated factors that induce conflict in secondary schools between principals and teachers and their resolution strategies in Awka, Anambra state of Nigeria. Results showed that the factors inducing conflict include: dereliction of duty, dishonesty/corrupt practices, autocratic style of leadership, and special connection in high places among others.

Basake, Mando, Anashie and Ebirim (2013) examined that impact of role conflict between principals and proprietors of private secondary schools in Central Senatorial District of Benue State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Three research hypotheses guided the study. The data collected was tested using inferential statistics of Chi-square goodness-of-fit to 0.05 level of significance, findings of the study revealed that, school finances was not a significant source of role conflict between principals and proprietors in private secondary schools in Zone ‘B’ Senatorial District of Benue State.

METHODS

This is a descriptive study that was based on survey research design. The population for this

study consisted of three thousand 3,211 university administrators in South West Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The university administrators comprised of Vice Chancellors, Deputy Vice Chancellors (Administration and Academic), Registrars, Bursars, University Librarians, Deans of Student Affairs, Provosts of Colleges, the Chief Security Officer, Deputy Registrar, Deans of Faculties, Heads of Departments and Directors in the universities (federal, state and private) in the six states (Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ekiti and Ondo) that make up South West Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

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

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

The instrument that was used for collection of data was the questionnaire titled: “Conflict Survey

Questionnaire (COSUQ)”. This instrument (COSUQ) was developed by the researcher. The instrument consisted of two parts “A” and “B”. The Part A included bio-data of the respondents such as name of institution while Part “B” looked at the areas of conflict, frequency of occurrence, sources of conflict in universities. The part B was sub-divided into Sections I, II and III. Part B, Subsection I deals with areas of conflict which covered two areas namely interpersonal (items 1 to 5) and intergroup conflict (items 6 to 12). All the items were rated as Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1. Part B, section II contained 12 items to elicit responses of respondents on the frequency of occurrence of conflict in Nigerian universities. The items also covered two dimensional areas of conflict interpersonal (items 1 to 5) and intergroup conflict (items 6 to 12). The response rate of the items were berated Always = 4, Sometimes = 3, Seldom = 2 and Rarely = 1. Part B section III consisted 20 items on sources of conflict in universities. The 20-items border on four groups of factors that could instigate conflict in universities namely: environmental, sociological, cultural factor and communication gap. All the items were rated as Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1.

The questionnaire was validated by two experts in the field of Educational Administration. They carefully reviewed the questionnaire and ensured that its contents are relevant, clear, unambiguous and precise. The corrections made by them were incorporated into the final draft to ensure the content validity of the instrument. The split-half reliability method was adopted for this study. This was done by administering copies of the questionnaire to a group of 10 respondents comprising principal staff of University of Benin (federal university), Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma (State university) and Samuel Adegboyega University Ogwa (private university) in Edo State. Edo State was chosen in order not to include participant on the pilot test in the main administration of the instrument. The data retrieved was collated and split into two equal halves using odd and even numbers. The Split-Half reliability analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 21). The overall Split-Half alpha (α) for the scales are: 0.78 for areas of conflict, 0.82 for frequency of occurrence, and 0.77 for sources of conflict.

The researcher visited each of the universities to administer copies of the questionnaire and also with the aid of four research assistants. The research assistants were first degree holders who already had knowledge of field researches. However, the researcher further trained them on how to administer the questionnaire. This was done to ensure that the research assistants came to terms with the contents of the instrument for proper administration. Research questions one to three were analyzed with percentages (%), Mean (\bar{X}), Standard Deviation (S.D) and rank ordering.

RESULTS

This section deals with the results and discussion of findings on data collected and analysed.

Research Question 1: What are the areas of conflict as identified by university administrators in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

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

s/n	Areas of Conflict	N=888		
		\bar{X}	S.D	Remark
Conflict between....				
1	student and student	3.32*	.782	Agreed
2	lecturer and lecturer	3.05*	.975	Agreed
3	non-academic and non-academic staff	2.18	.899	Disagreed
4	students and lecturers	1.93	.928	Disagreed
5	students and non-academic staff	2.42	1.173	Disagreed
Overall mean on inter-personal conflict= 2.58				
6	academic staff and the government	2.96*	1.128	Agreed
7	non-academic staff and the government	2.73*	1.020	Agreed
8	academic staff and the university authority	2.56*	1.076	Agreed
9	non-academic staff and the university authority	2.55*	1.074	Agreed
10	school authority and the host communities	1.92	1.088	Disagreed
11	students and the government	2.11	1.122	Disagreed
12	teaching staff and students	2.03	1.100	Disagreed
Overall mean administration inter-group conflict= 2.41				

Note: *Significant mean ($\bar{X} \geq 2.5$)

The results in Table 1 showed that university administrators agreed that conflict between: student and student, lecturer and lecturer; academic staff and the government; non-academic staff and the government; academic staff and the university authority; non-academic staff and the university authority are the areas of conflict with a mean score range of 2.55 to 3.32 while they disagreed that conflict between: non-academic and non-academic staff; students and lecturers; students and

non-academic staff; school authority and the host communities; students and the government; teaching staff and students are the areas of conflict with a mean score range of 2.42 to 1.92 respectively. The results in Table 2 further showed that the overall mean score on inter-personal conflict (items 1 to 5) in the universities in the South West Geopolitical zone was 2.58 while that which constitute inter-group conflict (items 6 to 12) in the universities in the South West Geopolitical zone was lower with a mean score of 2.41. Since the overall mean score on inter-personal conflict ($\bar{X} = 2.58$) in the universities is higher than the criterion mean of 2.5 while that of inter-group conflict was less than the criterion mean of 2.50 (i.e $\bar{X} = 2.41 < 2.5$), this showed that inter-personal conflicts were the major areas of conflict in universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the frequency of occurrence of conflict as identified by university administrators in the universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean, Standard Score and rank ordering of university administrators on the level of Occurrence of Conflict in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria

s/n	Areas of Conflict	Frequency of Occurrence					\bar{X}	Mean rank*
		Always	Sometimes	Seldom	Rarely			
1	student and student	402 (45.3%)	348 (39.2%)	126 (14.2%)	12 (1.4%)	3.28	1 st	
2	lecturer and lecturer	342 (38.5%)	288 (32.4%)	186 (20.9%)	72 (8.1%)	3.01	2 nd	
3	non-academic and non-academic staff	60 (6.8%)	270 (30.4%)	348 (39.2%)	210 (23.6%)	2.20	8 th	
4	student and lecturers	60 (6.8%)	198 (22.3%)	294 (33.1%)	336 (37.8%)	1.98	11 th	
5	student and non-academic staff	222 (25.0%)	216 (24.3%)	174 (19.6%)	234 (26.4%)	2.46	7 th	
6	academic staff and the government	378 (42.6%)	264 (29.7%)	48 (5.4%)	144 (16.2%)	2.96	3 rd	
7	non-teaching staff and the government	228 (25.7%)	288 (32.4%)	216 (24.3%)	102 (11.5%)	2.69	4 th	
8	academic staff and the university authority	252 (28.4%)	228 (25.7%)	186 (20.9%)	168 (18.9%)	2.60	5 th	
9	non-teaching staff and the university authority	180 (20.3%)	336 (37.8%)	198 (22.3%)	174 (19.6%)	2.59	6 th	
10	school authority and the host communities	108 (12.2%)	210 (23.6%)	120 (13.5%)	450 (50.7%)	1.97	12 th	
11	students and the government	138	240	144	366	2.17	9 th	

		(15.5%)	(27.0%)	(16.2%)	(41.2%)		
12	teaching staff and students	126	228	144	390	2.10	10 th
		(14.2%)	(25.7%)	(16.2%)	(43.9%)		

Note: *Proportionate percentages of each cell are in bracket beneath the values*

** Mean scores are ranked in descending order*

The results in Table 2 showed that majority of the respondents (N=402, 45.3%) attested that student-student conflict occurred always with a mean score of 3.28. 342, (38.5%) attested that lecturer-lecturer conflict occurred always with a mean score of 3.01. In the aspect of non-academic and non-academic staff conflict, 348, 39.2% attested that it occurred seldomly with a mean score of 2.20. Majority 336 (37.8%) attested that students and lecturers 'conflict occurred rarely with a mean score of 1.98. 234 (26.4%) attested that students and non-academic staff conflict occurred rarely with a mean score of 2.46. 378 (42.6%) attested that the academic staff and the government conflict occurred always with a mean score of 2.96. 288 (32.4%), attested that the non-academic staff and the government conflict occurred sometimes with a mean score of 2.69.

252 (28.4%) attested that the academic staff and the university authority conflict occurred always with a mean score of 2.60. Majority (336, 37.8%) attested that the non-academic staff and the university authority conflict occurred sometimes with a mean score of 2.59. 450 (50.7%) attested that school authority and the host communities' conflict occurred rarely with a mean score of 1.97. 366 (41.2%) attested that the students and the government conflict occurred rarely with a mean score of 2.17. 390 (43.9%) attested that teaching staff and the students' conflict occurred rarely with a mean score of 2.10.

The rank ordering of the mean scores on the level of occurrence (frequency) showed that conflict between student and student was the most frequent area of conflict while lecturer and lecturer and academic staff and the government were the second and third most frequent areas of conflict in universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria respectively. The least occurrence (frequent) area of conflict was the conflict between school authority and the host communities.

Research Question 3: What are the sources of conflict in the universities as perceived by university administrators in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and standard score of university administrators on the sources of conflict in the universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria

s/n	Sources of Conflicts	N=888		
		\bar{X}	S.D	Remark
Conflict between....				
1	Complaints about limited resources	2.64*	8.79	Agreed
2	Perception on lack of autonomy or academic freedom among university members	2.59*	8.62	Agreed
3	Differences in perception among the university management and members of the university community	2.10	9.59	Disagreed
4	Personality differences among members of the university community	2.55*	7.91	Agreed
5	Unclear authority structures within a faculty, college, department or unit	2.61*	9.20	Agreed
6	Lack of task identity among members of staff in a faculties, colleges, departments or units	2.50*	8.74	Agreed
Overall mean on environmental factors = 2.48				
7	Students’ struggle for recognition of their right	2.66*	1.037	Agreed
8	Agitation for individual or group right among the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU)	2.72*	8.29	Agreed
9	Agitation for individual or group right among Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities (NASU)	2.69*	8.92	Agreed
10	Agitation from the Senior Staff Academic Association of Nigerian University (SSANU)	2.64*	8.07	Agreed
Overall mean on sociological factors = 2.68				
11	Differences in cultural perception among members of the university community result in conflict	1.88	9.15	Disagreed
12	Differences in ethnicity result among members of the university community result in conflict	2.44	7.91	Disagreed
13	Differences in language among members of the university community result in conflict	2.45	9.40	Disagreed
14	Differences in religious status among members of the university community result in conflict	2.47	8.82	Disagreed
15	Differences in personal belief of members of the university community result in conflict	1.84	8.99	Disagreed
Overall mean administration cultural factors = 2.22				

16	Noninvolvement of staff in decision making matters leads to conflict	2.51*	8.82	Agreed
17	Students revolt in matters of the Student Union Government (SUG) is not involved in major decision matters that affect them	2.83*	9.41	Agreed
18	Marginalization of the university staff on new policy decisions leads to conflict	2.43	8.64	Disagreed
19	Lack of clarity of purpose on a new initiative leads to conflict between the university management and concerned persons	1.91	9.62	Disagreed
20	Conflict arises when there is no free flow of information between institutional leaders and the led	2.70*	9.34	Agreed

Overall mean administration communication gap = 2.48

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

The results in Table 3 showed that the university administrators agreed that complaints about limited resources; perception on lack of autonomy or academic freedom among university members, personality differences among members of the university community; unclear authority structures within a faculty, college, department or unit, lack of task identity among members of staff in a faculties, colleges, departments or units; students’ struggle for recognition of their right; agitation for individual or group right among the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU); the Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities (NASU); the Senior Staff Academic Association of Nigerian University (SSANU); noninvolvement of staff in decision making matters leads to conflict; students revolt in matters of the Student Union Government (SUG) in major decision matters that affect them, and non-free flow of information between institutional leaders are the sources of conflict with a mean score range of 2.50 to 2.72; while the university administrators disagreed that differences in perception among the university management and members of the university community; differences in cultural perceptions; ethnicity result, language, religious status and personal belief among members of the university community result; marginalization of the university staff on new policy, and lack of clarity of purpose on a new initiative are not sources of conflict with a mean score range of 1.84 to 2.47.

The results in Table 3 on the sources of conflict showed that the overall mean score on environmental factors (items 1 to 6) was 2.48; items 7 to 10 bordering on sociological factors was 2.68; items 11 to 15 bordering on cultural factors was 2.22; while items 16 to 20 that constituted items on communication gap was 2.48. Since the overall mean score of 2.68 for sociological factors was greater than the criterion mean of 2.5 (i.e $\bar{X} = 2.68 > 2.50$); sociological factors were considered as the main sources of conflict in the universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

Areas of Conflict in Universities

The result from the study showed that inter-personal conflicts were the major areas of conflict in the universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria. This result agrees with that of Ndum and Okey (2013) that Nigerian universities have for decades been faced with so many crises ranging from conflicts between academic staff and the university administrators, students versus the academic staff, students the versus university authorities, non-academic staff versus university administrators. However, this result is in disagreement with that of Adeosun, Onifade, Sodiya, Fapojowo and Abiona (2014) where areas of conflict in the universities included: irregular payment of salary, role conflict, delay promotion and non-payment of arrears among others.

The result from this study had shown that the areas of conflict in the universities in the South-West Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria were more of interpersonal conflict; student and student, lecturer and lecturer, non-academic and non-academic staff, student and lecturer and students and non-academic staff among others. Perhaps, this is as a result of frequent interaction and close association between the aforementioned groups of individuals on a daily and weekly basis which makes it almost impossible for them relate with each other without some forms of conflict. Perhaps, the reason inter-group conflict was not significant may be due to the low existence of conflict between school authority and the host communities; students and the government; teaching staff and students in the universities in South-West Geo-political Zone of Nigeria.

Frequency of Occurrence of Conflicts in the Universities

The result from the study showed that the conflict between student and student was the most frequent area of conflict while the lecturer and lecturer and academic staff and the government were the second and third most frequent areas of conflict in the universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria respectively. The least frequent area of conflict was the conflict between the school authority and the host communities.

The result in this study disagrees with that of Adeyemi (2009) which stated that disagreement over issues relating to religion had the highest number of occurrence as they occurred in 62 schools (77.5%) while conflicts over the imposition of decision by authority without due consultation with staff and students were also high (71.3%). The result in this study supported that of Oleforo and Akpan (2016) that the conflict among students and students, university students and the host community were more recurrent than any other area of conflict. They

further found that 67% of all conflicts in a session often emerged from students’ agitation for recognition of their rights.

The results had revealed that interpersonal conflict was a more recurrent area of conflicts in the universities in the South-West Geo-political Zone of Nigeria. This may be as a result of close affinity and relations among the students. Students and lecturers in the pursuit of their personal interests make conflict inevitable. Furthermore, the reason conflict is less frequent on intergroup related areas of conflict may be due to the ability of various unions, groups and bodies to relate with the other groups within the confines of the laws governing them as students, non-teaching staff, academic staff and management union. Lastly, the low existence of conflict between school authority and the host communities; students and the government; teaching staff and students in the universities in South-West Geo-political Zone of Nigeria accounts for their low frequency or incidence.

Sources of Conflict in Universities

Result from the study showed that sociological factors were the main sources of conflict in the universities in the South West Geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The result in this study disagrees with the result of Oparanma, Hamilton and Ohaka (2009) that the causes of conflicts in non-profit making organizations included poor communication, ethnic and religious differences, power tussle among the staff, unequal distribution of rewards and competition over scarce resources.

The result from this study also agrees with that of Duze (2012) that lack of academic freedom, role ambiguity among the administrators, power tussle and insecurity challenges were the major causes of conflict between the university professional and the academic administrators. The results in this study supported that of Alibi (2005) that conflicts were caused by factors such as limited resources, differences in perception, autonomy drives, role conflict, and political and national issues.

Result in this study disagrees with that of Basake, Mando, Anashie and Ebirim (2013) that school finances were not significant sources of role conflict between the principals and the proprietors in the private secondary schools in Zone B Senatorial District of Benue State. The result agrees with the findings of Ekpenyong (2000) that sociological factors such as the struggle for power even among students had been on the high side. The power struggle had brought about problems in institutions even among the academic and non-academic staff. Ekpenyong (2000) added that it has led to students struggling for the rights due them.

The outcome of this study showed that environmental factors, cultural factors and communication gap are not sources of conflict in the universities in Nigeria. This may be due to indifferences in perception among the university management and members of the university community on cultural, ethnicity, language, religious and personal beliefs. Furthermore, the non-emergence of conflict from communication gap may be due to the non-marginalization of the university staff on new policy decisions and clarity of purpose on a new initiative by the university administrators of the universities in the geo-political zone.

CONCLUSION

Inter-personal conflicts are the major areas of conflict while sociological factors such as agitation for individual or group right among various academic and non-academic unions such as Academic Staff Union ASUU and NASU are the main sources of conflict in the universities in the South West Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. It was concluded based on results that the areas of conflict (interpersonal and intergroup)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Effective interpersonal relationships between student and students, lecturer and lecturer, non-academic and non-academic staff, student and lecturer and students and non-academic staff should be encouraged by the university management. This could be achieved through democratic management style and participative decision making among the aforementioned groups.
2. The management should create time for regular discussions with the students through the Student Union Government (SUG) to understand issues that concern them. To glean such information a personal anonymous information boxes could be provided in the student affairs, personnel and human resource division of the university to enable students, academic, non-academic and senior staff, document their opinions, suggestions and reports about certain issues bordering them.

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