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A SURVEY OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES USED TO TACKLE STUDENTS' UNREST IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN DELTA STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined conflict management strategies used to tackle students' unrest in tertiary institutions in Delta state, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was used to carry out the study while the study population comprised staff and students of tertiary institutions in the study location. Three research questions and one hypothesis were raised to guide the study. Stratified random sampling technique was also used to select 360 respondents from four (4) selected tertiary institutions. A 29 items questionnaire entitled: 'Conflict management strategies for tackling students' unrest' was designed by the researchers and forwarded to two research experts for validation. The corrections made were incorporated in the final draft copy of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was measured with test – re-test method alongside Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and reliability score was 0.82. The researchers alongside three (3) research assistants were involved in distribution and collection of copies of the questionnaire to and from respondents. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts, percentage, and mean scores while the hypothesis was tested with chi-square statistic. It was found among others that: authorities of tertiary institutions in Delta state adopt several conflict management strategies to tackle students' unrest. It was recommended among others, that authorities of tertiary institutions in Delta state should give preference to conflict management strategies that produce effective result in tackling students' unrest.

Introduction

Higher education in Nigeria according to the Federal Ministry of Education (2013) exists to give sound and qualitative education which equips individuals to be functional in any environment they find themselves. Furthermore, the National Policy document listed the aims of higher education to be acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value orientation needed for the survival of the individual and society; the development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate their environments; the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community and the acquisition of an objective view of the local and external environments.

However, research findings such as Emaikwu and Eba (2001); Nwagwu (2005) and Okebukola (2006) have shown that many of the Nigerian tertiary educational institutions are finding it increasingly difficult to achieve the highlighted goals because of one conflict with institutions management or another. One of such conflicts is students' unrest (Anifowoshe, 2004; Aluede, Jimoh, Agwinede & Omoregie, 2005). Nevertheless, the importance of tertiary education to the national development cannot be overemphasized. The word unrest has been defined by the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English as lack of calmness

or dissatisfaction. Muhammad (2010) stated that students' unrest can be viewed as the disturbances in schools caused by students ranging from peaceful demonstrations to destructive and violent protests because of frustration.

For student unrest to be curtailed, the strategy adopted by management is very important. Conflict management scholars such as De Bono (2005) and Best (2006) have provided four methods of managing crises. These are: the use of violence and coercion, bargaining and negotiation, problem solving and mediation. Violence/coercion (in physical or psychological form) is a win or loses style of managing crisis. It is asserting one's viewpoint (using coercive state apparatus) at the expense of another (Anho, 2013).

Negotiation and Bargaining is a way of dealing with crisis, particularly when the parties in crises have relatively equal power and mutually independent goals. It is based on the belief that a middle route should be found to resolve the crisis, with concern for personal, groups, or organizational goals as well as relationship. In the process of negotiation, there are gains and losses for each party. Problem solving involves identifying causes of crises and removing such to make the situation normal again.

Mediation is the involvement of third party –binding (legal system that is, use of court and litigation processes), non-binding (the use of traditional rulers/opinion leaders) and non-governmental organization (NGOs)/associations to settle differences/dispute between parties in crises. Despite the existence of conflict management strategies, students' militancy in the Nigeria tertiary institutions has come to be an issue of serious concern. Revolts, protests, unrests, and violence, as well as incessant closure of schools for months in the wake of unrest have become a regular characteristic of Nigerian's tertiary institutions (Adeyemi; Ekundayo & Alonge, 2010). The intent of this study, therefore, is to examine in detail how authorities in tertiary institutions have managed student unrest and the efficacy of such strategies.

Statement of the Problem

Generally, education is germane to sustainable development in any society. Similarly, the importance of higher education in any nation cannot be overemphasized. However, it has been observed that students' unrest is becoming more rampant in tertiary institutions and the resultant consequence has been to the detriment of the teaching – learning atmosphere and societal advancement. Studies have propounded conflict management strategies; still, the menace of students' unrest exists. This begs for an answer to the question as to whether institution's management make use of these conflict management strategies and to what extent such strategies have been effective. This study, therefore, seeks to carry out a survey of conflict management strategies used to tackle students' unrest in tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria to make a case for the best management strategy to adopt.

Goals and Objectives

The main objective of this study is to:

1. Find out the conflict management strategy used by authorities of tertiary institutions to tackle students' unrest. Specifically, the study sought to:

2. Examine the efficacy of conflict management strategies used by authorities of tertiary institutions to tackle students' unrest.
3. Propose a most suitable conflict management strategy for adoption in tertiary institutions.

Research Questions

1. What conflict management strategies do authorities of tertiary institutions adopt to tackle students' unrest?
2. Which of the conflict management strategy adopted by the authorities of tertiary institutions to tackle students' unrest produces the best result?
3. Which of the conflict management strategy adopted by the authorities of tertiary institutions to tackle students' unrest produces the best result?

Research Hypothesis

Ho1: Some conflict management strategies adopted by authorities of tertiary institutions have not been significantly effective in tackling students' unrest.

Conceptual Framework

Conflict refers to disagreement or dispute between or among individual person or persons. Conflicts are bound to occur at homes, offices, communities, locally and internationally too. In as mush as we have human beings in a place or places, conflicts would emanate. They are parts and parcels of human society (Anho, 2013). At home or work, disagreements can arise and may be unpleasant. However, not every dispute calls for the same response. The ability to learn to choose the right conflict management style, makes one better and able to respond constructively to whenever disputes that come up. Conflicts inevitably pop up when you spend time with other people, whether at work or home.

It was discovered that student unrest affects university administration in various forms such as; Malicious destruction and vandalism of infrastructures thereby preventing effective teaching and learning, Some suggestions were offered; University management/administrations should diffuse tension and crises pruned to the barest minimal.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework which guided this study were the System Resource Theory and Conflict theory. System resource theory of organizational effectiveness which was propounded by Yutehman and Seashore (1967) states that: "effectiveness is an organizations' ability to secure an advantageous bargaining position in its environment and to capitalize on that position to acquire, judiciously distribute, and monitor utilization of scarce resources". The theory also viewed organizations such as schools as an open system which acquire inputs, engage in transformation process, and generate outputs. The theory is relevant to this study because school interaction with its environment is critical for the acquisition of scarce educational resources which when effectively utilized translate to good performances. Government and other donors provide educational facilities and other resources such as buildings for classrooms, offices, hostels, administrative block as well as textbooks, computer and science laboratories, libraries to schools in Nigeria among others. These are to facilitate teaching (lecturing) and learning effectiveness and promote greater

achievements which reflect on the standard of management that is in place.

The theory of conflict by Karl Marx was equally used to further elucidate the study. Conflict theory holds on the assumption that society is divided into two parts. That of the haves and have nots or upper and lower classes. The upper class is seen as controlling the society and only gives little resources to the lower class to work for them and sustenance of the society. In most cases, the lower class is considered as insignificant hence, conflict is bound to occur if the lower class is not carried along in running the affairs of the society. This theory is apt as authorities of tertiary institutions in Nigeria exclude or give mere attention to students when taking decisions that affect the welfare and other needs of students.

Research Method

The study covered Delta state with reference to the three (3) senatorial zones of the state namely: Delta North, Delta Central and Delta South senatorial zones. This was to have a wide range of coverage for the study. Delta state is one of the oil producing states in the south – south region of Nigeria. Delta state has a vast population and land mass which makes her attractive to the Federal Government and foreigners. Apart from oil resources, the state has arable farmlands that attracts farmers and other agricultural investors. In terms of schools, several tertiary institutions are found in Delta state. Some are owned by the state and federal governments while others are owned by private individuals. These attract many young people to seek admission and embarking on different programmes of their choices. Descriptive survey research design was used to carry out the study.The population of study comprised all students, student union leaders, academic staff and non-academic staff in students' affairs division of the 24 tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria. The population was made up of male and females. The institutions identified are: Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun, Delta State University (Abraka Campus, Oleh Campus, Asaba Campus), Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku., Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe Oghara, Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro., College of Education, Agbor, College of Education, Warri, Federal College of Education Technical, Asaba, College of Physical Education, Mosogar, School of Health Technology, Ughelli, Petroleum Training Institute, Effurun, Western Delta University, Oghara, Novena University, Ogume-Amai, Delta State School of Marine Technology, Burutu, Nigerian Maritime University, Okerenghigho, Warri, Conarina School of Maritime & Transport Technology, Oria-Abraka, University of Information and Communication Technology, Agbor, State School of Midwifery, Asaba, School of Nursing, Agbor, School of Nursing, Warri, Baptist School of Nursing, Eku, Edwin Clark University, Kiagbodo, Eagle Heights University, Omadino, Warri and Nigerian Naval School, Sapele. The sample for the study was selected using multistage sampling technique. Purposive sampling technique was used to select only public tertiary institutions in the state. Simple random sampling technique was further used to select two (2) tertiary institutions from each of the 3 Senatorial zones respectively while stratified random technique was adopted to select 90 respondents from each of the four (4)

tertiary institutions selected to obtain a total sample of 360 respondents that used as sample of the study. Both male and female respondents were captured as sample for the study. The sample was considered as representative and adequate because of homogeneity of the population. A structured questionnaire of 29 items, titled Conflict Management in Higher Institutions Questionnaire (CMHIQ) was designed by researchers. The instrument designed for data collection was forwarded to two research experts from Departments of Educational Foundations and Educational Psychology in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba Delta state for validation. Observations made by the research experts which covered both the face and contents of the instrument were imputed in the final draft of the questionnaire before advancing to the field with it for data collection. Test - re – test method was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. 36 respondents from another location outside the study area, were administered copies of the questionnaire to respond while data obtained from the instrument were analysed accordingly. 0.82 was realized as the correlation coefficient score making the instrument reliable for data collection for the study. Three (3) research assistants alongside the researchers, directly administer copies of the questionnaire on respondents and retrieve same after completion. However, the research assistants were trained earlier on how to apply the instrument to respondents. Furthermore, there was high percentage of recovery of administered copies of the questionnaire since the administrators waited for respondents to complete them and retrieved them on the spot. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts, percentage, and mean scores while the hypothesis raised for the study was tested with chi-square statistical tool.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Result

Presentation of Demographic Data

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	175	50.7
Male	170	49.3
Total	**345**	**100**

The distribution in table 1 shows that 175 (50.7%) respondents were females while 170 (49.3%) were males. This means that the females were more represented in the study than their male counterparts.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Statuses

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Staff	60	17.4
Students	285	82.6
Total	**345**	**100**

Table 2 reveals that 60 (17.4%) respondents were staff from six institutions while 285 (82.6%) were students selected across the six institutions.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One: What conflict management strategies do authorities of

tertiary institutions adopt to tackle students' unrest?

Table 3: Showing conflict management strategies adopted by authorities of tertiary institutions to tackle students' unrest.

Conflict management strategies adopted by authorities of tertiary institutions include:

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean
3.	Dialogue strategy	120 (34.8)	89 (25.8)	50 (14.5)	86 (24.9)	2.7
4.	Emergency strategy	97 (28.1)	138 (40.)	48 (13.9)	62 (18.0)	2.8
5.	Prevention strategy	88 (25.5)	122 (35.4)	64 (18.6)	71 (20.6)	2.7
6.	Mediation strategy	126 (36.5)	96 (27.8)	73 (21.2)	50 (14.5)	2.9
7.	Collaboration/participatory	104 (30.1)	128 (37.1)	50 (14.5)	63 (18.3)	2.8
8.	Ad-hoc strategy	40 (11.6)	70 (20.3)	92 (26.7)	143 (41.4)	2.0
9.	Persuasion strategy	59 (17.1)	45 (13.0)	121 (35.1)	120 (34.9)	2.1
	Grand Mean					**2.0**

The distributions on table 3 reveals that respondents were of the view that authorities of tertiary institutions adopted several strategies for conflict management to tackle students' unrest. Such strategies such as dialogue, emergency, prevention among others, are captured in the table. However, the distribution also shows that ad-hoc and persuasion strategies were seldomly used.

Research Question Two: What makes conflict management strategies adopted to tackle students' unrest effective?

Table 4: Showing why conflict management strategies adopted are effective for tackling students' unrest.

Conflict management strategies adopted by authorities of tertiary institutions are effective because they:

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean
10.	Make communication processes easier.	130 (37.7)	110 (31.9)	55 (15.9)	50 (14.5)	2.9
11.	Engender motivation for change.	124 (35.9)	133 (38.6)	60 (17.4)	28 (8.1)	3.0
12.	Lead to better understanding of issues.	132 (38.3)	121 (35.1)	58 (16.8)	34 (9.9)	3.0
13.	Lead to better agreement on resolutions.	152 (44.1)	134 (38.8)	46 (13.3)	13 (3.8)	3.2
14.	Create harmony in schools.	128 (37.1)	103 (29.9)	54 (15.7)	60 (17.4)	2.9
15.	Involve regular academic activities.	109 (31.6)	126 (36.5)	60 (17.4)	50 (14.5)	2.9
16.	Ensures flexibility in actions.	80 (23.2)	167 (48.4)	72 (20.9)	26 (7.5)	2.9
17.	Ensures lesser stress on management.	97 (28.1)	136 (39.4)	58 (16.8)	54 (15.7)	2.8
18.	Ensures mutual aspect between authorities and students.	154 (44.6)	120 (34.9)	34 (9.9)	37 (10.7)	3.1
	Grand Mean					**3.0**

Respondents' opinions in table 4 reveal that conflict management strategies adopted by tertiary institutions authorities were effective because of several reasons which include but not limited to their ability to make communication processes easier, gave room for motivation of students, leads to better understanding,

created harmony in schools, involved regular academic activities among others.

Research Question Three: Which of the conflict management strategy adopted by the authorities of tertiary institutions to tackle students' unrest produces the best result?

Table 5: Showing conflict management strategies adopted by authorities of tertiary institutions that produce the best result:

Conflict management strategies adopted by authorities of tertiary institutions that produce result include:

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean
19.	Dialogue strategy	141 (40.9)	120 (34.8)	67 (19.4)	17 (4.9)	3.1
20.	Force	97 (28.1)	78 (22.6)	128 (37.1)	42 (12.2)	2.6
21.	Emergency	88 (25.5)	98 (28.4)	145 (42.0)	14 (4.1)	2.8
22.	Prevention	128 (37.1)	112 (32.5)	74 (21.4)	31 (9.0)	3.0
23.	Mediation	116 (33.6)	138 (40.0)	62 (17.9)	29 (8.4)	3.0
24.	Persuasion	122 (35.4)	98 (28.4)	70 (20.3)	55 (15.9)	2.8
25.	Participatory	120 (34.8)	101 (29.3)	64 (18.6)	60 (17.4)	2.8
26.	Ad-hoc	72 (20.9)	84 (24.3)	87 (25.2)	102 (29.6)	2.3
27.	Collaboration	137 (39.7)	123 (35.7)	56 (16.2)	29 (8.4)	3.1
	Grand Mean					**2.0**

Table 5 shows that specific conflict management strategies that have produced the best of results in terms of arresting students' unrest in tertiary institutions. Respondents identify them as dialogue, force, emergency, prevention, mediation, participatory, ad-hoc and collab oration among others. This implies that a good number of the strategies are functional when it come to addressing students' unrest in tertiary institutions.

Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Some conflict management strategies adopted by authorities of tertiary institutions have not been significantly effective in tackling students' unrest.

To test hypothesis one, the chi square (χ^2) statistic was used

.Table 6, item 10:

Variable	Item statement	Agree	Disagree	Total
	Conflict management strategies adopted by authorities of tertiary institutions are effective because they make communication easier.			
Female		**122 (135.4)**	**55 (284.6)**	**420**
Male		**118 (158.6)**	**50 (333.4)**	**492**
Total		**345**	**618**	**912**

Table summary of chi – square (χ^2) test

χ^2cal.	χ^2crit.	P	Degree of Freedom	Remark
0.11	**3.841**	**0.05**	**1**	**Accept Ho1**

Since the chi-square calculated value is less the than the critical value, we accept the null hypothesis which states that some conflict management strategies such persuasion and ad-hoc, adopted by authorities of tertiary institutions have not been significantly effective in tackling students' unrest and reject the alternative hypothesis which states otherwise.

Summary of Findings

- It was found that authorities of tertiary institutions in Delta state adopt several conflict management strategies to tackle students' unrest.
- It was equally found that a good number of the conflict management strategies adopted by tertiary institutions authorities to curb students' unrest were effective for several reasons such as making communication easier, but persuasion and ad-hoc strategies were found not to be effective.
- The further revealed that some of the strategies adopted by authorities of tertiary institution to curbing students' unrest such as dialogue and collaboration were more effective than others.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that authorities of tertiary institutions in Delta state adopted several conflict management strategies to tackle students' unrest. This finding is in line with the views of Egboluche (2013) which maintain that most tertiary institutions authorities find always find ways to curbing students' unrest before it escalates and create more problems within and / or sometimes outside the system.

It was also discovered that a good number of the strategies adopted to manage conflict among students in tertiary institutions were effective because, they created rooms for participation, understanding, harmonious relationship and made communication easier between school authorities and students. This result coincided with the positions of Anho (2009) and (Alimba, 2008) which assert that a couple of conflict management strategies adopted by authorities of tertiary institutions seem to work well in terms of addressing students' unrest in most cases due to their abilities to making communications easier among other reasons.

The study further found that among the numerous strategies adopted by authorities of tertiary institutions, some are identified to be more effective in resolving students' related conflicts in Delta state. This finding equally agrees with the views of Gaya (2006) and Hajek (2013) which holds that dialogue, persuasion, collaboration, and participatory strategies appear to be more effective in cribbing students' unrest in tertiary institutions.

Summary of the Study

This study was carried out to establish the conflict management strategies adopted by

authorities of tertiary institutions to curbing students' unrest. Three research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select a total of 360 respondents from four tertiary institutions in Delta state as the sample of the study. Researchers made structured questionnaire of 29 items was use for data collection. Validation of the instrument was carried out by two research experts from Departments of Educational Foundations and Educational Psychology in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba Delta state. The observations were incorporated into the final draft copy of the questionnaire. Researchers alongside three research assistants distributed copies of the questionnaire to respondents and retrieved them immediately after completion of the instruments.

Data collected were analysed using frequency counts, percentage, and mean scores. However, the hypothesis raised was tested with chi-square statistical tool to ascertain it acceptance or rejection. Results show that authorities of tertiary institutions in Delta state adopt several conflict management strategies to tackle students' unrest; some of such strategies were effective for several reasons while persuasion and ad-hoc approaches were not effective in curbing students' unrest.

Conclusion

The focus of this study was to find out conflict management strategies adopted by authorities of tertiary institutions in Delta state to tackle students' unrest. Several processes were involved to achieve this. For instance, respondents were selected through randomized approach as sample of the study. Questionnaire was designed by researchers and used for data collection. The study however, revealed that authorities of tertiary institutions in Delta state have adopted several conflict management strategies to tackling students' unrest. A good number of such strategies adopted were found to be effective in arresting students' unrest in tertiary institutions although some such as persuasion and ad-hoc strategies were ineffective in curbing unrest in tertiary institutions. However, the need to adopt effective conflict management strategies for resolving conflict and other forms of students' unrest in schools. This would go a long way in creating a very conducive teaching and learning environment in schools and motivates students to perform well in their academic endeavours.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

- Authorities of tertiary institutions in Delta state should give preference to conflict management strategies that produce effective result in tackling students' unrest.
- Students' representatives should be allowed to participate actively in taking decisions on the best conflict management strategies to adopt for tackling students' unrest.
- Authorities of tertiary institutions should be encouraged to jettison the use of persuasion and ad-hoc strategies to tackling students' unrest as these may escalate the situation.

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Certification
This is to certify that this project entitled: A survey of conflict management strategies used to tackle students' unrest in tertiary institutions in Delta state Nigeria, sponsored by TETFUND was carried out by Onyema, P. C., Momodu, B. E and Erondu, C. N. the completed study was presented to Research and Publications Directorate, Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba Delta state.

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