

## **Emerging Trends in Workplace Conflict and Conflict Resolution in the Nigerian University System**

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**ABSTRACT:** The research is a case analysis of the trends of workplace conflict in the Nigerian University system. This is backed up with a survey of current conflict issues in the system. The major source of conflict in the system was ethnic/communal conflict. Arranged in order of importance, other forms of conflict found in the Nigerian University System were oriented towards leadership, labour, personality, financial, role and ideological (disagreement about values). The impacts of conflict on the Nigerian University System were many. It has affected institutional development and research output negatively. The rating of Nigerian universities globally is not satisfactory. In year 2012, no Nigerian University made it to list of best 400 universities in the world. Union/Labour oriented conflicts have over the years truncated university academic calendars and created serious frustration for students who overstay their residencies and academic staff who could not find time to go on vacation as they struggle to capture lost time through strikes. It has also been discovered that many workers do not put in their best because of the discomfort arising from one conflict situation or the other. It was equally found that there are no solid mechanisms for workplace conflict resolution in the Nigerian university system. Many conflict situations are ignored. Nevertheless, it is recommended that proper attention should be paid by the operators of the universities to stem the adverse effects of conflict. Conscious efforts should be invested to manage conflicts especially the pervasive one that take communal dimension. The provision of basic facilities required in the work place and effective communication are also recommended as part of strategy for the management of conflicts in Nigerian Universities. Some models in conflict management were highlighted for adoption by both the leaders and individuals in the system.

**KEYWORDS:** workplace conflict, conflict management, conflict resolution.

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### **I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The “Nigerian University system” represents the set of universities established in its geographical space and their affiliated colleges. “Universities are basically sites and systems of knowledge production” (Manuh, Gariba & Budu , 2007). Therefore they serve as factories for the production of quality manpower required for the technological, economic, political and social development of a nation. The unique characteristic of the Nigerian University System is that they are governed by individual laws but with a co-ordinating body established by federal laws called National Universities Commission (NUC). The Nigerian University System has evolved from the establishment of the University College Ibadan in 1948 and the first full-fledged university in 1960 to the present where there are 128 universities.

Conflict is a natural phenomenon. Wherever persons of diverse backgrounds congregate, whether in a workplace, group or association, conflict is bound to occur. This is more so, when there are expectations to be fulfilled by the persons concerned. This may be more intense when attainments of such expectations are possible through satisfying certain conditions. Conflict situations may be so rife when such persons are meant to stay together overtime pursuing set goals or targets which may be personal or corporate.

The Nigerian University System is a specific setting where workplace conflict takes different dimensions. The manifestation of conflict in the system started from the quest to satisfy the “hunger for higher education” in the colonial era when the chances for admission and employment were very minimal. The competition for scarce resources in the wider society was soon to gate-crash into the universities. This was so because the acquisition of higher education was a sure guarantee for one to fit into the colonial economy after graduation. Though conflict took different forms, the most outstanding conflict in the early days in the Nigerian University workplace took communal colouration. It was discovered that communal

associations proliferated the universities such as they were in the urban areas where “intra-class and inter-individual socio-economic competition began to be translated into competition among communal unions” Nnoli (1980: 140). Otite and Ogionwo (1979: 363) argued that one of the principal sources of conflict in the present day is the growing inequality in the distribution of resources among societies and within societies. As they put it, “most people enter into social relations in pursuit of their own interests – to extract as much from the relationship as possible. Invariably, the interests of the two sides are in conflict – they both want the same scarce resources ...” (Otite & Ogionwo: 363-364). They also adduced the point that conflicts always exist in relationships because people who enter into relations come from different social environments. Today, the communal associations are still very prominent in the universities and in most cases act as the hob on which internecine workplace conflict revolves.

In recent time, union/labour oriented conflicts have been usually resolved through the instrumentality of collective bargaining at the apex level involving representatives of all universities funded by the government (State and Federal). The privately owned universities have not been involved so far. They are therefore not part of the universities covered in this research.

### **1.1 Importance of the Research**

It is apparent that proper attention has not been paid to the issue of workplace conflict in the Nigerian University System. Social Scientists have focused much on political and social conflicts in the wider society without narrowing down to the institutions. In as much as the university environment influences the orientation of future leaders, managers, and members of the society, it is important to understand the conflict situations in the system and proffer ways of reducing their impact. By so doing, the system will experience an atmosphere of relative harmony that will be conducive for the workers to unleash their potentials and enhance productivity and for the stakeholders to realize their expectations. We know that conflict around work and organizations is particularly important as it touches the lives of practically every individual including those indirectly connected to the workplace.

### **1.2 Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this research is to share the experiences of the researchers in the Nigerian University System where they have worked for between 25 and 23 years respectively. It is their desire to unravel one of the cankerworms beclouding the development of Nigerian universities which is communally oriented conflict. Proper knowledge of this and other types of conflict in the system will therefore enhance policy re-direction particularly on the part of the government (State and Federal) which fund the universities. The expectations of the public and the international community may be dashed if nothing is done in this regard. Moreover, this will stimulate other researchers who may contribute their own quota in related areas. On the other hand, employees, managers and mediators in various conflict situations may find this paper useful as it might enlighten and guide them in their day-to-day activities. The research may also be of value to policy makers and employers of labour. In our view workplace conflict is important though an under-researched issue in the Nigerian University System. The need for research in this crucial area cannot, therefore, be over-emphasized.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

Historical evidence has shown that tertiary education came into Nigeria in 1932 to satisfy the desire to produce requisite manpower for colonial governance. Thereafter, the University College Ibadan was established in 1948, followed by 5 full-fledged indigenous universities established from 1960 and presently we have 128 universities. The original observed trend was for the ethnic groups to organize themselves to compete for jobs and leadership in the institutions which has given rise to inter-ethnic conflicts and mutual suspicion in the workplace.

One may ask whether this trend has phased out or abated with the rate of modernization and multiplication of universities in the country. Furthermore, are the Nigerian universities developing like their counterparts all over the world and if not has the continuous ethnic mistrust and disharmony affected their development? What were the emerging trends in workplace conflict in the Nigerian University System? Are there deliberate and effective procedures or mechanisms put in place to resolve the conflicts? What are the implications of the incessant or unabated conflicts in the system?

### **1.4 Methodology**

The researchers made use of both the primary and secondary sources of data. They relied on historical records and documents on the University System in Nigeria as well as data collected through

survey questionnaires on the current conflict issues in the Nigerian University System. The questionnaires were administered on samples of individuals from the 27 Federal and 36 State-owned universities. A representative sample of 15 Federal and 20 State Universities were covered. Specifically, the questionnaires were administered on the Heads of Personnel Units, Labour (Union) Leaders and top Management Staff of the sampled universities. In each university, the Head of Personnel Unit, three Union Leaders and three top Management Staff were selected. It was assumed that these groups should have the key facts about conflict issues in the system as they usually play very active role in conflict matters. The results of the questionnaires were presented on tables and analyzed with simple pie charts.

## **II. THEORETICAL BASE OF WORKPLACE CONFLICT**

According to Honeyman, "Workplace conflict includes any type of conflict which takes place within a workplace or among workers, potentially including conflict between employees out of work hours"(www.crinfo.org/Ck-Essays/ck-workplace-conflict.jsp). Conflict means different things to different people. While some may define conflict as involving fighting, war, trade embargos and so on, for others it may be a difference in opinion, perspective or personality. This makes conflict a broad concept. It may or may not involve the employer as a party; it may be between two or more employees.

Conceptually, there is hardly anyone in the workplace who has not been exposed to a workplace conflict at one time or another. The concept is almost universally relevant. It is a common view that few understand the intricate distinctions between types of workplace conflict, which heavily influences how they are actually handled in contemporary life (CRInfo Version VI, 2010). Conflict commonly exists between employees – supervisors and employees – employees. It is argued that whether a supervisor is not satisfied with an employee's performance or employees are competing against one another over incentives, it seems as though conflict in some shape or form is engrained within the workplace. Conflict is seen as a fact of life, normal and natural part of any workplace. When it occurs there is a tendency for morale to be lowered, an increase in absenteeism and decreased productivity (University of Colorado Boulder). It is summed up that since conflict is essentially a condition of imbalance residing within us caused by our perceptions of situations, we can end conflict through disempowering our ego, which is the driving force behind our mental perceptions, and simply allow situations to be. It has been estimated that managers spend between 20 and 25% of their time managing conflict (Thomas, 1992; University of Colorado). There is ample evidence that conflict and conflict management at work substantially influences individual, group and organizational effectiveness, as well as wellbeing (Spector and Jex, 1998; De Dreu et al, 1999). Mullin estimates that employers lose \$300 billion dollars every year because of stress-related conflict in the workplace. It is true that "the longer workplace conflicts fester, the bigger they grow and the more stress they create" (Levinson, 2011). On the other hand, "if conflict is not managed, it can become overwhelming and breakdown the lines of communication in an organization" (Dinkin). As Dinkin continues, "if there's a lot of anger and mistrust, teams can't work effectively. Conflicts create a lot of inefficiency in organizations". We also share Dinkin's view that the number of workplace conflict increases when the economy is weak and jobs grow scarce. This is because some employees retreat into self-preservation mode, where they could do anything to save their job, including throwing another person under the bus.

The first theoretical construct that stimulated this study is the "Social Identity Theory" established by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979. "Social identity theory asserts that group membership creates in-group/self-categorisation and enhancement in ways that favour the in-group at the expense of the out-group. After being categorized of a group membership individuals seek to achieve positive self esteem by positively differentiating their group from a comparison out-group on some valued dimension"(Haslam, 2001:26-57). McLeod (2008:1) also provides a lucid summary of social identity theory. According to him, social identity is a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s). In order to increase our self-image we enhance the status of the group to which we belong. We can also increase our self-image by discriminating and holding prejudiced views against the out group (that is the group we don't belong to). "Social identity theory states that the in-group will discriminate against the out-group to enhance their self-image" (McLeod, 2008:1). Normally, people see the group they belong to (the in-group) as being different from others (the out-group), and members of the same group as being more similar than they are. This theory analyses whether workplace conflict originates within individuals, among teams or between groups. Regardless of the level of conflict, the theory claims that when incentive structures place importance on individual performance, employees make decisions for their own benefit rather than the group, whereas the opposite is true when incentives reward group behavior (Mullin). Social Identity Theory addresses the ways in which people perceive and categorize themselves. People generally want to create favourable comparisons that make their own groups appear superior (Smith, 2013:2). The departure

of the theory is that individuals form self-conceptions that are based first on personal or self identity and second on collective identity. Personal or self identity refers to our unique, personal qualities such as our beliefs, our abilities and skills, etc. The collective self on the other hand includes all the qualities that arise from being part of a society, culture, family, groups, clubs, etc (AlleyDog.com)

In a simplified language, this theory asserts that we must do more than study the psychology of individuals as individuals, but must understand how, when and why individuals define themselves in terms of their group memberships and how these memberships as a consequence affect the behavior of employees within organizations.

The second theoretical framework adopted for this paper is socio-cognitive conflict theory. Socio-cognitive theory (SCT) was developed from social learning theory by Albert Bandura in the 1960s. The unique feature of SCT is the emphasis on social influence and its emphasis on external and internal social reinforcement. SCT considers the unique way in which individuals acquire and maintain behavior, while also considering the social environment in which individuals perform the behavior. The theory takes into account a person's past experiences which factor into whether behavioural action will occur. People's past experiences influence reinforcements, expectations and expectancies in specific behaviours and the reason why they engage in such behaviours (sph.bu.edu/otlt/MPH-modules/SB—SB721-models5-html). Socio-cognitive conflict theory models show how employees react to differences in standards and judgments and how they conform to group opinions. A 1989 study by Nemeth and Staw showed that minority dissent in a group causes the majority, to doubt its assumptions and search for new information. According to Doise & Mugny (1978:182-183), dissent occurring during group or peer learning favours cognitive development and knowledge acquisition. The theory argues that dissent with one or several partners over a task in which learning is concerned may stimulate task-related cognitive activity and result in progress.

In another perspective, Steve (2008) advocates that the method of handling conflict in an organizational setting should include Carl Jung's Theory of personality type. This advocacy is premised firstly on the assumption that knowledge of individual differences will help identify the unique abilities that individuals contribute toward the goal of task accomplishment. The theory expresses the view that each of the sixteen personality types has a unique set of strengths or resources that are derived from the specific way in which the particular type processes information and makes decisions. Secondly, there is the assumption that knowledge of individual differences when attributed to differences in personality type can help reduce conflict by redirecting potential sources of misunderstanding. Steve concludes that "through knowledge and understanding of psychological type preferences when conflict does occur it can be diagnosed and attributed to naturally occurring type differences. Within the content of type theory blaming and other negative elements of conflict can be managed" (Paladin Exe.com, retrieved on October 26, 2012).

A survey of causes for workplace conflict includes personality or style differences and personal problems such as substance abuse, child care issues, and family problems. In another dimension it includes organizational factors such as leadership, management, budget, and disagreement about core values. On the primary causes of workplace conflict, University of Colorado Boulder cites poor communication, different values, differing interests, scarce resources, personality clashes and poor performance.

Furthermore, there are still other issues that could cause conflict. It is reported that about 96% of human resource professionals and 80% of executives said workplace romances are dangerous as they are capable of leading to conflict. The public display of affection in an organization can make co-workers uncomfortable and generate accusations of favouritism and engender passive aggressive behavior. Beyond the above causes, it has been recognized that in an increasingly globalized world, cultural conflict might easily arise when employees from different backgrounds try to work together. Cultural conflict stems from incompatible or seemingly incompatible-cultural values, norms and practices. This can originate from unconscious prejudice or different methods of achieving objectives, as well as intentional disrespect (Council of Europe, 2008). "These misunderstanding or hostilities can create an unpleasant work environment without proper mediation" (Ford 2012).

Addressing the effects of workplace conflict, Fiore (2012:1), says it leads to decreased productivity, increased stress among employees, hampered performance, high turnover rate, absenteeism and at its worst, violence and death. Wikipedia links unresolved conflict in the workplace to miscommunication which could be as a result of confusion or refusal to cooperate, quality problems, missed deadlines or delays, increased stress among employees, reduced creative collaboration and team problem solving, disruption of workflow, decreased customer satisfaction, distrust, split camps and gossip.

Other undesirable effects of conflict revealed in various studies are unproductive use of valuable time and in this regard, it was estimated that managers spend between 25% and 40% of their time dealing with employee conflict; inflated health care since stress is recognized as an unhealthy by-product of unmanaged conflict; and increased legal fees. A 2005 Fullbright & Jaworski survey quoted by Fiore showed that 9 out of 10 American companies are involved in some type of litigation. According to Adeoti (2002:4), “the social cost of conflict is so enormous that a serious manager will do all within his capacity to discover the best strategy for conflict resolution. In the case of tertiary education, unsettled conflict has serious implication on the number of years the students will spend in the universities as well as financial commitment of their parents. It also has implication on the image of the universities abroad....”

Coming to conflict resolution, Susan Heathfield (2012) outlines the following steps. First, she suggests that the mediator should meet with the antagonists together in such a way that each should be allowed to summarize the point of view, without comment or interruption by the other party. Secondly, ask each participant to describe specific actions they would like to see the other party take that would work well. Thirdly, the supervisor should own some of the responsibilities for helping the employees resolve their conflict. Fourthly, assure both parties that you have every faith in their ability to resolve their differences and get on with their successful contributions within your shared organization.

Generally, she agrees that mediating a conflict is challenging, but the manager or supervisor should see it as a role beholding his/her territory. The manager’s willingness to intervene, she says, sets the stage for his or her success.

One of the conflict management theories is the “Dual Concern Theory”. De Deru, C.K.W. et al (2001:646-649) explained that the theory “argues that conflict management is a function of high or low concern for self, combined with high or low concern for others.” Where there is high concern for self and low concern for others, it results in a preference for **forcing** focused on imposing one’s will on others. Forcing, they explained, involves threats and bluffs, persuasive arguments, and positional commitments. On the other hand, low concern for self and high concern for others is said to result in a preference for **yielding**, which is oriented towards accepting and incorporating others will. This will give rise to unilateral concessions, unconditional promises, and offering help. Furthermore, De Deru, et al (2001) explained that low concern for self and others will result in a preference for **avoiding**, which involves reducing the importance of the issues, and attempts to suppress thinking about the issues. Another level they explained is high concern for self and others which produces a preference for **problem solving**, which is oriented towards an agreement that satisfies both own and others’ aspirations as much as possible.

### III. PRESENTATION DATA:

The data collected through the sample survey in the selected universities were presented below:

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents by category of university officials:**

Category	No. of Questionnaire distributed	No. Returned	Percentage
Heads of Personnel Units	35	30	85.7
Labour/Union Leaders	105	95	90.5
Top Management Staff	105	90	85.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>87.8</b>

Source: Survey 2013.

On the whole, 245 questionnaires were distributed while 215 (87.8%) were returned.

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents on the sources of conflict in the Nigerian University System**

Variables	Frequency
Ethnic/Communal source of conflict	95
Leadership controversy	65
Labour-oriented sources of conflict	55
Personality factors	9
Financial/Resources factors	9
Role conflict	5
Ideological conflicts	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>242</b>

Source: Survey 2013

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents on the negative effects/impacts of conflict on the universities:**

Variables	Frequency
Institutional Development	203
Goal Attainment/Research output	210
Global Rating/Image	205
Workers Moral/Motivation	205
Students' Graduation Rate	215
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,038</b>

Source: Survey 2013

**Table 4: Distribution of respondents on the existence of conflict management Strategies in the system:**

Variable	Frequency			
	Yes	%	No	%
Established institutional procedures available	120	58.5	85	41.5
Attitude to conflict is that of acceptance	5	2.4	200	96.6
Attitude to conflict is confrontational	205	95.3	10	4.7
Conflict is often ignored	165	76.7	50	23.3
There is quick response time to conflict	35	16.3	180	83.7

Source: Survey 2013

#### IV. DATA ANALYSIS/DISCUSSIONS:

Figure 1 shows the sources of conflicts observed in the Nigerian University System. A very significant degree of respondents indicated that communal or ethnic-oriented conflicts were pervasive in the system. The trend of communal or ethnic-oriented conflicts has remained upward irrespective of the age of university education in Nigeria which is now about 53 years using the baseline of 1960 when the first full-fledged indigenous universities came on board. This was followed by leadership controversy. There appears to be a rat race to lead in the universities which generates serious conflicts among those who offer themselves for leadership on the one hand and their opponents and their supporters on the other. The third significant source of conflict was labour-oriented conflict. Since 1981 when the first Academic Staff Union strike in the Nigerian University system took place, the system had not remained stable. In 1992, 2003 and 2007 respectively, the country witnessed protracted strikes in the University System, involving both Academic and Non-Teaching Staff Unions.

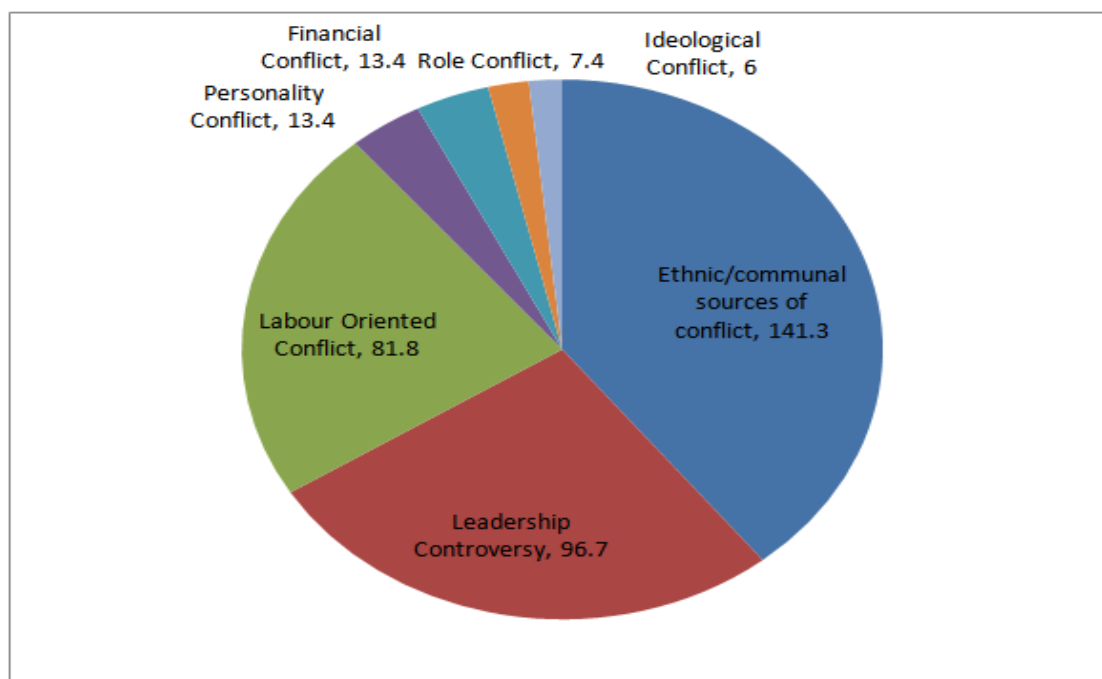


Figure 1: Pie Chart Showing sources of Conflict in Nigerian University System

Figure 2 shows the negative effects/impacts of conflicts on the Nigerian University System. It was observed that students' graduation rate has been seriously hampered in the system. Many students have had to overstay their residencies due to frequent conflicts in the system. This was followed by lowered goal attainment or research output as well as low global image or rating of the universities. In year 2012, no Nigerian university made it to the best 400 universities in the world ([www.usnews.com/education/worlds-best-universities-rankings/top-400-universities-in-the-world](http://www.usnews.com/education/worlds-best-universities-rankings/top-400-universities-in-the-world)). It was also discovered that workers morale/motivation has been influenced negatively while overall institutional development was not as it should be. Many Nigerian universities lack basic facilities that they should ordinarily have such as classrooms, lecture theatres, laboratories, etc. due to low funding by the proprietors (the government).

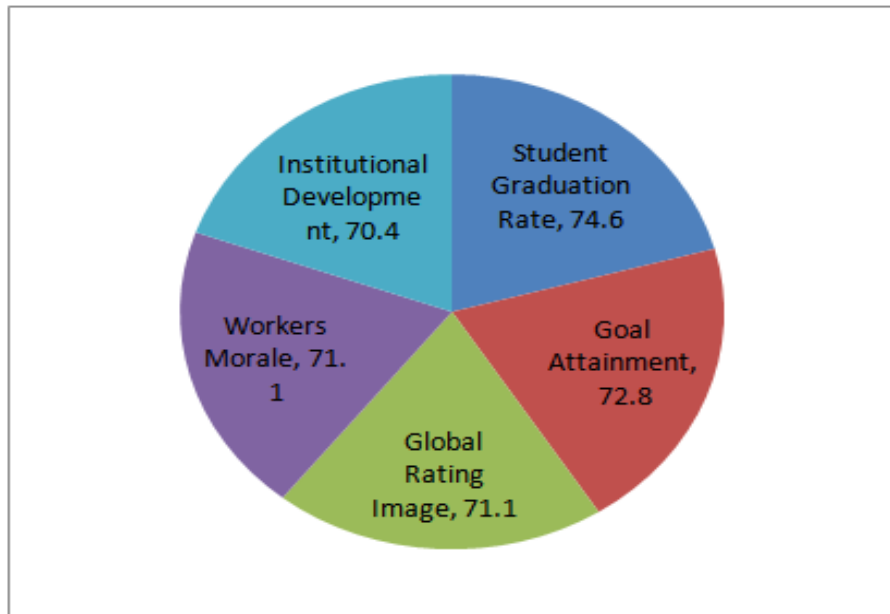


Figure 2: Pie Chart Showing the Negative effects/Impacts of Conflict on the Nigerian University System

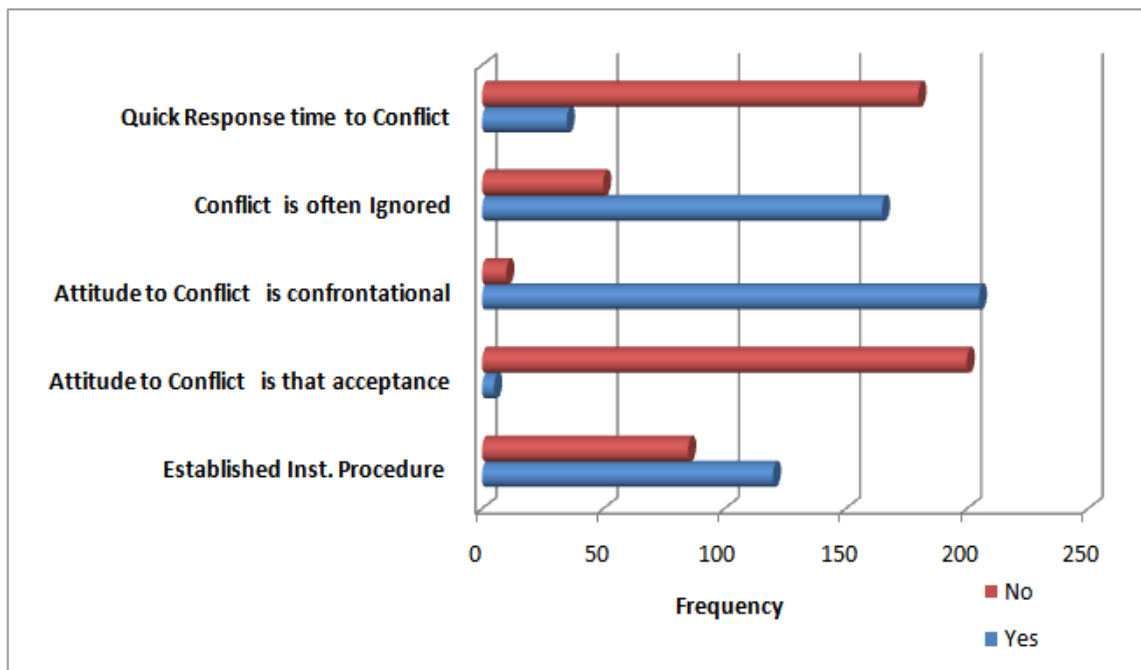


Fig 3: Bar Chart showing Distribution of Respondents on the existence of Conflict Management Strategies.

Fig 3 shows that conflict management strategies and attitude to conflict in the system were very weak. Although institutional procedures/mechanisms for conflict resolutions were available, they were not backed up with the right attitude to conflict. Conflict was not accepted as a normal manifestation in the universities. There was high tendency to regard conflict as a confrontation (especially labour-oriented conflicts). There had been occasions when workers were denied their pay by their employers for getting involved in one form of conflict or the other. There were evidences when the government that owned the universities would bluntly refuse to negotiate with the Labour Unions by ignoring the conflicts. At one critical occasion in 2003, the President of Nigeria then went on the National Television to announce that he would not negotiate with the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) again, thereby escalating the face-off between the Union and the government at that time. The response time to conflict in the system had not been quick. Most Labour-oriented conflicts usually start with warning strikes of either one day or one week by the unions as the case may be and it had been observed that the managers of the system hardly respond quickly enough to pre-empt such threats to conflicts until they degenerate into protracted conflicts.

#### **V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:**

The research findings placed communal/ethnic conflicts on the highest pedestal in the Nigerian University System. This was followed by leadership controversy. At times, those who want to be leaders in the system would hide under their communal/ethnic cocoon to pursue their ambition. When it did not work out as expected, they would fan the embers of hatred between their own communal/ethnic attachments against those of the leader that would eventually emerge. Another important source of conflict observed in the system was labour-oriented. This, in most cases, masks other sources of conflict because when it degenerates into strike, it draws the attention of the populace thus making it to appear as the major source of conflict. Personality, financial, role and ideological conflicts exist in the system but were not given prominence in our findings.

The most outstanding effect of conflict on the Nigerian University System was its negative effect on students' graduation rate. Other negative effects in order of intensity were lowered goal attainment/research output, global image or rating, workers' morale/motivation and overall institutional development.

One of the conflict management strategy observed in the system includes established institutional procedure/mechanisms used for collective bargaining between Labour Unions and the government or the various institutional top management officers. However, the right attitude to conflict was not observed in the system. Conflict is either not accepted naturally or treated with confrontational stance. Also the response time to conflict issues in the system was not quick.

#### **VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

This paper has attempted to analyse the emerging trends in workplace conflict and conflict resolution in the Nigerian University System. It maintains that though conflict is an inevitable concomitant of human interaction, it is necessary to manage such conflict in the workplace so that productivity will be enhanced. It is expected that this paper will awaken human resource practitioners and researchers in the Nigerian University System to the urgent need to focus proper attention on conflict and conflictual issues in the system. This will elicit sound professional advocacy for their resolution.

Recognizing the fact that conflict is a natural phenomenon, we conclude that the situation in the Nigerian University System is a normal social manifestation. However, communal/ethnic-oriented conflicts which are very rampant in the system should be phasing out in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. The influence of globalization has made multiculturalism an inevitable fact in the global community. Since Nigeria is part of this community, her university workplace should tolerate diversity. The system should therefore unmask the individuals that cover their personal ambitions with communal sentiments, thereby making the system tension-soaked.

The implications of conflict in the system are many. First, it will continue to drag the entire nation backward because research output which gives leverage to technological and scientific development will lag behind. Manpower development in the country will be hampered especially as many students would have to spend more frustrating years to graduate. The cost of education would increase as a result. Another implication is that parents and guardians may be constrained to sending their children and wards abroad for education with the attendant capital flight. From whichever angle one looks at it, a conflict prone university system leaves much to be desired.



The university system should encourage their staff to join professional HRD bodies such as Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPMN), and their international counterparts. Through constant exposure to professional best practices in the field, the system would be transformed overtime. Top Management in the system should be committed in this direction. Such HRD practitioners should be in a position to guide communication in the system to help people realize that conflict could also be healthy to the system. In this wise, HRD Practitioners should mount training on communication and conflict resolution techniques in association with the individual universities or government. This will help people change their perspective on conflict.

On the individual level, we recommend improved communication between one individual and the other. Individuals should show high concern for others and low concern for self in order to accommodate them. Destructive conflicts should be minimized by making efforts to spend time in the early stages of such conflicts to manage them. Moreover, employees should be given proper attention in the system to minimize suspicion and role conflicts. Operators of the Nigerian University System should improve their perspective on conflict in order to develop a positive attitude to conflict by seeing it as a normal occurrence in the workplace. Union leaders and top management should always strive to strike a compromise on contentious issues to save the system. Vice- Chancellors or Presidents of universities should not see themselves as lords or representatives of primordial interests who have assumed office to amass wealth and empower those having ethnic or communal affiliation with them. They should rather perceive themselves as father figures and be resolutely committed to the pursuit of excellence and advancement of the frontiers of knowledge, with integrity as their cardinal principle. On their part, labour leaders should learn the primacy of dialogue over strikes. They should always realize that “it is better to jaw-jaw than war-war”.

At the macro level, there is an urgent need for policy redirection on the part of government at both the state and federal levels in order to build confidence in the university workers. An effective machinery backed up by law should be set up that should ensure that conflict issues in the Nigerian University System are arrested at the early stages. Funding problem, which has been a recurring decimal in all nation-wide conflicts in the Nigerian University System should be sorted out with a definite formula. Specific percentages of the annual budgets of the States and Federal Government should be channeled to the development of the universities. This will enable the universities to provide basic facilities for teaching and research. This will also ensure that they are in a position to compete with other universities globally.

Overall, all parties in the Nigerian University Workplace should be geared towards arriving at a common ground in every conflict situation. Objectivity should be a paramount factor in handling conflicts.

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