Conflict management strategies and performance of tertiary institutions in south-south, Nigeria

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A B S T R A C T

This study focused on conflict management strategies and the performance of tertiary institutions in SS-Nigeria. The objectives aimed to determine the relationship and influence of conflict management strategies on the performance of tertiary institutions. Relevant theoretical and empirical works of literature were reviewed while the social identity and socio-cognitive conflict theories were adopted. Survey research was adopted as the study design. Data was sourced in November-2021 from primary sources. Data generated from 162 respondents were analyzed using descriptive, correlation and regression analyses which revealed that all conflict management strategies studied namely competing, accommodating, compromising and collaborating were found to have significant positive relationship with the performance of tertiary institutions aside avoidance strategy which had an inverse relationship. The conflict strategies jointly had a positive effect on the performance of tertiary institutions. The study concludes that conflict management strategies have a significant effect on the performance of tertiary institutions in SS-Nigeria.
Keywords: Conflict Management, Avoiding, Competing, Accommodating, Compromising, Collaborating.
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1. Introduction

Conflict management is the practice of resolving disagreements in such a way that negative outcomes are minimized and positive outcomes are prioritized. This important managerial talent entails a variety of methods based on the situation, as well as negotiating and creative thinking. An organization's ability to minimize interpersonal issues, improve client happiness, and deliver better commercial outcomes can all be improved by correctly managing conflict. Workplace conflict does not always imply that one or more employees are to blame, however, this may be the case in some circumstances. If your employees are questioning the status quo and pushing for changes that they believe will benefit the company, this could suggest that your company has a high degree of employee engagement. According to Shanka and Thuo (2017) and Aja (2013), conflict is the opposition or struggle between two or more forces that arise from the pursuit of incompatible aims or a group of opposing viewpoints. Oboegbulem and Alfa (2013), for example, see conflict as a fight over values or claims to status, authority, and limited resources, in which the opposing parties' goals include not just gaining the desired values, but also eliminating, neutralizing, or injuring their adversaries. Employees who are comfortable challenging one another and believing that their problems will be fairly resolved by the organization are likely to engage in conflict. When conflict management is done correctly, the questions posed during the process might potentially help a business learn more. According to Adilo (2019), conflict occurs in organizations and can occur between individuals, between individuals and groups, or between groups. While conflict is commonly regarded as dysfunctional, it can also be constructive since it can force a problem to be presented from various angles.

The university as a whole is made up of people with various needs, interests, choices, ambitions, and personalities, all of whom have varied aims and expectations from the university. Students, academic and non-academic personnel, management, unions, and other stakeholders are among them.

Individual differences among employees in a company often lead to friction, which can be counterproductive and lead to inefficiency, ineffectiveness, and, in some situations, the company's closure. The key purposes and activities of university education are teaching, research, the transmission of current and new information, community service, and serving as a knowledge reservoir (Chiekezie, Dibua and Chima, 2016). Carrying out these responsibilities causes friction inside and among various groups of persons in the university community. Support personnel who are not academics may feel undervalued or even marginalized by academic staff. In carrying out their tasks of recruitment, admission, examination, and providing welfare services to employees and students, management frequently clashes with students, staff, and other stakeholders. Academics, once again, have a difficult dual task of teaching and research. This dual job could cause a lot of conflict in terms of the individual's time, energy, and dedication. The goals of the pupils are possibly the most complicated of all. They have internal conflict as a heterogeneous group, but they must comply with learning certain things to obtain a degree (Chiekezie, Dibua and Chima, 2016).

In order to create safer and more supportive educational learning settings, effective conflict management takes center stage. When differing perceptions or opinions are inherently conflicting, conflict arises (Bano, Ashraf, & Zia, 2013). Conflict, according to Adhiambo and Enose (2011) and Shanka and Thuo (2017), causes tension and discomfort because of the fear of the unknown; as a result, it is a dismal and unpleasant state of affairs for all parties involved. Conflict disrupts the teaching and learning process, but if thoroughly investigated and managed, it can lead to peaceful cooperation between instructors and school administrators. Employee conflict is unavoidable in any firm. If appropriately managed, it can act as a catalyst for change and have a beneficial impact on employee happiness and organizational success. Unmanaged conflict, on the other hand, has a detrimental influence on both employee happiness and job performance. When bosses dismiss workplace disagreement, they transmit the message

that poor work performance and unacceptable behavior are acceptable (Abdul and Sehar, 2015).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Conflict in the workplace has long piqued people's interest and sparked heated debate. Dealing with conflicts in companies has long been seen as the primary obligation of managers, who frequently took a firm stance on how to handle them; however, companies that approach conflicts in this manner fail to recognize that conflict is a natural part of organizational life, with its own set of benefits and costs (Adilo, 2019; Ebe and Osibanjo, 2014). Conflict is unavoidable in any organization, and tertiary education is no exception. When there are no defined procedures to utilize in the management of conflicts in some tertiary institutions in order to maximize good impacts while reducing negative effects, it becomes concerning. This is significant because ineffective and inefficient conflict management in tertiary institutions will almost certainly lead to ineffectiveness and inefficiency, particularly in the areas of academic proficiency, as well as the constant closure of these tertiary institutions.

Mismanagement of university politics, a lack of dispute resolution procedures such as discussion and arbitration, and rivalry between competing interest groups or people for power, authority, and leadership could all contribute to these losses. As a result, educational standards in some of these institutions are suspect. In rare circumstances, the academic schedule has been disturbed, resulting in the cancellation of some academic sessions. Academic proficiency among students has plummeted, and various forms of examination misconduct are on the rise. The public today criticizes higher institutions of producing graduates who lack the necessary character and learning skills to contribute to the nation's growth and development.

Given the above problems, this study becomes necessary as it aims to investigate the relationship and influence of effective conflict management on the performance of selected tertiary institutions in south-south Nigeria.

Several studies have embarked on investigating the effects and relationship of some of the above-mentioned conflict strategies with the performance of Nigerian tertiary institutions; however, none to the best of my extensive inquiries and knowledge have considered the relationship and influence of these conflict strategies on the internal factors category of performance of Polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria hence the basis for this study.

1.2   Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship and influence of conflict management strategies on the performance of tertiary institutions in south-south Nigeria. Conflict management indicators used in this study were collaborating, competing, avoiding, accommodating, and compromising strategies while the internal factors category was considered as the measurement indicator for performance. The specific objectives are:

i.   To assess the relationship between conflict management strategies and the performance of tertiary institutions in south-south Nigeria.

ii.   To assess the influence of conflict management strategies on the performance of tertiary institutions in south-south Nigeria.

1.3   Research Questions

i.   Is there any correlation between conflict management strategies and the performance of tertiary institutions in south-south Nigeria?

ii.   Is there any influence of conflict management strategies on the performance of tertiary institutions in south-south Nigeria?

1.4   Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were formulated in line with the objectives of the study.

Ho1:   There is no correlation between conflict management strategies and the performance of tertiary institutions in south-south Nigeria.

Ho2:   There is no influence of conflict management strategies on the performance of tertiary institutions in south-south Nigeria.

1.5   Scope and Limitations of the study

The scope is limited to the 5 conflict management strategies while the internal factors category (academic performance of students with high graduation rates, the attraction of research funds, stability and security of lives and property, adequate human and physical resources, etc.) was considered as the performance indicator measure for tertiary institutions. All Government polytechnics (state and federal) from Akwa Ibom state (Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot-Ekpene, and Federal Polytechnic, Ukana) and Rivers state (Ken Saro-Wiwa Polytechnic, Bori) were selected for the study through random sampling from south-south states in Nigeria. Furthermore, a total of 208 questionnaires were shared to all unit and sub-unit heads (academic and non-academic) in the selected tertiary institutions out of which only 162 questionnaires were returned. The researcher was limited by his inability to acquire access to the numerous departments that made up the tertiary institutions under investigation, as well as employees' rejection to respond to the questionnaire out of fear. In addition, the study was confined to only public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States hence the findings may not be representative of all tertiary institutions (both private and public) in the country as a result, similar research may be required at other tertiary institutions.

2.0   Review of Related Literature
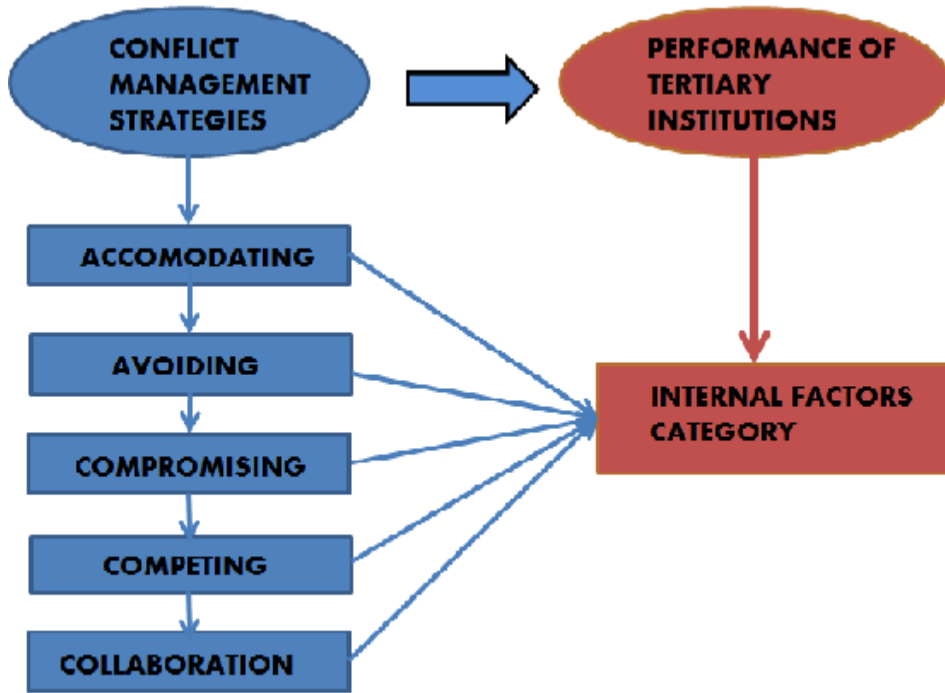
2.1   Conceptual Framework

FIG 1

2.1.1   Performance of Tertiary Institutions

The number of universities in Nigeria has increased dramatically during the last several years. The objective of these tertiary schools is to accommodate educational demands from various sections of the country while also satisfying the country's political structures. As a result, there is increasing competition among institutions (both public and private), and they are all working hard to improve their capacities. Universities must follow rules and regulations and improve their performance by meeting some basic educational standards in accordance with the Nigerian University Commission's (NUC) guidelines. As a result, it is frequently possible to conduct a self-evaluation to learn more about any system flaws. In terms of

quantitative and qualitative methodologies, there are a plethora of ways to assess a university's performance (Soheila, Baratali and Hosseinali, 2012). According to Higgins (1989), performance indicators can be classified into three groups. The first group is linked to internal criteria such as first-year graduation rates, higher-degree success rates, attracting research money, having appropriate people and physical resources, and so on. The second category is concerned with external factors, such as graduate employment acceptance, staff publications, and patents, while the third category is concerned with operational difficulties, such as unit costs, staff/student ratios, and staff workloads. A variety of typical OR/MS problem areas, such as defining service levels for libraries and computer systems, are included in the third category. Some universities' performance was assessed using this three-category system. Subjective measures are an easier way to measure performance in an effective manner, according to Adilo (2019), because they allow the business to conduct benchmarking among firms. Organizations can also use subjective measures to track sales, market share, productivity, customer satisfaction, and product quality. Adilo (2019) went on to say that in 2006, Falshaw and a group of researchers discovered that subjective and objective metrics produce the same results. As a result, using subjective measures in research yields more accurate results. As a result, subjective metrics were used to assess performance in this study. Only the internal factors category (first grouping as mentioned above) was considered as a performance measurement indicator for this study.

2.1.2 Conflict Management Strategies

Conflict in tertiary institutions has been shown to have a good or negative impact on the achievement of institutional goals. Though conflict is frequently perceived as negative, it has the potential to improve corporate performance through promoting organizational innovation and productivity. When disagreements are handled appropriately in the workplace, it leads to the achievement of corporate goals and objectives. If managed properly, conflict can sometimes enhance cooperation and foster

goal fulfillment in any institution. Conflicts among staff, students, institutional and authority figures, and the community, on the other hand, if not adequately managed, could result in irreversible loss of life, property destruction, and interruption of routine academic operations. As a result, the development of better methods for resolving disagreements is critical to any institution's sustainability (Adoga, 2013). According to Rahim (2002), managers adjust their conflict management technique based on the complexity and intensity of the issue, its relevance to each side, and the time and resources required to resolve it. The key features of the five conflict management styles are:

Accommodating strategy: This method is all about placing the demands of the other party ahead of one's own. You let them win and have their way (Rahim, Magner and Shairo, 2000). Accommodation is used when you don't care as much about the problem as the other person, when extending the conflict isn't worth your time, or when you believe you're wrong. This method is all about keeping the peace, not putting in more effort than the problem warrants, and understanding when to pick fights. While it may appear to be a weak option, accommodation can be the most effective way to overcome a minor disagreement and move on to more important matters. The resolver is very cooperative in this method, although it can lead to animosity.

Avoiding strategy: This approach seeks to minimize conflict by ignoring it, eliminating the disputants, or avoiding it in some way (Rahim, 2002). Conflicting team members may be removed from the project, deadlines may be pushed, or workers may be shifted to different departments. If a cool-down period would be beneficial or if you need more time to examine your viewpoint on the issue itself, this might be an effective conflict resolution approach. Avoidance should not, however, be used as a substitute for good settlement; deferring conflict indefinitely can and will result in additional (and larger) disputes in the future (Rahim, 2002).

Compromising strategy: This approach tries to establish a middle ground by urging both sides to give up certain aspects of their desires to reach an

agreement (Thomas et al., 2008). This approach is known as lose-lose since both parties must give up a few items to reach an agreement on the broader issue. This is utilized when there is a time constraint or when a solution must be implemented rather than perfected. Overuse of compromise as a dispute resolution method can lead to resentment, therefore use it wisely.

Competing strategy: This approach rejects compromise and does not give up to other people's opinions or desires. One party is certain about how they believe a matter should be handled, and they will not relent until they get their way (Rahim, Magner and Shapiro, 2000). This might happen in cases where morality mandates a particular course of action, when there isn't enough time to explore another approach, or when an unpopular decision must be made. It can swiftly resolve disagreements, but it has a high risk of lowering morale and productivity. This isn't a style that should be greatly relied upon (Rahim, 2002).

Collaboration Strategy: This approach has the finest long-term effects, but it is also the most difficult and time-consuming to achieve. The requirements and desires of each party are taken into account, and a win-win solution is found so that everyone is satisfied. This frequently entails all parties coming down together, discussing the dispute, and jointly negotiating a solution. This is utilized when it is critical to maintaining all parties' relationships or when the solution will have a big impact (Rahim, 2002).

Whatever strategy a manager uses to manage conflict, the approach he or she takes to resolve disputes is critical. Conflict management is a product of both personality and situation, according to Sakiyo and Mohammed (2016). To successfully handle workplace conflict, managers must notice, assess, and de-escalate crises as they arise. As a result, if a conflict is not successfully managed, the outcome will be negative. According to Sakiyo and Mohammed (2016), Managers utilize 20% of their time handling disagreements, and the implication for tertiary institutions is that the time and effort spent resolving these disagreements may have been better spent on tertiary institutions' developmental and performance operations.

2.3   Theoretical Review

Various theories involving conflict management are the maturity-immaturity theory, socio-cognitive conflict theory, structural theory of conflict, Karl Marx conflict theory, Group Conflict process theory, etc. However, the maturity-immaturity and socio-cognitive conflict theories were applied to this study.

2.3.1   Maturity-Immaturity and Socio-cognitive conflict theories.

This study is based on the Maturity –Immaturity theory as propounded by the social science researcher Argyris in 2017 (Amaeshi, Ugwu and Okoye, 2021). People in their professional life, like those in their personal lives, want to develop and mature with rising degrees of responsibility and opportunity, according to this theory. Many hierarchical businesses, however, break jobs that are linked and interrelated into specializations for the sake of efficiency, giving employees specific scopes and duties that they expect them to accomplish very well. As a result, employees' talents and abilities are not fully utilized. They feel frightened and stifled in their development. This leads to friction and conflict between and within workgroups, as well as inside the company. Employees may develop disinterest and anger on a personal level. Because it directs the attention of all organizational members to the core source of tension and conflict at the individual and group levels, the theory becomes important to this study. It also views the organization as an organic entity that necessitates organizational managers to work as both babysitters and reality counselors to avoid conflict situations by gaining a better grasp of the reasons that cause organizational conflict. According to Argyris, this is capable of lowering tension and conflict in the workplace, resulting in higher production and industrial harmony. The socio-cognitive conflict theory is the second theoretical framework used in this investigation. According to Chiekezie, Dibua, and Chima (2016), Albert Bandura developed a socio-cognitive theory from social learning theory in the 1960s. The emphasis on social impact, as well as external and internal social reinforcement, distinguishes socio-cognitive. The socio-cognitive theory analyzes the distinctive way in which people learn and sustain behaviours,

as well as the social setting in which they do so. The theory takes into consideration a person's previous experiences, which influence whether or not they will act in a certain way. Reinforcements and expectations in specific behaviours, as well as the reasons why people engage in such behaviours, are influenced by people's past experiences. Employees' reactions to variations in standards and judgments, as well as how they adhere to group beliefs, are shown in socio-cognitive conflict theory models, which can have an impact on the organization's performance.

2.4 Empirical review

Nwokolobia, Nwaghodoh, and Abanobi in (2021) investigated conflict management and organizational effectiveness in Nigeria to ascertain if compromising and collaborating strategies had any effect on client/customer satisfaction. The Descriptive survey research design was utilized involving a population study of 15 firms and 200 employees with a sample size of 120 employees. The hypothesis was tested using regression analysis which revealed that conflict management had positive relationship with organizational effectiveness in Nigerian firms. The researchers advised that conflict management strategies be imbibed in organizations to help reduce conflicts.

Amaeshi, Ugwu, and Okoye (2021) used a descriptive survey research design with a sample size of 166 academic staff to investigate the effects of conflict management on organizational performance in Nigeria. The data were examined using descriptive statistics, and the Pearson product-moment coefficient of correlation was used to test the hypotheses and establish the relationship between conflict management practices and their effects on the performance of organizations. The findings revealed that conflict management strategies had a considerable positive impact on organizational performance. According to the findings, power, culture, style, and goal all play important roles in resolving organizational conflicts. As such, private university administrators should establish additional lines of

contact with employees to collect timely input on organizational policies and avoid any conflicts of interest.

Mwaniki and Muathe (2021) looked into the effects of organizational conflict management approaches such as negotiation, mediation, collaboration, and avoidance on employee performance in Kenyan public universities. The research was conducted using a descriptive research approach. Employees from Kenya's designated public universities made up the study's population. Stratified and simple random sampling procedures were used to choose a sample of 160 participants. With the help of SPSS, the collected data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics (ANOVA and regression analysis). In the selected public universities in Kenya, the study discovered a strong positive and substantial relationship between negotiation mediation, teamwork, and employee performance. Avoidance, on the other hand, was found to have a negative and considerable impact on employee performance. Negotiation, mediation, and collaboration were found to have a beneficial impact on employee performance, whereas avoidance had a negative impact as concluded by the study. As a result, the study suggests that public university administrators in Kenya use a combination of these organizational conflict management approaches to get the best results in resolving organizational conflicts.

Using a survey research design, Yusuf and Ibrahim (2019) investigated conflict management tactics and administrative effectiveness in tertiary institutions in the Sokoto metropolitan. The population included students from the area's eight tertiary institutions. A total of 168 academics from four tertiary institutions were chosen as respondents. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the data. On the one hand, the study found a link between conversation, competition, prevention, and communication, and on the other side, administrative effectiveness. It is suggested that higher institutions institutionalize dialogue as a dispute resolution approach since discourse allows team members to learn to think together and tolerate differences, preventing crises and enhancing performance.

Adilo (2019) investigated the relationship between conflict management strategies (negotiation, joint consultation, collective bargaining, and alternative dispute resolution) and organizational performance. The study was designed using a survey research technique. A total of five breweries were investigated. Frequency tables and percentage analyses were used to analyze the data. The hypotheses were put to the test using regression analysis. According to the findings, all of the conflict management strategies investigated had a substantial positive link with organizational performance. Managers should use the conflict management tactics listed above, according to the study, because they help resolve disagreements in the workplace.

Nwadike (2019) used the survey research method on employees of Nigerian Breweries, Plc in the South-East zone of Nigeria to explore the influence of accommodating strategy, avoiding strategy, collaborating strategy, and compromising strategy on organizational performance. The study included a sample of 337 people as participants. The data were analyzed using the Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient and Multiple Regression analysis in SPSS version 21. The results revealed that accommodating, compromising and collaborating strategies had significant positive effects on organizational performance while avoiding strategy had a significant negative effect on organizational performance of Brewery firms in South-East Nigeria. According to the findings, organizations should use collective bargaining to manage conflicts to be more effective in solving organizational problems, and organizations should try to use an inclusive collaborating strategy in conflict management while also attempting to include union leadership/employee representatives in important decisions that affect the workforce.

Conflict management and organizational effectiveness were investigated by Anyakie (2018). In Port Harcourt, data was collected from 98 managers and heads of departments in 16 microfinance institutions. In this study, the purposive sampling strategy was used. Spearman correlation coefficient was

used to evaluate the stated hypothesis via the use of SPSS. Conflict management (collaboration and compromising) and organizational effectiveness (client/customer satisfaction and quality of work-life) are highly associated, according to the findings. The researcher concluded that efficient conflict management will improve proper learning, which will influence organizational effectiveness, and that management should promote effective communication between the management team, subordinates, and clients.

Osakede et al. (2018) investigated conflict management in tertiary institutions in south-western Nigeria to determine the level of stakeholder participation in conflict management at Lagos State University and Adekunle Ajasin University in Ondo State since their establishment, as well as to see if the performance of a conflict management board at the two institutions has improved since their establishment. A survey study design was used, with 500 respondents as the sample size (280 from LASU and 220 from AAUA, respectively). The data was analyzed using the percentage approach and the Chi-square non-parametric technique. Conflict management has encouraged stakeholder participation in decision-making and conflict resolution in the selected universities, according to the findings of the study. In addition, the conflict management boards in LASU and AAUA have made significant progress in terms of crisis management and peacebuilding. The study proposes strong, effective conflict management procedures that will allow stakeholders to participate in institutional decision-making.

Using a survey research approach, Chiekezie, Dibua, and Chima (2016) investigated the association between conflict management and the performance of several selected tertiary institutions in Enugu State, Nigeria. The specific goals were to see how much arbitration improves academic performance and how dialogue can help reduce the incessant closure of selected tertiary institutions in Enugu State. This study drew on both primary and secondary data sources. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson's product-moment correlation. Effective conflict management has a

considerable impact on tertiary institution performance, according to the findings. It was suggested that tertiary institutions use techniques such as arbitration and dialogue, proper use of authority, adherence to rules and regulations, proper institutional structuring, provision of adequate communication networks, and encouraging meaningful stakeholder participation in conflict resolution.

Ndulue and Ekechukwu (2016) assessed the effects of conflict management on the performance of employees at Nigerian Breweries in Lagos state. The study employed a survey research design. A questionnaire was used to obtain data from primary sources. The study lasted from 2005 to 2014, and the results revealed that there is a significant link between conflict management and employee performance in Nigerian Breweries Plc. According to the study, Nigerian Breweries Plc's management should strengthen its conflict management tactics (bargaining, compromise, and forcing) since it improves employee performance.

Sakiyo and Mohammed (2016) investigated staff perceptions of conflict management practices in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The survey research method was utilized, and the frequency counts and mean statistical methods were used in the analysis of research questions, while the analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis. The data show that educational administrators in these institutions use conflict management tactics such as integrating, competing, compromising, smoothing, and avoiding with their students. The report suggests that educational administrators exercise caution when deciding on conflict resolution solutions for their employees.

Olukayode (2015) used data from Nigerian manufacturing organizations to investigate the impact of workplace conflict management on organizational performance. The participants were 250 employees who were chosen using a stratified random sample technique. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire that has been tested. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The empirical

studies revealed a substantial positive link between conflict management tactics (collective bargaining, compromise, and accommodation) and organizational performance using Spearman correlation analysis.

Abdul and Sehar (2015) used Askari Bank Ltd as a case study to look at conflict management and organizational performance. To collect data from a target group of respondents, a formal questionnaire was created and a survey approach was used. The data were analyzed and interpreted using descriptive-analytical approaches such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and variance, as well as factor analysis. The performance of Askari Bank is examined using ratio analysis. The main conclusions are that education has little bearing on respondents' views on Conflict Management Strategies. Similarly, there is no discernible difference in male and female respondents' perspectives on the causes of conflict. Conflict, on the other hand, has a substantial effect on organizational performance.

Using Access Bank Plc as a case study, Ajike et al. (2015) investigated the impact of conflict management on the performance of financial service organizations in Nigeria. In three branches of the bank in Lagos State, a sample size of eighty-one (81) of the bank's various employees was presented questionnaires. The impact of conflict management on Access Bank Plc's organizational performance was investigated using descriptive and regression analysis with SPSS. The study's findings revealed that conflict management and organizational performance had a significant positive association.

Mizanur and Tanjela (2015) investigated the types, nature, causes, and costs of managing conflict, as well as the effects of conflict on individuals and organizations, and organizational performance. Data is collected using a self-administered questionnaire. For this study, survey respondents were chosen from eight different corporate sectors in Bangladesh. A total of 120 questionnaires were provided to the study participants. Intra-personal and inter-personal conflicts are the two most common conflict kinds, according to the findings. Employees and managers both expressed worry that the appearance of conflict does not primarily have a good impact on

organizational performance, but rather has a negative impact on work performance and productivity. However, out of the five most popular conflict resolution tactics, three stood out as the most preferred among managers and other employees: integrating, dominating, and compromising.

Adoga (2013) did a study on Conflicts as Constraints to Effective Management of Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria at the College of Education in Oju, Benue State, Nigeria. Using basic random sampling, a total of 324 individuals were recruited. They discovered that conflict is an inevitable part of human interaction in every organization and that maintaining a cordial relationship between staff and students by school authorities is essential. They also suggested that involving students and trade unions in the decision-making process is the most effective way forward for efficient tertiary institution management.

3.0   Research Methodology

3.1   Research Design

This study used a descriptive survey design to gather extensive factual information on a current occurrence. It's a method for objectively quantifying data and generalizing outcomes from a sample of a target population using statistical means. This method was chosen for the study because it is systematic, scientific, and objective, and it allows for the creation of a hypothesis as well as the collection of numerical data to evaluate it.

3.2   Population and Sampling Technique

The population of this study is made up of unit heads of all government polytechnics (state and federal) from Akwa Ibom state (Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot-Ekpene and Federal Polytechnic, Ukana) and Rivers state (Ken Saro-Wiwa Polytechnic, Bori). The sample size consisted of all the total population size of 208 unit and sub-unit heads (both academic and nonacademic) of the above tertiary institutions however only 162 unit and sub-unit heads formed the sample size being the number of respondents that

returned the questionnaires. The composition of population size of the study is represented in table below.

Table 1 : Selected Polytechnics and Population size of Unit heads

S/NO	Polytechnics	Population Size of Unit Heads
1	Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Ekpene	96
2	Federal Polytechnic, Ukana	29
3	Ken Saro-Wiwa Polytechnic, Bori	83
	Total	208

Source: Field Work 2021

3.3   Data Collection Method

Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The questionnaire used for the primary data collection was validated using reliability tests which resulted in a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.721.

3.4   Model Specification

The theories adopted for the study were the maturity-immaturity and socio-cognitive conflict theories.   The theories suggest that the conflict management variables under study have a relationship with performance and can influence the performance of tertiary institutions.

The correlation model was used to test the null hypothesis one (**Ho₁**) by ascertaining the relationship of each independent variable with the dependent variable as represented by the correlation coefficient formula below:

$$ r = \frac{n(\Sigma xy) - (\Sigma x)(\Sigma y)}{\sqrt{[\, n\Sigma x^2 - (\Sigma x)^2\,][\, n\Sigma y^2 - (\Sigma y)^2\,]}} $$

Where: n = number of pairs of scores, Σxy = sum of the product of paired scores

Σx = sum of x scores, Σy = sum of y scores, Σx² = sum of squared x scores,

Σy^2 = sum of squared y scores.

The multiple regression model as expressed below was used to test the null hypothesis two (**Ho$_2$**) and ascertain the significance of the joint influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

RPEF = f (ACC, AVD, COM, CPT, COL) = Z_0 + Z_1ACC + Z_2AVD + Z_3COM + Z_4CPT + Z_5COL + et

Where RPEF = performance of tertiary institutions, Z_0 = intercept, Z_1 to Z_5 = coefficient of the variables, ACC = accommodating, AVD = avoidance, COM = compromising, CPT = competing, COL = collaboration and et = stochastic term (error term).

SPSS 25 was used to carry out the analyses. The a priori expectations are Z_1, Z_2, Z_3, Z_4, $Z_5 > 0$

4.0   Data Presentation, Findings and Discussion.

Presented below is the data used for the analysis which was sourced from the collated questionnaires retrieved from the respondents in the survey carried out on the selected tertiary institutions.

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive data on the conflict management strategies and performance of higher institutions are presented in this part. The goal of the study is to see how the conflict variables perform in connection with the performance of the tertiary institutions. The table below shows the results of the examination of the individual properties of these variables:

Table 2 :   Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

	Mean	Std. Deviation
PERF	19.98	1.690
AVOID	11.03	1.505
COMPET	15.20	3.156
ACCOMM	17.72	2.537
COMPRO	18.36	2.353
COLLAB	20.93	2.231

Source: Author's Collation from Analysis using SPSS Version 23.0

The table presents the summary of statistics used in the analysis. It provides information on the mean and standard deviation of the measurement indicators utilized in the study. The mean value for the performance of tertiary institutions is 19.98 while the standard deviation is 1.690. Avoiding and competing strategies recorded mean values of 11.03 and 15.20 with standard deviations of 1.505 and 3.156 respectively. Accommodating, compromising and collaborating strategies had 17.72, 18.36, and 20.93 as their mean values with 2.537, 2.353, and 2.231 as their standard deviation readings respectively.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation was used to assess the strength and link between the independent variables in this study. The Pearson correlation coefficient, abbreviated as r, is a measure of the strength of a relationship between paired data. The correlation coefficients are summarized in Table below.

Table 3 :   Correlations Results

	PERF	AVOID	COMPET	ACCOMM	COMPRO	COLLAB
PERF	1	-.493**	.360**	.175*	.112	.032
AVOID	-.493**	1	-.416**	-.503**	-.075	-.216**
COMPET	.360**	-.416**	1	.051	-.062	-.466**
ACCOMM	.175*	-.503**	.051	1	.395**	.274**
COMPRO	.112	-.075	-.062	.395**	1	.196*
COLLAB	.032	-.216	-.466**	.274**	.196*	1

Source: Author's Collation from Analysis using SPSS Version 23.0

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows the results of the correlation carried out to determine the association between the variables used in the study. Performance showed an inverse relationship with Avoidance; this implies that an increase in the performance will be associated with a lower score on avoidance at 49.3 percent. When there is an increase in performance by 49.3 percent, there is a resultant decrease in conflict avoidance in the tertiary institution. For the relationship between performance and competing conflict situation, 36 percent of the changes in each variable will be affected while it will be 17.5 percent change between performance and accommodating strategy. Avoidance and competing were statistically significant at 0.01 level while accommodating strategy was statistically significant at 0.05 level in a two-tailed test.

Avoidance to conflict showed an inverse and statistically significant relationship with competing, accommodating and collaboration to conflict situations in the organization at 41.6 percent, 50.3 percent, and 21.6 percent respectively. This implies that an increase in the use of these variables as a conflict resolution method will lead to a reduction in the use of the avoidance strategy. This is so because in avoiding conflict, the conflict situation has not or will not occur while other variables are responses to already existing conflict situations. The components are all statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Competing as a form of conflict resolution has a statistically significant relationship with collaboration. This relationship indicated by the negative or inverse relationship signifies that when the use of competing conflict resolution method increases, the use of collaboration suffers a reduction of 46.6 percent. Accommodating conflict situation was positively and statistically significant with performance, compromise and collaboration. It was statically significant with compromising at 39.5 percent and collaborating at 27.4 percent. Additionally, compromising showed a statistically significant relationship with collaboration at 19.6 percent at a 0.05 level of significance.

Multiple Regression Analysis

The effect of explanatory variables on the dependent variable was investigated using multiple regression analysis. The tables below show the results of the multiple regression analysis.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Results

Model Summary[b]

Mode	R	R2	Adj. R Square	Std. Err	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	D-W
					Change Statistics					
1	.539[a]	.291	.268	1.446	.291	12.785	5	156	.000	1.663

a. Predictors: (Constant), COLLAB, COMPRO, AVOID, ACCOMM, COMPET

b. Dependent Variable: PERFM

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	133.681	5	26.736	12.785	.000[b]
	Residual	326.220	156	2.091		
	Total	459.901	161			

a. Dependent Variable: PERFM

b. Predictors: (Constant), COLLAB, COMPRO, AVOID, ACCOMM, COMPET

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	23.088	3.102		7.443	.000		
	AVOID	-.510	.109	-.454	-4.656	.000	.478	2.091
	COMPET	.109	.051	.203	2.124	.035	.497	2.013
	ACCOMM	-.084	.058	-.127	-1.453	.148	.599	1.670
	COMPRO	.095	.054	.133	1.772	.078	.810	1.235
	COLLAB	.029	.068	.038	.422	.673	.566	1.766

a. Dependent Variable: PERFM

Source: Author's Collation from Analysis using SPSS Version 23.0

R^2, which quantifies the strength of the independent variable's effect on the dependent variable, has a value of 0.291 in Table 4.7. This means that conflict variables (collaborating strategy, compromising strategy, avoiding strategy, accommodating strategy, and competing strategy) account for 29.1 percent of the variation in the performance of the tertiary institutions. The adjusted R^2 of 0.268 backs this up. Durbin-Watson statistics was used to check for autocorrelation in the model. The variables in the model are not auto-correlated, and the model is dependable for predictions, according to Durbin-Watson statistics of 1.663.

The model showed F-statistics of 12.785 with significant value of 0.000 (p-value < 0.001). This implies that the variables used in the model had a statistically significant effect on the performance of the organization i.e. the conflict strategies (avoidance, competing, accommodating, compromising, collaboration) have a significant effect on the performance of the tertiary institutions.

The multicollinearity was ascertained using the variance inflation factor (VIF) and the tolerance value with VIF values of less than or equal to 3 and tolerance values of greater than 0.1. This showed no multicollinearity existing among the variables.

In response to research question one, correlation results showed that the conflict management strategies were all positively related to the performance of tertiary institutions except for avoidance which was inversely related hence the null hypothesis (**Ho₁**) is rejected and the alternative accepted.

While for research question two, the regression analysis indicated that all conflict strategies influenced the performance of tertiary institutions hence the null hypothesis (**Ho₂**) is rejected and the alternative accepted.

4.1 Policy Implication of Findings

According to the findings, proper conflict management has a favourable impact on a variety of performance metrics, including productivity, staff interpersonal connections in the educational setting, and successful resource use. The findings also suggest important theoretical and policy implications

on why conflict techniques should be applied in such tertiary institutions to drive performance, given the types and nature of the conflict that may arise or exist. It demonstrates that to promote the growth and success of tertiary institutions, there should be a greater emphasis in tertiary institutions in Nigeria on the application of collaboration, competing, accommodation, and compromising conflict management strategies in resolving workplace conflicts among selected tertiary institution staff, students and the management(s) of these institutions. Because of its negative consequences on tertiary institution performance, administrators and management of Nigerian tertiary institutions should minimize the use of avoidance as a conflict management tactic. This conflict resolution approach should only be used for dealing with minor or trivial disagreements. Regular reviews of how workplace disagreements affect performance within the tertiary institutions should be instituted by the administration of public tertiary institutions. This could aid management in determining the best effective conflict management strategy to use in resolving current or future workplace disagreements.

5.0   Conclusion and Recommendation

This study looked at conflict management tactics and tertiary institution performance in south-south Nigeria, with a focus on government-owned polytechnics. The following are the study's conclusions, which were derived from the data generated and analyzed:

1. With the exception of avoidance strategy, which was inversely related, conflict methods were positively related to tertiary institution performance. Avoidance, competing, and accommodating had a statistically significant relationship with performance.
2. All conflict management strategies had a significant effect on tertiary institution performance.

The study analyzed the influence of conflict management practices on tertiary institutions' performance in south-south Nigeria on a conceptual,

theoretical, and empirical level. Conflict has been argued in the literature to have two main effects on organizational performance: positive and negative effects. Though conflict is frequently perceived as negative, it has the potential to improve corporate performance through promoting organizational innovation and productivity. According to the findings, competing, accommodating, compromising, and collaborating strategies all had a substantial beneficial influence on tertiary institution performance in the south-south of Nigeria, however, avoidance strategy had a large negative impact. As a result, the study suggests that conflict resolution tactics had a considerable positive effect on tertiary institution performance in south-south Nigeria. The study's findings support the importance of conflict resolution tactics in boosting tertiary institution performance. Depending on the nature of the problems, public tertiary institution management/administrators may use a combination of conflict management approaches to obtain the best results in workplace conflict resolution. This is due to the fact that a single conflict resolution strategy may not provide the best results for both current and existing organizational problems. This is also in recognition of the reality that organizational disputes vary in nature, and while one conflict management strategy may produce positive outcomes in one type of organizational conflict, it may not produce the same positive results in another type.

5.1   Contribution to Knowledge and Future Research Direction

With the exception of avoidance strategy, which had an inverse relationship, this study established that competing, accommodating, compromising, and collaborating strategies all have a significant relationship with performance of tertiary institutions in South-South Nigeria, with a special emphasis on polytechnics. The study also provides empirical evidence that all conflict management solutions have a substantial impact on tertiary institution performance, which can help managers, unit heads and policymakers handle work-related conflicts. It is recommended that further research studies be carried out for other private polytechnics within the South-South

region of Nigeria using similar methods of data analysis adopted in this study.

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