



Educational Administrators Conflict Management Strategies And Quality Assurance In Tertiary Institutions In Delta State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated administrator's conflict management strategies, and quality assurance in universities in Delta State, Nigeria. Three research questions were raised and answered. A descriptive survey research design was employed. The population comprised 1,546 academic and 3,624 non-academic staff of universities in Delta State. A sample of 877 staff, was drawn from both academic and non-academic staff using proportionate stratified sampling technique. Two questionnaires—the Administrator's Conflict Management Strategies Scale (ACMSS) and Quality Assurance Scale (QAS) were used to collect data. Face and content validity were established through expert evaluation, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach alpha, yielding indices of 0.836 and 0.742 for each scale. Out of 877 questionnaires administered, 830 copies were correctly completed and analyzed. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, to answer the two questions and Pearson r to answer research question 3. Findings revealed that administrator's conflict management strategies in universities included active listening, mediation, fairness in conflict resolution, open dialogue, prompt attention to complaints and promotion of workplace harmony. The level of quality assurance was moderate. There was a positive link between administrator's conflict management strategies and quality assurance. The study concludes that adopting structured conflict management strategies is essential for improving the quality of administrative and academic services in universities. Based on these findings, it was recommended that universities provide regular training for administrators on effective conflict management strategies to achieve optimal quality assurance in the universities.

INTRODUCTION

Administrator's conflict management strategies refer to the systematic approaches and techniques employed by university administrators to identify, address, and resolve disagreements or tensions among stakeholders within the academic environment. These stakeholders may include academic and non-academic staff, students, governing councils, and external partners. Conflict in the university system can arise from a variety of sources such as resource allocation, policy implementation, communication breakdowns, power struggles, or differing personal or professional interests. Administrators play a crucial role in not only

minimizing the occurrence of such conflicts but also ensuring they are resolved constructively and in a manner that promotes institutional harmony and productivity. As observed by Oboegbulem and Onwudinjo (2021), conflict management in universities involves the use of strategies such as dialogue facilitation, negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and in some cases, disciplinary measures, all tailored to restore order and improve organizational relationships.

The essence of conflict management lies not in suppressing disputes, but in transforming them into opportunities for improved understanding and collaboration. Effective conflict resolution ensures that grievances are addressed fairly, transparency is upheld, and trust is maintained between the university administration and its stakeholders. This is particularly important in Nigerian universities where frequent industrial actions, student unrest, and administrative bottlenecks have often been traced to unresolved conflicts. Aina and Ogunyemi (2022) emphasize that when administrators adopt proactive conflict management strategies, they create a stable academic environment conducive to quality teaching, research, and service delivery.

Administrator's conflict management strategies may have some roles to play in quality assurance in public universities in Nigeria by shaping the institutional climate, promoting organizational harmony, and ensuring continuity in academic activities. When conflicts among staff, students, and management are poorly handled or allowed to fester, they often lead to disruptions such as strikes, protests, and administrative delays, all of which may negatively affect teaching, research, and service delivery. However, when administrators implement proactive and effective conflict management strategies, they may foster a peaceful work environment where academic goals can be pursued without interruption. As highlighted by Nwankwo and Okafor (2021), institutions with robust conflict resolution frameworks report fewer industrial actions and higher staff satisfaction, leading to improved commitment to teaching and research responsibilities.

Conflict management strategies may influence how resources are allocated and how roles and expectations are negotiated within the university system. When conflicts over resource distribution, promotions, or workload are handled transparently and equitably, it builds trust and boosts staff morale. This, in turn, may enhance the quality-of-service delivery, particularly in areas such as curriculum implementation, student mentorship, and departmental administration. Aina and Ogunyemi (2022) noted that universities where administrators promote participatory governance and mediate disputes fairly tend to attract and retain more qualified personnel, fostering academic stability and continuity. Furthermore, conflict-free institutions are more likely to meet accreditation requirements, secure external funding, and maintain partnerships with industries and international bodies, all of which are markers of quality assurance.

On the other hand, the absence of effective conflict resolution strategies often results in institutional decay, with cascading effects on student performance, research output, and administrative efficiency. Delays in transcript preparation, stalled academic sessions, and high staff turnover have all been traced to unresolved disputes and administrative high-handedness in many public universities. As Eduwatch Nigeria (2023) reports, universities with recurring internal crises often fall short in national rankings and fail to meet the benchmarks for quality education. The impact of these strategies becomes even more evident when considered alongside the role of innovation in administrative practices such as transcript preparation, which serves as the next critical area of exploration in improving institutional performance.

Quality assurance in the university system refers to the achievement of high standards in the core functions of tertiary education. It involves the consistent delivery of educational outcomes that meet or exceed national and international benchmarks in terms of curriculum relevance, graduate employability, research impact, infrastructure, and governance practices. It is the realization of educational goals through effective policies, competent personnel, adequate facilities, and continuous evaluation and improvement processes.

The importance of quality assurance in the university system cannot be overemphasized, as it directly correlates with the reputation, productivity, and societal relevance of the institution. Universities that prioritize quality tend to produce graduates with critical thinking skills, technical competencies, and ethical values necessary for nation-building and global competitiveness. Additionally, quality assurance fosters a research-driven academic environment where innovations, policy solutions, and knowledge creation thrive. This, in turn, attracts partnerships, funding, and collaboration from local and international stakeholders. As highlighted by Abubakar and Abdullahi (2020), the consistent pursuit of quality not only boosts institutional credibility but also ensures that higher education contributes meaningfully to the social and economic advancement of the country. A university that is committed to quality assurance must also be proactive in addressing administrative issues that can hinder performance, which introduces the relevance of effective conflict management in maintaining academic stability and institutional harmony.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. What are the various administrator's conflict management strategies in Universities in Delta State, Nigeria?
2. What is the level of Quality assurance in Universities in Delta State, Nigeria?
3. What is the relationship between administrator's conflict management strategies and quality assurance in universities in Delta State, Nigeria?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population comprised all academic and non-academic staff of universities in Delta State totaling at 1,546 academic and 3,624 non-academic staff. A sample of 877 was selected using proportionate stratified random sampling method. Sample of the study was collected from the subjects through two questionnaires namely the Administrator's Conflict Management Strategies Scale (ACMSS) and Quality Assurance Scale (QAS). The questionnaires were structured along a four point rating scale. Through expert judgement of two Professors of educational administration the face and content validity of the instrument was ascertained. Split half reliability method was employed and Cronbach Alpha technique was applied to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaires and it yielded 0.86 and 0.78 for ACMSS and QAS respectively. The research questions were answered using descriptive mean to answer the questions and the hypotheses were tested using linear regression analysis, at a 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question One

What are the various administrator's conflict management strategies in Universities in Delta State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the various Administrator's Conflict Management Strategies in Universities in Delta State

S/N	Items	Mean n	SD	Mean rank	Decision
1	The administrator listens actively to conflicting parties.	2.84	1.03	10 th	+
2	Disputes among staff are resolved without delay.	3.02	.99	6 th	+
3	The administrator encourages open dialogue during disagreements.	3.04	1.06	4 th	+
4	Staff members feel free to express grievances without fear.	3.21	.88	1 st	+
5	The administrator uses mediation to settle disputes effectively.	3.08	.988	2 nd	+
6	Conflict situations are addressed with fairness.	2.99	1.008	9 th	+
7	The administrator promotes mutual understanding among staff.	2.71	1.106	13 th	+
8	Complaints from staff receive prompt attention.	2.80	1.068	12 th	+
9	The administrator fosters tolerance among conflicting individuals.	2.84	1.009	10 th	+
10	Conflict resolution procedures are clearly communicated.	3.06	.895	3 rd	
11	The administrator discourages favoritism in handling disputes.	2.56	1.147	19 th	+
12	Staff conflicts are handled without bias.	3.01	.976	7 th	+
13	Peaceful coexistence is promoted among staff.	2.57	1.093	18 th	+
14	The administrator de-escalates tensions calmly.	2.52	1.082	20 th	+
15	Meetings are used to address emerging conflicts.	2.70	1.175	14 th	+
16	Constructive criticism is welcomed during conflict resolution.	3.04	.947	4 th	+
17	The administrator models respectful communication during disputes.	2.67	1.167	16 th	+
18	Staff are consulted before decisions affecting them are made.	2.65	1.204	17 th	+
19	The administrator prevents minor issues from escalating.	2.81	1.134	11 th	+
20	The conflict management style used promotes workplace harmony.	3.00	.996	8 th	+
Grand Mean		2.86	1.85		+

NOTE: Decision rule Mean = 2.50 and above= accepted (+), below 2.50= not accepted (-) N=833

Data in Table 1 shows the mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) values of the various administrator's conflict management strategies in universities in Delta State, Nigeria. The mean value of staff members feeling free to express grievances without fear is 3.21 with a standard deviation of 0.88, ranking it as the most practiced strategy. This is followed by the use of mediation to settle disputes effectively ($\bar{x} = 3.08$, SD = 0.99), conflict resolution procedures being clearly communicated ($M = 3.06$, SD = 0.90), encouraging open dialogue during disagreements ($\bar{x} = 3.04$, SD = 1.06), and welcoming constructive criticism during conflict resolution ($\bar{x} = 3.04$, SD = 0.95). Other highly practiced strategies include resolving disputes among staff without delay ($\bar{x} = 3.02$, SD = 0.99), handling conflicts without bias ($M = 3.01$, SD = 0.98), promoting workplace harmony through the conflict management style used ($M = 3.00$, SD = 1.00), and fairness in addressing conflict situations ($\bar{x} = 2.99$, SD = 1.01). Listening actively to conflicting parties and fostering tolerance among staff both had mean values of 2.84 with standard deviations of 1.03 and 1.01, respectively. Furthermore, preventing minor issues from escalating ($\bar{x} = 2.81$, SD = 1.13), giving prompt attention to staff complaints ($\bar{x} = 2.80$, SD = 1.07), and promoting mutual understanding among staff ($\bar{x} = 2.71$, SD = 1.11) were also recognized strategies. Meetings being used to address emerging conflicts ($\bar{x} = 2.70$, SD = 1.18), administrators modeling respectful communication during disputes ($\bar{x} = 2.67$, SD = 1.17), and consulting staff before decisions affecting them are made ($\bar{x} = 2.65$, SD = 1.20) were moderately practiced. Conversely, the least practiced strategies include promoting peaceful coexistence among staff ($\bar{x} = 2.57$, SD = 1.09), discouraging favoritism in handling disputes ($M = 2.56$, SD = 1.15), and de-escalating tensions calmly ($\bar{x} = 2.52$, SD = 1.08). Overall,

the grand mean of 2.86, which is above the benchmark of 2.50, indicates that administrators' conflict management strategies are generally practiced in universities in Delta State, Nigeria.

Research Question Two

What is the level of quality assurance in Universities in Delta State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the level of quality assurance in universities

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Academic programmes meet national accreditation standards.	2.95	1.04	+
2.	Staff performance is evaluated consistently.	2.95	1.15	+
3.	Learning environments support effective teaching.	3.12	.96	+
4.	Lectures are delivered using modern instructional methods.	3.28	.88	+
5.	Assessment tools reflect academic objectives accurately.	2.98	1.01	+
6.	Course materials are reviewed regularly.	2.86	1.05	+
7.	Students demonstrate competence after graduation.	3.04	.99	+
8.	Staff development opportunities are provided frequently.	3.04	1.02	+
9.	University policies promote academic excellence.	3.15	.77	+
10.	Administrative services are delivered efficiently.	3.21	.72	+
11.	Teaching schedules are adhered to consistently.	2.32	1.11	+
12.	Research output among staff has improved.	2.98	1.01	+
13.	Examination procedures are free from malpractice.	2.19	1.18	+
14.	Feedback from stakeholders is used for improvement.	2.46	1.08	+
15.	Infrastructure supports academic activities effectively.	2.68	1.17	+
16.	Student support services are adequately provided	3.03	.95	+
17.	Staff commitment to duty has increased	2.80	1.13	+
18.	Academic calendars are implemented without interruption.	2.82	1.11	+
19.	Graduate employability has shown significant growth.	3.04	1.03	+
20.	Quality assurance mechanisms are functioning properly.	3.03	.98	+
	Grand Mean	2.89	1.02	+

NOTE: Decision rule mean = 2.50 And above= accepted (+), below 2.50= not accepted (-) N=833

Data in Table 2 present the mean ratings and standard deviations on the level of quality assurance in universities in Delta State. The results show that the mean scores of the items range from 2.19 to 3.28, with a grand mean of 2.89 (SD = 1.02). Based on the decision rule, this grand mean falls within the range of 2.00–2.99, which indicates a moderate level of quality assurance. Specifically, items such as lectures are delivered using modern instructional methods ($\bar{x} = 3.28$, SD = 0.88), administrative services are delivered efficiently ($\bar{x} = 3.21$, SD = 0.72), and university policies promote academic excellence ($\bar{x} = 3.15$, SD = 0.77) were rated high, showing notable areas of strength. On the other hand, items such as examination procedures are free from malpractice ($\bar{x} = 2.19$, SD = 1.18), teaching schedules are adhered to consistently ($\bar{x} = 2.32$, SD = 1.11), and feedback from stakeholders is used for improvement (M = 2.46, SD = 1.08) were rated low. However, since the grand mean of 2.89 falls within the range of 2.00 to 2.99, it is concluded that the level of quality assurance in universities in Delta State, Nigeria is moderate.

Research Question Three

What is the relationship between administrator's conflict management strategies and quality assurance in universities in Delta State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Relationship between administrator's conflict management strategies and quality assurance in universities in Delta State, Nigeria

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	r	r ²	r ² %	Remark
Administrator's Conflict Management Strategies	833	3.13	1.85	.752	.566	56.6	Positive relationship
Quality Assurance	833	2.89	1.02				

Data in Table 3 show the relationship between administrator's conflict management strategies and quality assurance in universities in Delta State. The result indicates that administrator's conflict management strategies have a mean score of 3.13 ($SD = 1.85$), while quality assurance has a mean score of 2.89 ($SD = 1.02$). The computed r value of .752 indicates a strong positive relationship between administrator's conflict management strategies and quality assurance, since the value is close to +1.0. The r^2 value of .566 reveals that administrator's conflict management strategies influence quality assurance in universities in Delta State by 56.6%, which signifies a substantial level of contribution. It is thus concluded that there is a strong positive relationship between administrator's conflict management strategies and quality assurance in universities in Delta State, Nigeria

DISCUSSION

Findings revealed that the key strategies employed by administrators include active listening, mediation, fairness in resolving disputes, encouraging open dialogue, giving prompt attention to complaints, and promoting workplace harmony. This finding is probably so because university administrators, guided by institutional policies and quality assurance frameworks, are compelled to adopt inclusive and transparent approaches to conflict resolution in order to maintain a stable academic environment. It could also be that the growing emphasis on participatory leadership and organizational justice in Nigerian universities has encouraged administrators to discourage favoritism, foster tolerance, and ensure fairness in addressing staff grievances.

This finding aligns with the study by Nwankwo and Okeke (2021) who emphasized that administrators' use of open dialogue and fair mediation significantly reduces staff conflicts and strengthens institutional trust. The finding also aligns with Eze and Olatunji (2022), who found that active listening and prompt attention to grievances by university authorities promote mutual respect and improve staff morale in Nigerian higher institutions. Similarly, the finding corroborates Ogunyemi and Salisu (2023), who observed that administrators who adopt fairness, respectful communication, and tolerance in conflict situations are more likely to foster peaceful coexistence and harmony within academic communities. However, this finding is at variance with Bello and Musa (2020), who reported that conflict management in many Nigerian universities is often reactive rather than proactive, with administrators failing to prevent minor issues from escalating. In another opposing view, Lawal and Agbaje (2021) revealed that favoritism and lack of transparency in conflict resolution remain persistent challenges in some public universities, thereby weakening staff trust in administrative leadership.

For the second research question, findings revealed that the level of quality assurance is moderate. This result is probably so because, although universities have introduced some level of digitalization and structured procedures in transcript preparation, challenges such as inadequate ICT infrastructure, irregular

staff training, and insufficient monitoring mechanisms still constrain service delivery. This finding supports the work of Okeke and Nwankwo (2021), who reported that the quality of transcript services in Nigerian universities remains inconsistent due to infrastructural gaps and limited technical expertise.

The finding of the third research question revealed a strong positive relationship between administrators' conflict resolution strategies and quality assurance in tertiary institutions. This may be so because effective conflict management strategies create a peaceful and cooperative work environment and administrative processes, both of which combine to enhance quality assurance in universities. This finding corroborates the work of Okafor and Ojo (2021), who found that the interplay of effective conflict resolution and adoption of digital innovations enhances institutional effectiveness and quality standards in Nigerian universities. In addition, the finding aligned with Chikwe and Omole (2021) who reported a strong positive link between conflict management strategies and quality attainment of goals.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings it can be concluded that administrators employ various conflict management strategies, including active listening, mediation, fairness, open dialogue, prompt attention to complaints, and promotion of workplace harmony, which positively influence institutional operations. There is a strong positive association between administrators' conflict management strategies and quality assurance in tertiary institutions.

The study recommends based on the findings as follows:

1. Universities in Delta State should provide regular training for administrators on effective conflict management strategies, including active listening, mediation, fairness, and open dialogue, to foster a harmonious work environment.
2. Universities should establish and enforce quality benchmarks and standard operating procedures for both administrative and academic processes to enhance the overall level of quality assurance beyond the current moderate rating.

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