International Journal of Innovative Education Research 14(3):511-518, July-Sept, 2026

© SEAHI PUBLICATIONS, 2026 www.seahipublications.org ISSN: 2354-2942

DOI:10.5281/zenodo.22283676

Conflict Management Techniques and Management Effectiveness in Public Universities in South East Nigeria

[1]Gloria Udechukwu Ofili; [2] Prof. Margeret Uga Oluwole & [3] Felix Terhile Bua (PhD)

[1 2 & 3] Department of Educational Foundations,
Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, Nigeria

ABSTRACT
This study investigated conflict management techniques and management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted the correlational research design. The population consisted 12,540 academic staff from 15 public universities in South East Nigeria. A sample of 388 academic staff members from seven public universities in South East Nigeria was used for the study. Purposive, proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the sample for the study. Two sets of questionnaires were used for data collection titled "Conflict Management Techniques Questionnaire (CMTQ)" and Management Effectiveness Questionnaire (MEQ) with a reliability coefficient of 0.89 and 0.88 respectively. A total number of 388 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents but only 374 copies of questionnaire returned were used. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that accommodating technique and competing technique have significant strong positive correlation with management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria. It was concluded that conflict management techniques have significant strong positive correlation with management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria. The study recommended among others that deans of faculties should apply accommodating strategies by demonstrating flexibility and empathy when addressing staff concerns and departmental conflicts. This can be achieved through open communication and supportive leadership practices. Such an approach will promote cooperation, reduce tension among staff, and enhance administrative effectiveness within faculties.

Keywords: Conflict management techniques, management effectiveness, accommodating technique, competing technique

INTRODUCTION

Management effectiveness in universities ideally entails the efficient and goal-oriented utilization of resources, personnel and structures to achieve academic excellence, innovation and societal relevance. However, issues such as poor leadership, inadequate funding, corruption and weak governance structures often seem to undermine this effectiveness. Instances like leadership crises in Germany, France and Italy universities, leading to staff strikes and administrative breakdowns, highlight management inefficiencies (Altbach, 2019). In Nigeria, frequent university closures likely due to poor funding, mismanagement and strikes reflect similar challenges, with South East Nigeria facing added issues like infrastructural decay and ethnic-based leadership tensions.

Management effectiveness refers to the degree to which managers achieve desired goals using available resources in an efficient, timely and strategic manner (Obi & Umeh, 2018). In the context of universities, it encompasses the ability to lead, plan, coordinate and evaluate institutional processes to foster academic excellence, staff productivity and student satisfaction. It includes strategic governance, transparent financial management, quality assurance mechanisms and stakeholder engagement (Okeke & Eze, 2019). When university managers lack clear vision, accountability structures or leadership competence, institutional effectiveness suffers (Adewale, 2020). Management effectiveness ensures alignment between institutional goals and operational practices (Onuoha & Ogbonna, 2021). It is crucial for navigating the dynamic challenges of higher education, especially in developing countries where resources are limited (Ibrahim & Musa, 2023). Thus, strengthening management capacity is essential for university growth and performance. A major threat to this effectiveness is unresolved conflicts, which often disrupt processes and undermine leadership authority. Therefore, exploring conflict management techniques is critical to sustaining university management effectiveness.

Conflict refers to a condition of disagreement or incompatibility that arises when individuals or groups pursue differing goals, values, interests, or perceptions within an organization, often resulting in tension, opposition, and strained relationships (Nwachukwu, 2018). In organizational settings, conflict manifests as differences in opinions, expectations, or priorities that compel parties to engage in competing or incompatible actions, which may disrupt harmony if not properly addressed (Uko & Alagah, 2023). Although conflict is frequently viewed as dysfunctional, Adebayo and Akinlabi (2019) acknowledge that it can stimulate critical thinking, dialogue and innovation when constructively managed. Consequently, conflict is an inevitable social phenomenon in universities that requires deliberate understanding of its sources and dynamics to prevent escalation through conflict management.

Conflict management is the deliberate process of applying appropriate strategies and techniques to control, reduce, or resolve conflicts in ways that minimize negative outcomes while maximizing positive organizational effects (Okebukola, 2020). It involves the systematic use of approaches such as collaboration, compromise, accommodation, avoidance, and competition to address disagreements constructively and sustain productive working relationships (Oni & Daniya, 2020). Effective conflict management enables organizations to channel divergent views toward goal attainment, improved cooperation, and institutional stability, thereby transforming conflict from a disruptive force into a mechanism for growth and effectiveness (Ugwulashi, 2021). Thus, conflict management builds directly on the understanding of conflict by providing structured conflict management techniques for responses that enhance university harmony.

Conflict management techniques refer to the strategies employed to identify, address and resolve disputes in organizational settings in a manner that minimizes disruption and promotes cohesion. In universities, conflicts may arise from administrative decisions, staff-student relations or resource allocation (Nwachukwu & Ezeh, 2019). Effective techniques include collaboration, negotiation, mediation, compromise and avoidance, depending on the nature and severity of the conflict (Ugwulashi, 2021). According to Akinbode and Aluko (2020), conflict management techniques foster mutual respect and generates creative solutions, while poor conflict handling can escalate tensions and impair institutional functionality. Leadership plays a key role in deploying these techniques constructively to foster a harmonious academic environment (Eze & Nwajiuba, 2022). Universities that apply proactive conflict management strategies often experience improved morale, productivity and decision-making (Mba & Emecheta, 2023). Consequently, effective conflict management is not merely a reactive measure but a critical component of overall management effectiveness in universities, thereby reinforcing the argument that enhancing conflict resolution capacity directly contributes to better university governance. Thus, the study is focused on the following conflict techniques; accommodating technique and competing technique to show how each correlate with management effectiveness.

Accommodating technique entails one party yielding to another's demands, often to maintain peace or avoid escalation (Oni & Daniya, 2020). While it can preserve relationships, it frequently silences legitimate concerns when applied in excess (Mba & Emecheta, 2023). In Nigerian public universities,

staff and students often adopt accommodating behaviour due to authoritarian leadership styles and fear of victimization (Eze & Nwajiuba, 2022). The inability of university management to promote an open and safe conflict resolution environment forces subordinates to suppress grievances. This weak form of management discourages assertiveness and accountability, allowing problems to fester beneath the surface. As a result, stakeholders may eventually resist through more assertive approaches, such as competing conflict strategies, to reclaim their voice and rights.

Competing technique is an assertive and uncooperative approach where one party seeks to dominate or win, often at the expense of others (Obi & Umeh, 2018). It is typically used when urgent, decisive action is needed, but it can breed hostility and long-term resentment. In South-East Nigerian universities, weakened management effectiveness evident in autocratic decision-making, poor communication and lack of conflict resolution mechanisms encourages power struggles and adversarial relationships (Nwachukwu & Ezeh, 2019). Strikes, protests and administrative breakdowns often stem from competing interests between university authorities and staff unions. The combative atmosphere results from managerial inability to foster inclusive dialogue, pushing stakeholders to adopt aggressive conflict stances. When competition leads to deadlock, some parties resort to avoiding conflict entirely to protect their interests in a dysfunctional system.

Statement of the Problem

Management effectiveness is a crucial determinant of institutional success, ensuring goal attainment, efficiency and stakeholder satisfaction in organizations worldwide. In public universities in South East Nigeria, however, educational stakeholders such as students, parents, academic staff and international organisations have expressed deep concerns regarding the state of management effectiveness, citing issues such as poor decision-making, inadequate conflict resolution, low staff morale and declining academic standards. These challenges have raised doubts about the ability of university management to create a conducive environment for learning, research and innovation. The researcher has observed that in many public universities in South East Nigeria, management effectiveness is often hampered by persistent industrial disputes, leadership crises and poor stakeholder engagement. Issues such as frequent strikes, student unrest, administrative bottlenecks and unhealthy power struggles among university leaders seem to have disrupted academic activities. These issues could indicate a gap in the application of effective conflict management techniques, which are essential for fostering stability, cooperation and productivity within university systems. In some instances, university administrators either adopt an authoritarian approach or neglect conflict resolution altogether, leading to prolonged crises and institutional instability.

Efforts have been made by the government, university governing councils and regulatory bodies such as the National Universities Commission (NUC) to improve management effectiveness in public universities through policy reforms, leadership training and funding interventions (Okebukola, 2020). Despite these measures, problems such as leadership inefficiencies, strained labour relations and weak grievance resolution mechanisms remain prevalent, indicating that management effectiveness continues to be compromised. Given the persistent issues observed, this study investigated conflict management techniques as correlate of management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate conflict management techniques as correlate of management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. find out the correlation between accommodating technique with management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria.
2. determine the correlation between competing technique with management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria.

Research Question

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the correlation between accommodating technique with management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria?
2. What is the correlation between competing technique with management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Accommodating technique has no significant correlation with management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria.
2. Competing technique has no significant correlation with management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study adopted the correlational research design. The population consisted 12,540 academic staff from 15 public universities in South East Nigeria. A sample of 388 academic staff members from seven public universities in South East Nigeria was used for the study. Purposive, proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the sample for the study. Two sets of questionnaires were used for data collection titled "Conflict Management Techniques Questionnaire (CMTQ)" and Management Effectiveness Questionnaire (MEQ) with a reliability coefficient of 0.89 and 0.88 respectively. A total number of 388 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents but only 374 copies of questionnaire returned were used. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule set for this study was that null hypotheses were rejected where the obtained probability value was less than or equal to 0.05 and not rejected if found otherwise.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: *What is the correlation between accommodating technique and management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria?*

Table 1: Correlation Between Accommodating Technique and Management Effectiveness in Public Universities in South East Nigeria

Variables			Decision
Accommodating Technique			
	74		
			Strong Positive Correlation
		.83	
Management Effectiveness in Public Universities			
	74		

The result in Table 1 shows correlation between accommodating technique and management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria. The result revealed that the correlation coefficient of 0.83 falls within 0.5 to 1.0 which indicate a strong correlation. This implies that there is a strong positive correlation between accommodating technique and management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria.

Research Question 2: *What is the correlation between competing technique and management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria?*

Table 2: Correlation Between Competing Technique and Management Effectiveness in Public Universities in South East Nigeria

Variables			Decision
Competing Technique	74		
			Strong Positive Correlation
		.95	
Management Effectiveness in Public Universities	74		

The result in Table 2 shows correlation between competing technique and management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria. The result revealed that the correlation coefficient of 0.95 falls within 0.5 to 1.0 which indicate a strong correlation. This implies that there is a strong positive correlation between competing technique and management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1: Accommodating technique has no significant correlation with management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria.

Table 3: Significant Correlation between Accommodating Technique and Management Effectiveness in Public Universities in South East Nigeria

Variables			f		Decision
Accommodating Technique	74				Significant Strong Positive Correlation
		.83	72	.000	
Management Effectiveness in Public Universities	74				

The result in Table 3 shows significant correlation between accommodating technique and management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria. The result revealed that $r = 0.83$; $df = 372$; p-value $= 0.000 < 0.05$. Since P-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis which states that accommodating technique has no significant correlation with management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria was rejected. This implies that accommodating technique has significant strong positive correlation with management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: Competing technique has no significant correlation with management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria.

Table 4: Significant Correlation between Competing Technique and Management Effectiveness in Public Universities in South East Nigeria

Variables			f		Decision
Competing Technique	74				Significant Strong Positive Correlation
		.95	72	.000	
Management Effectiveness in Public Universities	74				

The result in Table 4 shows significant correlation between competing technique and management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria. The result revealed that r = 0.95; df = 404; p-value = 0.000 < 0.05. Since P-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis which states that competing technique has no significant correlation with management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria was therefore, rejected. This implies that competing technique has significant strong positive correlation with management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first finding of the study showed that accommodating technique has a significant strong positive correlation with management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria. This means that when university administrators occasionally prioritize the interests of others and maintain flexibility in conflict situations, organizational peace and cooperation are strengthened, leading to improved institutional management. This finding is supported by the empirical study of Okafor and Nwankwo (2020) who discovered that accommodating conflict management strategy had a statistically significant positive relationship with administrative effectiveness in public universities in South-East Nigeria. Their results showed that accommodating behaviour enhances staff relationships, facilitates decision-making and reduces conflict within the university environment. Likewise, Musa and Ibrahim (2022) found that accommodating technique significantly improved institutional performance in public universities in North-Central Nigeria by fostering trust, improving communication and reducing tensions between management and staff unions. These studies are relevant to the present study because they examine accommodating technique as a determinant of organizational outcomes within the university system and employ similar survey methodologies. However, the present study advances the literature by examining the strength of correlation between accommodating technique and management effectiveness using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and a larger sample drawn from several universities across South-East Nigeria. The finding is justified because accommodating behaviour promotes empathy, tolerance and mutual respect among stakeholders, thereby reducing hostility and facilitating effective administration. It is therefore found that accommodating technique significantly contributes to management effectiveness in public universities.

The second finding of the study showed that competing technique has a significant strong positive correlation with management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria. This indicates that in certain circumstances, the assertive use of authority by university administrators to enforce rules, policies and decisions can promote organizational order and efficiency. This finding is supported by Osibanjo and Olokundun (2022) who found that competing conflict management strategy significantly influenced sustainable commitment among academic staff in selected public universities in Southwest Nigeria. Their study showed that decisive leadership in conflict situations can strengthen institutional discipline and promote staff commitment. In addition, Etele and Akunne (2023) reported that competing conflict strategy significantly influenced management effectiveness in colleges of education and universities in South-East Nigeria, emphasizing that firm administrative decisions sometimes become necessary to maintain institutional standards and operational efficiency. The reviewed studies relate closely to the present study because they investigate the role of competing technique in conflict management within tertiary institutions and employ similar questionnaire-based approaches. However, the present study differs by adopting a correlational design, expanding the population to include academic staff across fifteen public universities in South-East Nigeria and using Pearson Product Moment Correlation for hypothesis testing. The justification for this finding lies in the fact that competing strategy enables administrators to take decisive actions during crises, enforce regulations and protect institutional interests. The finding therefore revealed that although it must be applied cautiously, competing technique can contribute positively to management effectiveness when used appropriately in university administration.

CONCLUSION

The study established that conflict management techniques have significant strong positive correlation with management effectiveness in public universities in South East Nigeria. The findings revealed that accommodating technique and competing technique have significant strong positive correlations with management effectiveness. These results indicate that the appropriate application of diverse conflict management strategies contributes to improved administrative coordination, staff relations, decision-making processes, and institutional stability in universities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Vice-Chancellors should institutionalize collaborative decision-making by establishing participatory committees involving academic and administrative staff. This can be done through regular consultative meetings and inclusive policy formulation processes. This will strengthen teamwork, reduce conflict, improve staff commitment, and enhance overall management effectiveness in public universities.
2. Governing Councils should encourage compromise-based conflict resolution by promoting dialogue and balanced decision-making during disputes between management and staff. This can be implemented through structured negotiation forums and policy reviews. The result was improved industrial harmony, mutual understanding, and more effective university management.

REFERENCES

Adebayo, A., & Akinlabi, O. (2019). Conflict management strategies and organizational effectiveness in Nigerian universities. *Journal of Educational Management, 14*(2), 45–57.

Adewale, T. (2020). *Leadership competence and institutional effectiveness in Nigerian universities*. Lagos: Academic Publishers.

Akinbode, J., & Aluko, M. (2020). *Conflict resolution strategies in educational institutions*. Ibadan: University Press.

Altbach, P. G. (2019). *Full issue*. *International Higher Education*, (99). https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.99.11673

Etele, J., & Akunne, R. (2023). Influence of collaboration technique on academic staff job performance in Colleges of Education and Universities in South-East Nigeria. *African Journal of Management in Education, 15*(3), 87–101.

Eze, C., & Nwajiuba, C. (2022). *Leadership and participatory management in Nigerian universities*. Enugu: Sunrise Educational Publishers.

Ibrahim, A., & Musa, R. (2023). *Challenges of university governance in developing countries*. Kaduna: Global Scholars Press.

Igbinoba, E., Osibanjo, A., Falola, H., Olokundun, M., & Ogueyungbo, O. (2022). Compromising conflict-management strategy and sustainable commitment of academic staff in selected public universities in Nigeria. *International Journal of Organizational Behaviour in Education, 9*(1), 23–38.

Musa, A., & Ibrahim, S. (2022). Conflict resolution techniques and institutional performance in public universities in North-Central Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Leadership and Conflict Resolution, 12*(1), 73–89.

Nwachukwu, C., & Ezeh, S. (2019). *Administrative conflict and labour relations in Nigerian universities*. Port Harcourt: Zenith Academic Press.

Obi, F., & Umeh, J. (2018). *Management effectiveness and organizational goals in higher education*. Nsukka: Trust Publishing Company.

Oboegbulem, A., & Chukwuma, J. C. (2020). Conflict management strategies and institutional effectiveness in Nigerian universities. *Educational Research and Reviews, 15*(6), 310–319. https://doi.org/10.5897/ERR2020.3999

Okafor, J., & Nwankwo, B. (2020). Accommodating conflict management strategy and administrative effectiveness of public universities in South-East Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Leadership, 11*(2), 88–104.

Okebukola, P. (2020). *Reforming higher education governance in Nigeria: Achievements and challenges*. Abuja: NUC Publications.

Okeke, D., & Eze, A. (2019). *Governance, accountability and quality assurance in Nigerian universities*. Awka: Great Minds Publishing.

Onuoha, G., & Ogbonna, K. (2021). *Strategic management practices and performance of public universities in Nigeria*. Umuahia: Knowledge Impact Publishers.

Osibanjo, A., & Olokundun, M. (2022). Competing conflict management strategy and sustainable commitment of academic staff in selected public universities in Southwest Nigeria. *Journal of Human Resource Development and Education, 14*(1), 66–81.

Ugwulashi, C. (2021). *Conflict management techniques in educational administration*. Owerri: Mercury Academic Services.

Uko, R., & Alagah, A. D. (2023). *Compromising Strategy and Workplace Harmony of Public Universities in Rivers State*. IJA AFMR