

**THE MANAGEMENT OF INTERGROUP
CONFLICTS IN SELECTED UNIVERSITIES
IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA**

BY

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A B S T R A C T

This study examined intergroup conflicts in selected universities in Southwestern Nigeria and identified their causes. This was with a view to examine its effects on the universities and proffering appropriate management strategies in resolving them.

The study utilized primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Two types of questionnaires were used to elicit information from the students and the other from the academic and non academic groups. Six universities consisting of two each of federal, state and private were purposively selected for the study, namely: Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Federal University of Technology, Akure, Lagos State University, Ojoo, University of Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti, Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo and Covenant University, Ota. The study populations of the selected Universities consist of students and staff. From each group 10 % of each was sampled, namely: students (1008), academic (302) and non-academic (583). A total of 1,893 questionnaires were administered. From the questionnaires distributed, 956 were retrieved from the students, 291 from academics and 560 from non-academics. A total of 72 key officers of the universities were purposively selected for the interviews. These comprised the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Registrars, Deans of student affairs and Director of personnel affairs, while for the various groups in the universities were Presidents, Secretaries and Financial Secretaries. Secondary data were obtained from central administration of the six universities, the National Universities Commission (NUC) reports and the internet. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the analysis of quantitative data, while content analysis technique was used for the qualitative data.

The study showed that there was no significant difference among universities with respect to the identified causes of intergroup conflicts ($X^2 = 3.54$; $p > 0.05$). The results of the ANOVA also showed, that there was no significant difference of responses

between students and academics across the universities. They all traced the causes of conflicts to such things as incessant strikes, improper teaching and learning, sexual harassment and methods of discipline. Between academic and non-academic staff across the universities there was also not much variation in their opinion on such issues as, pay parity ($F = 0.73$, $P > 0.05$), welfare benefits / arrears and packages ($F = 1.04$, $P > 0.05$), promotional entitlements ($F = 0.36$, $P > 0.05$) selfish interest of the leadership ($F = 0.40$, $P > 0.05$). However on the matter of divide- and -rule tactics of university administration, the study showed significant difference among the universities ($F = 3.67$, $P < 0.05$). University administrations in Federal universities were perceived to have more inclination towards this tactics. Regarding their use of intergroup conflict management style; there was no significant difference across universities in their use of structural strategy ($F = 0.25$, $P > 0.05$). There was however variation among them in their use of communication strategy ($F = 12.79$, $P < 0.05$), process strategy ($F = 37.56$, $P < 0.05$) and formal dispute style ($F = 8.96$, $P < 0.05$). The study showed that State universities adopted more than others, the, process and communication strategies, while the private Universities employed the use of structural strategy. The Federal Universities were more disposed to the use of formal dispute strategy. Finally, the content analysis showed that the effects of conflicts as identified by the groups were negative and positive. The negative effects included mutual distrust, protracted academic session, loss of lives, destruction of properties and suspicion, while the positive effects were provision of better facilities, availability of more funds for the universities and fostering of better intergroup working relations.

The study concluded that although the identified causes of conflicts in the selected universities appeared similar, strategies engaged by university administrators differed significantly across the selected universities.