RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND ACADEMIC STAFF JOB PERFORMANCE IN ADAMAWA STATE UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE OF HEALTH TECHNOLOGY, MUBI

Dedan Kadaki Nehemiah
PG Student
Department of Social Science Education
dedannehemiah4@gmail.com
08038095631

ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of conflict management strategies on the job performance of academic staff in Adamawa State-owned tertiary institutions. Focusing on Adamawa State University, Mubi, and the College of Health Technology, Mubi, the research examines the causes and effects of conflict and the conflict resolution strategies employed by management, drawing on the perceptions of both management and academic staff. A descriptive survey design was used, with 223 respondents selected through proportional stratified random sampling. The study utilized a 35-item structured questionnaire, the Conflict Management Strategy Questionnaire (CMSQ), which was validated and tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.76. The findings indicate that both groups agreed on common causes of conflict such as inadequate resource distribution, communication breakdowns, and indiscipline. However, academic staff expressed stronger concerns about issues like lateness to lectures and ineffective leadership. The study also revealed differences in perceptions of conflict effects: management staff perceived greater negative impacts, while academic staff disagreed on certain aspects like stress and high turnover. Both groups agreed on the use of cooperation as a conflict management strategy but had differing views on accommodation and avoidance. Hypothesis testing using the z-test showed a significant difference in perceptions of conflict effects, but no significant difference in the strategies employed. The study concludes that although there are areas of agreement, the differing perceptions highlight the need for more inclusive and transparent conflict resolution processes. It recommends participatory management styles, open communication, and regular reviews of institutional agreements to improve academic staff performance and institutional harmony.

Keywords: *Conflict management, job performance, academic staff, conflict resolution strategies.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict is an incompatible and inevitable element in human organization. Conflict is an inherent feature of any human organization and is especially pronounced in tertiary educational institutions, where diverse goals, values, and perceptions among academic staff, students, and administrators can lead to clashes (Najjuma & Wandiba, 2024; Lukman, 2021).

*Corresponding Author:
Dedan Kadaki Nehemiah
PG Student
Department of Social Science Education
dedannehemiah4@gmail.com
08038095631

Effective conflict management by school administrators−through transparent communication, well-defined policies, collaborative cultures, and proactive intervention−can transform potentially destructive disputes into opportunities for innovation and improved performance (Hayaudin, 2024; Ayandele et al., 2022). Conversely, adversarial or avoidant approaches tend to undermine job satisfaction, increase stress and turnover, and ultimately diminish academic staff commitment and productivity (Ayandele et al., 2022; Lukman, 2021). Given the centrality of academic staff performance to student outcomes and institutional quality, understanding which resolution strategies foster commitment and high performance is vital. This study, therefore, investigates how specific conflict management techniques employed by administrators in Adamawa State-owned tertiary institutions affect the job performance of academic staff.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to explore the connection between the conflict management strategies of school administrators and the job performance of academic staff at Adamawa State University and the College of Health Technology, Mubi.

The study's specific objectives are to:

i. Identify the sources of conflict at Adamawa State University and the College of Health   Technology, Mubi.

ii. Investigate how conflicts impact the job performance of academic staff at Adamawa State University and the College of Health Technology, Mubi.

iii. Determine the strategies used by management to address and resolve conflicts at Adamawa State University and the College of Health Technology, Mubi.

vi. Analyse the relationship between conflict management practices and the job performance of academic staff in Adamawa State University and the College of Health Technology, Mubi.

Hypotheses

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the opinion of school management and academic staff on the causes of conflict in Adamawa State University, and the College of Health Technology, Mubi.

H O₂: There is no significant difference in the opinion of management and academic staff on the effect of conflicts in Adamawa State owned tertiary institutions".

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Mitchell's (1989) conflict theory conceptualizes conflict as the emergent product of an ongoing interaction among three interdependent elements: situations, behaviors, and attitudes. Situations arise whenever goals become incompatible or obstacles impede progress for example, when a worker repeatedly fails to meet performance targets, leading to frustration and an intensified drive to succeed (Mitchell, 1989). Attitudes

such as growing suspicion or distrust shape how individuals perceive and respond to these situations, while behaviors—whether collaborative or aggressive both reflect and reshape the conflict context (Mitchell, 1989).

These elements engage in a cyclical dynamic. First, situational pressures precipitate changes in behavior (e.g., mounting frustration drives more forceful efforts). Second, situations influence attitudes by deepening distrust during goal clashes. Third, behaviors feed back into the situation itself: demonstrations of success or aggression can introduce fresh obstacles or questions. Fourth, behaviors modify attitudes sometimes exacerbating hostility or, alternatively, strengthening in-group cohesion. Fifth, entrenched attitudes guide subsequent behaviors (e.g., defensive expectations shape strategic choices). Finally, attitudes transform the situation over time, as prolonged conflict generates new demands and complications (Mitchell, 1989).

Although Mitchell originally developed this model for political and military disputes, its core insights extend to any human organization characterized by mixed-motive relationships—where cooperative and competitive goals coexist (Mitchell, 1989). Structural factors such as frustration, misunderstanding, and historical grievances create fertile ground for conflict, and viewing conflict as a dynamic structure rather than a one-off event helps explain its persistence and evolution.

In the context of Adamawa State's tertiary institutions, daily interactions among management and academic staff inevitably bring diverse situations, behaviors, and attitudes into play. Goals may clash, frustrations can intensify, and entrenched expectations may shape responses each factor fueling the others. By applying Mitchell's three-part structure, administrators and staff can craft conflict management strategies that target situations (e.g., clarifying objectives), behaviors (e.g., fostering constructive communication), and attitudes (e.g., building trust), thereby enhancing organizational effectiveness and academic performance.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study posits that school administrators' conflict management strategies (independent variable) such as collaboration, accommodation, avoidance, competition, and compromise directly influence academic staff job performance (dependent variable) through their effects on intermediate outcomes like perceived fairness, trust in leadership, and workplace cohesion. Drawing on Mitchell's (1989) structural model of conflict, we assume that when administrators employ collaborative and integrative approaches, they address the underlying situations, behaviors, and attitudes that generate friction, thereby

fostering a climate of mutual respect and shared problem-solving. This, in turn, enhances lecturers' motivation, instructional quality, and commitment to institutional goals (Mitchell, 1989).

By contrast, avoidant or high-control tactics such as unilateral decision-making or aggressive imposition of sanctions tend to perpetuate frustration and distrust among academic staff (Ayandele et al., 2022; Lukman, 2021). These strategies may temporarily suppress overt disputes but often leave underlying issues unresolved, leading to increased stress, lowered morale, and reduced productivity (Hayaudin, 2024). In the context of Adamawa State University and the College of Health Technology, Mubi, resource constraints and communication breakdowns (Najjuma & Wandiba, 2024) exacerbate the impact of poorly managed conflicts, making the choice of strategy particularly salient for maintaining teaching effectiveness and research output.

Figure 1 (below) illustrates these hypothesized relationships: administrators' choice of constructive versus destructive conflict management strategies shapes the quality of interpersonal climate (mediators), which then determines key performance indicators for academic staff (e.g., lecture punctuality, research productivity, student evaluations). Testing these linkages through survey data and z-test comparisons will reveal not only which strategies correlate with higher job performance but also whether management and staff perceptions differ significantly in their appraisal of these effects.
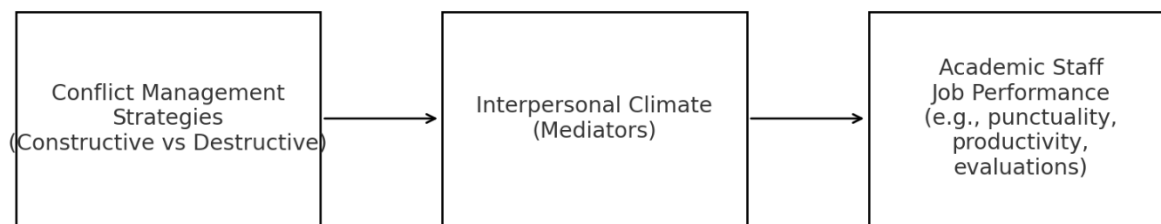

Figure 1: hypothesized relationships

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design.

Population of the Study

The population of this study consist of 466 staff and 37 management staff ofAdamawa State University, Mubi and College of Health Technology, Mubi Table 1 displays the managerial and academic staff who make up the study's population.

Table1: Population of Respondents

S/N	Tertiary institution	Management staff	Staff	Total
1	Adamawa State university, Mubi (ADSU)	23	371	394
2.	College of Health Technology, Mubi (CHT)	14	95	109
	Total	37	466	503

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study was determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula for sample size determination, which is suitable when dealing with a finite population. The formula is given as:

$n = N/1 + N(e)^2$

Where:

n = the sample size,

N = population size (503),

e = level of precision (0.05).

Substituting the values into the formula:

$n = 503/1 + 503 \times (0.05)^2$

$n = 503/1 + 1.2575$

$n = 503/2.2575 = 222.9$

$n = 223$

Rounding up to the nearest whole number, the sample size is 223 respondents.

The study used proportional stratified random sampling to ensure fair representation from two institutions: Adamawa State University (ADSU) and the College of Health Technology (CHT), both in Mubi. ADSU, with 394 staff (78.35% of the population), was allocated 175 respondents, while CHT, with 109 staff (21.65%), was allocated 48 respondents, totaling 223. Within each institution, simple random sampling was applied to select participants, giving all staff an equal chance of selection. This method reduces sampling bias and enhances the generalizability of the findings.

Instrument for Data Collection

The study used the Conflict Management Strategy Questionnaire (CMSQ) to collect data from 223 respondents in Adamawa State-owned tertiary institutions. The 35-item questionnaire employed a four-point Likert scale to measure respondents' agreement levels. It was divided into four sections: Section A explored causes of conflict; Section B examined the effects of conflict on academic staff performance; Section C assessed conflict management strategies; and Section D evaluated academic staff performance. The ordinal data enabled systematic analysis aligned with the study's objectives.

Validation of the Instrument

The questionnaire were subjected to content, relevance, language, and adequacy validation and it was given to two experts, one in educational administration and planning and one expert in Test and Measurement all from Adamawa State University, Mubi.

Reliability of the Instrument

A pilot test was conducted at the College of Education, Hong, to assess the reliability of the Conflict Management Strategy Questionnaire (CMSQ). Using Cronbach's Alpha to measure internal consistency, the instrument achieved a coefficient of 0.76, indicating good reliability. This confirmed that the questionnaire items were well-correlated and suitable for data collection in the main study.

Method of Data Analysis

The null hypotheses were examined using the z-test and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, while descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation, were utilized to address the research objectives.

RESULTS

The analysis in Table 2 outlines perceptions on conflict causes in state-owned tertiary institutions. Management and academic staff responses are summarized through mean scores and remarks on agreement or disagreement. Regarding low management behavior, there's disparity with management somewhat agreeing (2.67) and academic staff disagreeing (2.02). On rule violations, academic staff show stronger agreement (3.07) compared to management (2.55). Lateness to lectures reveals a divide, with management disagreeing (2.20) and academic staff agreeing (3.34). Both groups generally agree on inadequate resource distribution. Communication breakdowns are evident, with both groups agreeing on issues like unclear

responsibilities, indiscipline, and communication breakdowns. There's also agreement on ineffective leadership and failure to implement agreements. Overall, while there's a shared perception of conflict causes, variations exist between management and academic staff, emphasizing the need for collaborative solutions and improved communication channels.

Table 2:   Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Research Question 1.

S/N	Items	Management staff		Remark	Academic Staff		Remark
		$\bar{X}$	δ		$\bar{X}$	δ	
1	Low management behaviour of management staff	2.67	1.18	Agree	2.02	1.16	Disagree
2	Violation of school rules academic staff and regulations	2.55	1.22	Agree	3.07	0.06	Agree
3	Lateness to lectures	2.20	1.07	Disagree	3.34	1.12	Agree
4	Inadequate distribution of available teaching and learning materials.	2.64	1.18	Agree	2.64	1.51	Agree
5	Unclear definition of responsibilities among academic staff	2.66	1.29	Agree	2.65	1.22	Agree
6	The problems of indiscipline	2.88	1.22	Agree	3.76	1.28	Agree
7	Breakdown of communication among/between academic staff and management.	3.71	1.31	Agree	3.32	1.32	Agree
8	Breakdown of communication amenities for academic staff	2.79	1.24	Agree	3.21	1.14	Agree
9	Ineffective leadership styles	2.42	1.17	Disagree	2.13	1.27	Disagree
10	Failure to implement collective agreement	2.67	1.24	Agree	2.53	1.35	Agree
	Grand Mean	**2.72**	**1.21**	**Agreed**	**2.87**	**1.14**	**Agreed**

As shown in Table 3 the academic staff were in disagreed with all six items though with high mean and standard deviation 2.51±1.34 respectively as the effects of conflict on the educational system in Adamawa State tertiary institutions. On the other hand, the management staff agreed that all item statements

are effect of conflict on the educational system while disagreeing with items 19. This result shows that the academic staffs and the management staff agreed that lower job performance, and general strike may affect academic programmes are the effects of conflict on the education system.

Table 3: **Mean and Standard Deviation for Research Question 2.**

S/N	Items	Management staff			Academic staff		
		$\bar{X}$	δ	Remark	$\bar{X}$	δ	Remark
11	Low job performance	2.76	1.19	Agreed	2.65	1.30	Agreed
12	Discouragement of effective teaching behavior	2.71	1.25	Agree	2.43	1.47	Disagreed
13	Divisive tendencies among academic staff	3.03	1.21	Agreed	2.86	1.34	Agreed
14	Loss of concentration and dedication of academic staff on their tasks	2.91	1.18	Agreed	2.39	1.39	Disagreed
15	Violence	2.65	1.29	Agreed	2.43	1.25	Disagreed
16	Suspension of academic staff	2.86	1.30	Agreed	2.76	1.34	Agreed
17	Stress among academic staff	2.90	1.39	Agreed	2.04	1.36	Disagreed
18	High labour turn-over that causes shortage of trained and effective academic staff	3.03	1.29	Agreed	2.05	1.44	Disagreed
19	Low self-esteem among academic staff	2.43	1.31	Disagreed	2.43	1.23	Disagreed
20	General strike that may affect academic programmes	3.12	1.24	Agreed	3.02	1.30	Agreed
	Grand Mean	**2.84**	**1.27**	**Agreed**	**2.51**	**1.34**	**Agreed**

Table 4 presents the mean and standard deviation of responses on conflict management strategies typically employed by management in state-owned tertiary institutions, along with the corresponding perceptions of academic staff. Starting with "Cooperation," both management and academic staff generally agree on its

usage, with mean scores of 2.69 and 2.73 respectively, indicating a willingness to collaborate in resolving conflicts.

However, "Accommodating each other" shows a discrepancy in perceptions. While management staff agree with a mean score of 2.76, academic staff exhibit disagreement with a mean score of 2.11. This suggests a disconnect in the perceived effectiveness of accommodating approaches between the two groups. The "Avoidance approach" reveals contrasting views, with management staff disagreeing (mean = 2.13) and academic staff agreeing (mean = 2.86). This indicates a divergence in preferred conflict resolution strategies, with management possibly inclined towards confronting issues directly while academic staff may lean towards avoiding conflict. "Compromise (give and take)" and "Collaboration" both show disagreement from both groups. This suggests skepticism regarding the efficacy of these strategies in effectively managing conflicts within the institutional context.

Table 4:   Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Research Question 3.

S/N	Items	Management Staff			Academic Staff		
		$\bar{X}$	δ	Remarks	$\bar{X}$	δ	Remarks
21	Cooperation	2.69	1.25	Agreed	2.73	1.30	Agree
22	Accommodating each other	2.76	1.20	Agreed	2.11	1.21	Disagreed
23	Avoidance approach	2.13	1.17	Disagreed	2.86	1.24	Agree
24	Compromise (give and take)	2.43	1.25	Disagreed	3.01	0.19	Disagreed
25	Collaboration (i.e. to work through feelings that have interfered with a relationship)	2.35	1.31	Disagreed	1.32	1.11	Disagreed
	Grand Mean	**2.47**	**1.24**	**Disagreed**	**2.41**	**1.01**	**Disagreed**

Testing of Hypotheses

Table 5 summarizes the z-test results on the causes of conflicts in Adamawa State-owned tertiary institutions for management and academic staff. For management staff (74 respondents), the mean response was 2.72

with a standard deviation of 1.21, but the z-test statistic was not provided, so no conclusion can be made about the significance of their responses. For academic staff (149 respondents), the mean was 2.87 with a standard deviation of 1.14, and the calculated z-value was 1.25, which is below the critical value of 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted for academic staff, indicating no statistically significant difference between their sample mean and the population mean.

Table :5   Summary of z-test Mean Difference on Hypotheses Two.

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	δ	z-crit.	z-cal.	Remarks
Management Staff	74	2.72	1.21	1.96		
Academic Staff	149	2.87	1.14	1.96	1.25	accepted

In Table 6, the z-calculated value for academic staff **is** 0.054, which is **less** than the critical z value of 1.96 at a 0.05 significance level. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted, meaning that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of academic staff and management staff on the conflict management strategies employed in Adamawa State tertiary institutions.

Table 6: Summary of z-test Difference on Hypotheses Three

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	δ	z-crit.	z-cal.	Remarks
Management Staff	74	2.47	1.24	1.96		
Academic Staff	149	2.41	1.01	1.96	0.054	Accepted

Discussion of Findings

The study reveals both agreement and differences between management and academic staff regarding conflict causes, effects, and management strategies in Adamawa State-owned tertiary institutions. Both groups agree on causes like inadequate resources, unclear roles, indiscipline, and communication breakdown, though academic staff are more concerned about poor management behavior and lateness to lectures. These findings align with Adebayo and Omole (2019) and Adeyemi and Ademilua (2021).

Management perceives stronger negative effects of conflict such as stress and suspension, while academic staff mainly acknowledge declines in job performance and strikes, consistent with Onukwube and Chukwu (2020) and Usman and Danjuma (2023). Both groups support cooperation as a conflict management strategy, but differ on accommodation and avoidance, with management favoring accommodation and academic staff leaning toward avoidance, possibly reflecting trust issues, as noted by Ibrahim and Yusuf (2019) and Chukwuemeka et al. (2022). Hypothesis testing shows significant differences in perceptions of conflict effects but consensus on management strategies used. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of transparent communication, inclusive decision-making, and fair resource distribution to enhance staff morale and institutional stability, supporting Nwankwo and Oboegbulem's (2021) emphasis on proactive conflict resolution in higher education.

Conclusion

This study explored how conflict management strategies affect academic staff performance in Adamawa State-owned tertiary institutions. It found that conflict arises mainly from poor communication, resource shortages, indiscipline, and weak leadership. While management and academic staff agreed on some causes and effects, their perceptions differed on key issues like stress, turnover, and lateness. Both groups acknowledged the importance of conflict management in promoting harmony and performance, though academic staff questioned the effectiveness of strategies like accommodation and collaboration. The study highlights that unresolved conflicts harm morale, teaching, and productivity. It emphasizes the need for transparent, respectful, and participatory conflict management, along with improved communication, fair leadership, and greater academic staff involvement in governance to reduce conflict and boost performance.

Recommendation

To enhance academic staff performance and reduce conflict in Adamawa State-owned tertiary institutions, the study recommends promoting transparent communication, adopting participatory management approaches, and improving staff welfare. Institutions should also strengthen internal conflict resolution mechanisms, provide leadership training for management personnel, and regularly monitor institutional climate to detect and address conflict early. Implementing these strategies will foster a more harmonious, inclusive, and productive educational environment

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