CONFLICT RESOLUTION PRACTICES IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: THE REALITIES, THE MISTAKES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

This study examined conflict resolution practices in universities: The realities, mistakes and challenges. The objectives of the study were to; examine the level of conflict practices among Nigeria universities, analyze the mistakes and challenges of conflict practices among Nigerian universities and analyze the ways forward to ensure effective conflict management among Nigerian universities. The study used contingency theory to examine the challenges of conflict resolution practice. The study revealed that conflict is an inevitable outcome of humans, groups and state interactions. The study has shown that conflict is a process, and it is inevitable because individual has interdependent relationship. It is generally perceived as unwholesome because of its destructive manifestations in terms of killings, maiming and destruction of property. The fact however remains that even though we agree that conflict is a necessary evil, there is need to avoid it where possible because of its dysfunctional consequences. It has been observed that there is a rising spate of violent conflicts in Nigerian higher institutions. Its impact on Nigerian higher institutions makes conflicts unpalatable relations. Incessant violent conflicts in the tertiary institutions in the country cannot but impede educational development. It was recommended that universities constitution, laws and regulations should be made available to both academic and professional administrators and all staff so as to avoid communication gap and conflict within the system. Also, the management of universities, polytechnics and colleges of education should always explore the dialogue strategy as a foremost step in managing conflict before embarking on the other strategies for higher administrative effectiveness in the institutions.

KEYWORDS:*Conflict resolution practices, Nigerian Universities, University education, conflict management practices.*

1. INTRODUCTION

University education is arguably the most important and crucial component in human capital development. It is considered indispensable to the building of a strong and viable economy. Functional education is an important ingredient for national development. Furthermore, knowledge accumulation and its applications are seen as a major factor in the economic development of any nation leading to competitive advantage in the global economy.

University education can, therefore, be considered a platform on which the future development of a nation rests (Anyim, 2012). Indeed, that a nation can only develop in relation to its achievements in education. These assertions are not misplaced because educational systems are responsible for producing the skilled manpower and the knowledge needed for technological advancement and economic growth. Quite apart, university commands a lot of respect and trust. Universities, since their medieval beginnings, have been founded to preserve the positive heritage of society. They are committed to promote society's corporate wellbeing and advancement by refining the ability of their members to select reasons and understand by enquiring into and seeking to explain the development and function of man as part of the natural world and by acting as guide and critic in those areas which can be informed by a university's resources of knowledge and specialized skills.

In spite of the enormous benefits derived from university education in nation building, Nigerian universities had over the years gradually deteriorated from citadels of learning to "theatres of violence". The latent force of educational system in developing countries like Nigeria is frequently disillusioned

by long-standing problems of programme reforms, changes in policy, and onslaught of conflicts (Umana, 2019). Thus, contrary to the high expectations of the founding fathers whose vision and dream were to see that Nigerian men and women were equipped with university degrees equivalent to what is obtained in Western countries, Nigerian universities have been plagued with conflicts. The realization of the dream and vision of the founding fathers is almost becoming an illusion and movement towards global relevance has become a difficult task which can be partly attributed to unmanaged or mismanaged conflicts within the system. This study will examine conflict resolution practices in universities: The realities, mistakes and challenges.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Conflict is considered an inevitable phenomenon in organizations. Working in an organization is to be in conflict and to take advantage of joint work requires conflict management. Conflict, if not properly managed, can ruin any organization or institution (Umana, 2019). Conflicts can hinder an organization's performance and the attainment of its goals and conflict can lead to stress, frustration, dissatisfaction, high turnover, absenteeism and poor performance among employees. Conflict can be a destructive force but if properly managed, it can become useful as a source of renewal and creativity, as managers can assemble different pieces of information to yield productive result.

Although most of the research on conflict has been conducted in traditional organizations, this does not imply that conflicts do not occur in the universities. Conflicts is often seen and experienced in our educational institutions as a result of the nature of the functional and relational characteristics of the various academic departments. Also, educational institutions are a perfect breeding ground for conflict as a result of the academic freedom present there, whereby the academic staff are more independent in their approaches and viewpoints.

A poorly managed conflict does not only affect the length of time the students spend in the universities with attendant financial burden on parents, it also affects the image of the universities within the global context. Unfortunately, it is unrealistic and impossible to completely eradicate conflict within the university system, especially where sabotage situations are common (Umana and Okafor, 2019), but the corollary is that no meaningful development can take place where a system is torn apart by conflicts. This brings about the need to properly manage conflicts in order to retain its positive aspect and improve job satisfaction. The effect and consequences of unmanaged conflicts in the workplace on employees and the organization are crucial. In order to manage or develop effective key conflict management strategies, it is essential to know the underlying causes. If the causes of conflict are known, a conflict chart which directs management processes can be developed. This can enable organizations' managers to develop appropriate strategies towards managing such a conflict. Notwithstanding, the knowledge basis of the sources or causes of organizations' conflicts are minimal and this can be attributed to the low incidence of empirical research, especially in relation to Nigerian universities.

Looking at the Nigerian university system, there have been cases of conflicts often resulting into strike actions especially between the various staff unions in the public universities and the government; and staff and management in private universities. For more than thirty years now, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Federal Government of Nigeria have been in industrial disharmony over the non-implementation of agreements reached by both parties. The agreements addressed issues of poor conditions of service of academic staff members in government-owned universities; problem of underfunding and infrastructural neglect in the universities; as well as lack of autonomy and academic freedom which ASUU claims, affect the quality of teaching, research and scholarship in the universities. These issues have featured prominently as the primary causes of the conflicts between ASUU and the government. This study, therefore, sought to find out conflict practices in Nigerian universities.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to examine conflict practices in Nigerian universities; the mistakes and challenges. The specific objectives include:
   i) To examine the level of conflict practices among Nigeria universities
   ii) To analyze the mistakes and challenges of conflict practices among Nigerian universities
   iii) To analyze the way forward to ensure effective conflict management among Nigerian universities

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory that fit this study is contingency theory. This theory was postulated by Fred Edward Fiedler, an Austrian psychologist. This theory is the hallmark of contemporary management and it has been widely accepted in management disciplines. It is a leadership theory that suggests that effective leadership depends on matching leadership styles with the situation at hand. It recognizes the importance of considering the needs of the employees in an organization, the task to be done and the situation or environment. Failure to do these often times result in ineffective leadership. Therefore, when decision quality and acceptance are low, the leader is expected to use the autocratic style of leadership. But if the decision quality and acceptance are high, then it becomes advisable for the leader to use the participatory style of leadership.

Rahim (2001) applied this theory to conflict management by suggesting that in a conflict situation where there is low decision quality and acceptance, the dominating style could be more appropriate whereas when there is high decision quality and acceptance, then the integrating style may be justified. This theory proposed that there is no best way to make a decision or lead an organization as the choice of action or outcome is dependent upon the external or internal situation and successful decision making is said to be dependent upon these internal and external factors influencing the system.

The significance of the theory to the study is that this theory stresses that the most constructive way to managing conflict in universities is for management to base its conflicts resolution decisions on the prevailing circumstances of the conflict itself. It also stated that many conflicts take place without warning and applying a proactive approach might not be possible, but rather a reactive approach becomes more appropriate to meet the situation.

5. CONCEPT OF CONFLICT

According to Borisoff and Victor (2017), it is difficult to define conflict or come to a consensus with regard to its definition. They consented to this by stating that there is no comprehensive definition of conflict as the definition varies depending on the discipline to which it is applied and

the perspective from which it is viewed. However, they went further to assert that conflict is a natural consequence of interaction with people and therefore inevitable. To buttress this argument, Okafor and Okoye (2017) added that conflict is a fact of organization life, sometimes inevitable and unavoidable. It is a reality and like for all realities, there have been attempts to define, explain and explicate them. Also, Ejiogun (2010) had prior to this time, stated that conflict is bound to happen regularly in all human interactions and organizational behavior.

Umana and Okafor (2019) opined that groupthink may be the root cause of conflict and can wreak havoc when it occurs undetected, where minority opinions are stifled. Conflict is derived from the Latin word "conflictus" which means strike together. According to Segun (2013), conflict means clash, contention, confrontation, a battle, struggle or quarrel. He added that conflict is a situation in which two or more persons struggle for goals which only one of the persons can attain. This simply suggests that conflict involves struggles over valuable rights including claims to power and scarce resources whereby the objectives of those involved are to remove rivals along the way and get their desired results. Bloisi (2017) defines conflict as a disagreement between two or more parties who perceive that they have incompatible goals and needs. He also noted that a conflict can occur when interests, goals or values of different individuals or groups become incompatible with one other.

6. TYPES OF CONFLICT

There are various types of conflict that occurs in Nigerian universities. They include:

i)**Hierarchical conflict:** There may be conflict between the various levels of the organization. The board of director may be in conflict with top management, middle management may be in conflict with supervisory personnel, or there may be general conflict between management and workers.

ii)**Functional conflict:** There may be conflict between the various functional department of the organization. This could be conflict between different departments of a university.

iii)**Line- staff conflict:** There may be conflict between management and staff. It often results from situations in which staff personnel do not formerly possess authority to do their work effectively.

iv)**Formal- informal conflict:** There may be conflict between the formal and informal organizations for example the informal organizations norms for performance may be incompatible with the formal organizations norms for performance. Conflict can be viewed into fire sequential stages which are; latent, perceived, felt, and manifest and conflict resolution stages.

v)**Latent:** In this stage the basic conditions for potential conflict are resources, role conflict, drivers for autonomy, divergence of individual goal etc. These conditions are suppressed for reasons not quite known to members or belong to the opposition on every issue.

vi)**Perceived:** At this stage focused anxieties are created between the anxiety and tension. Each party begins to develop negative feelings towards each other. As the parties in conflict argues and battle for their points of view, the significance of the disputed issue is likely to be blown out of proportion.

vii)**Manifest:** This is the stage of open conflict. A stage where conflict behaviour is exhibited. Such overt behaviour includes sabotage.

viii)**Resolution and aftermath:** This stage represents the condition that exists after the resolution or suppression of the conflict if the conflicts have been genuinely resolved, it can lead to an improved relationship and effective cooperation between organizational members. But if not resolved adequately, it may lead to a new and more severe conflict than the first.

According to Bankovskaya (2012), there are three types of inter-organizational conflicts. Substantive conflict happens when a basic disagreement occurs at a fundamental level. Cultural conflict, the result of misunderstanding and stereotyping, occurs as a result of cultural needs and desires. Bankovskaya (2012), associated emotional conflict with people from different organizations and this takes place when people react based on emotions such as fear, jealousy, envy or stubbornness.

Intra organizational conflict can also be categorized as follows:

Intrapersonal conflict: According to Rahim (2001), this type of conflict is also known as intra-individual or intra-psychic and it occurs when an organization's member is asked to perform some tasks or roles that do not correspond with his interests, goals or values. In order words, when an individual participates in two or more activities that are clearly incompatible, they lead to intrapersonal conflict.

Interpersonal conflict: Gareth and Jennifer (2010) stated that it is a kind of conflict that involves more than one individual within a group. This usually happens when two or more employees of the same or different hierarchy in an organization do not get along and this can invariably affect those around them. The main cause of this conflict is usually personality differences. This type of conflict is said to be disruptive to organizational goals.

Intragroup conflict: This is also known as intra-departmental conflict (Rahim, 2001). It is the conflict among members of a group or sub-group as regards the carrying out of their goals, tasks and procedures to be used.

Intergroup conflict: According to Rahim (2001), this is also known as inter-departmental conflict which occurs between two or more groups within an organization.

7. CAUSES OF CONFLICT AMONG NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

Potentials for conflicts are multifarious within the university system. Some of these are indicated below:

i)**Continuous competition for scarce resources:** Research, teaching, student amenities, staff pay and other welfare services all have their claims on the limited resources at the disposal of the university. Hence, there is deprivation (relative or absolute) of the needs of all the groups within the system. The consequences of inadequate provision of financial resources to the university system are the decay of structures and the decline in services and functions. According to Sanda (2012), there is direct connection between deprivation which leads to frustration, and aggression. The conflicts which result from the frustrated are often directed against the defined aggressors or perpetrators of the undesirable state of affairs. Gross mismanagement of available resources could also result in conflicts. These conflicts could take the form of strikes, demonstration, boycott of lectures and violent riots.

ii)**Perceived goal incompatibility:** The potential for conflict is likely to be high where groups or individuals perceive and interpret the same phenomenon differently. In the university system, attention needs to be focused on the critical point of contact between the teacher and the learner.

The psychology of learning suggests that students will not learn well unless they are actively involved in the process, and so accept responsibility for their learning activities. So, if students do really feel that they are learning, much else will be forgiven. If not, they need to be listened to; otherwise, they might engage themselves in other activities they consider worthwhile.

iii)Autonomy and academic freedom: Autonomy drives occurs when one group either seeks to exercise control over some activity that another party regards as its own domain or seeks to insulate itself from such control (Idowu, 2015). Academic freedom, according to Sanda (2012) connotes freedom to organize the university, design and teach courses, associate with others, project, imbibe, exchange and hold ideas without any fear of harassment or victimization, and challenge established orthodoxies without any fear of contradiction, all in the pursuit of truth. However, events such as outright ban of university staff and students' associations fear of premature retirement, or rationalization of programmes as a result of government overregulation all result in decreasing autonomy, decline in morale, goal displacement and ultimately, conflicts.

iv)Management style of universities: Though a university is an academic enterprise, a lot of academic effectiveness rests on administrative support machinery. Hence, the management competencies of university managers determine to a large extent, the severity of conflicts within the university, irrespective of the origin of the conflict (internal or external). Managers who have tendencies to authoritarianism and dogmatism are particularly conflict-prone. In university administration, eight spheres are identified for the goal of quality education to be attained (Sanda, 2012). These spheres are finances, students, academic programme, committee system, personnel, welfare, reward system and physical facilities. Any significant lapse (s) in any of these areas might lead to a revolt. Role Ambiguity/Role Dissatisfaction, Conflicts occur when the role prescriptions are vague and uncertain.

v)Difference in values and lifestyles: Udu and Okafor (2014) asserts that the practices and behavior of organizational participants are influenced and constrained by their environment which includes but not limited to economic conditions, cultural structures of the organization, etc. Also, probably because of the concentration of young adolescents, possibly experiencing freedom and independence for the first time, the university campuses are filled with and threatened by, noise, aggressive styles of dress, sexual behaviours, aesthetics and secret peer associations (e.g. cultism). The older members - academic and administrators - impose rules and regulations. The young may answer back by demanding for, and claiming, their democratic rights, culminating in minor conflicts or even ghastly skirmishes between the students and the university authority.

vi)Politics and national issues: In addition to conflicts arising from situations intrinsic to the university, some arise due to political objectives outside the university. Political control of education in terms of financial and administrative policies bring about conflicts between the university and the government. The Federal Government, through the Federal Ministry of Education and National Universities Commission (NUC), controls the structure, curriculum, budget and calendar of the universities. Also through Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), all admissions to the universities are controlled and manipulated (Quota system). Moreover, national issues, especially with political undertones, do bring about conflict. Policies such as privatization, university autonomy and democratization of university management usually spark off controversies. Politics especially on campus relating to appointment of key officers such as Vice Chancellor also result into conflicts. These conflicts often lead to disruptions of academic activities and university calendars.

Similarly, causes of role conflict in the university includes work interdependence, differences in performance criteria and reward systems, differences in units and subunits orientation and goals and differences in status and jurisdictional ambiguities. Personal or behavioural such as differences in background, personal traits, values, communication, perceptions, attitudes, and emotions.

8.CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

Conflict management practice has been defined by De Dreu (2012) as a process of managing the clashes or struggles between parties. He added that it is the practice of identifying and handling conflict in a sensible, fair and an efficient manner. Whereas Tanner (2010) defined conflict management as the limitation, mitigation and/or containment of a conflict without necessarily solving it. He added that it is the process of eradicating violence and actions associated with it thereby leaving the conflict to be dealt with on the political level. He, unlike the others, restricted the management of conflict only to the political sphere leaving out others like organizations and institutions of higher learning which also experience conflicts. Conflict management is the ability to distinguish between useful conflicts and the ones that should be eliminated. He further viewed conflict management as not implying terminating conflict, but involving the understanding of strategies required to minimize the dysfunction aspect of conflict and enhance its constructive effectiveness.

The study of conflict management is important as it helps in understanding and resolving conflicts in any organization. Conflict management aims at limiting and avoiding future violence by promoting positive behavioural changes in the parties involved (Fisher, 2000). Conflict management strategies, therefore, refer to the internal mechanisms used by various authorities in resolving conflicts without actually eradicating it. In addressing the issues of conflict, it is important to know that its management is different from the resolution albeit in some literature, the two concepts are used interchangeably (Deutsch, 2013). According to Rahim (2001), conflict resolution implies a reduction, elimination or termination of conflict. It involves mediation, negotiation, bargaining, and arbitration which fall into the conflict resolution category. It connotes the idea that individuals involved in a conflict are mutually satisfied with the outcome of the settlement of the conflict. He added that not all conflicts can actually be resolved to the mutual contentment of the parties involved.

Rahim (2001) also asserted that conflict management does not necessarily imply avoidance, reduction or termination of conflict; it simply means designing effective macro-level strategies to minimize its dysfunctions and enhance constructive functions for learning and effectiveness in an organization. He further stated that what a contemporary organization need is conflict management and not conflict resolution as conflict resolution strategies also known as dispute resolution or dispute management emphasizes negotiation or bargaining, mediation, and arbitration and these

are designed to deal with conflict at the micro-level within the organization and may not involve any significant change in the functioning of the organizations. But effective conflict management, according to him, involves a change at the macro-level in the organization so that substantive conflict is encouraged and affective conflict is minimized in the individual, group, intergroup, and organizational level. In other words, conflict management minimizes the negative outcomes of conflict and promotes its positive outcomes with the goal of improving learning in an organization. Conflict is a major outcome of interactions among people and therefore, cannot be eliminated in any social system, hence conflict resolution is considered one of the most important challenges of governance. Therefore, managing conflict towards constructive action is the best approach in resolving it in an organization rather than its complete elimination. Conflict is, therefore, considered a major consequence of social interaction among humans and as a result cannot be completely eliminated.

9. CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

One of the effective ways of managing conflict in Nigerian universities is to first and foremost recognize that there is a problem and thereafter create problem-solving processes and implementation. Rahim (2001) further stated that the art of managing organizational conflicts involves four processes which he referred to as the diagnosis, intervention, conflict learning and effectiveness.

i)Diagnosis: According to Rahim (2001) diagnosis provides the basis for intervention whereby the conflict is viewed critically and thus leads to learning and effectiveness in the organization. It is considered the most important element of conflict management. Diagnosis is the ability to recognize the problem leading to the conflict at hand. It can also lead to finding out the cause of the conflict in the organization and the strategies used by managers and employee in solving or managing the conflict.

ii)Intervention: After the diagnosis is done, intervention becomes the next necessary step and it is considered to be of two types. The first is the process approach where managers match the strategies of handling conflicts with different situations after assuming the changing intensity of the conflicts and the ways to handle them. The second is the structural approach which involves improving organizational effectiveness and changing organizational design. It manages conflict by the way it is viewed.

iii)Conflict: According to Rahim (2001), this has two dimensions. The first dimension consists of disagreements pertaining to task issues while the second consists of emotional and interpersonal issues which lead to conflicts and are said to have an effect on the organization.

i)**Competing:** This is high concern for self and low concern for others and it is known as the *"win-lose"* or the zero-sum approach. This seeks one's own concerns at the expense of others by using all appropriate strategy to win the position and defend something that is believed to be correct. People who use this style usually operate from a position of power or competitive advantage. This approach is considered appropriate when decisions need to be quickly made or when defending oneself against a person who selfishly holds on to a position without any justifiable reason. The major disadvantage of using this approach is that it can lead to offending one of the parties that did not win anything (Victor, 2012). (High assertive and low cooperative).

ii)Collaborating: High concern for self and others. This is the pursuit of all the concerns of both parties through a solution that satisfies both parties completely as a result of their coming together to address all underlying concerns and attempts to find alternatives to satisfy all of them. It is therefore a *"win-win"* approach. People who use this style try to satisfy the needs of everyone involved in the conflict by acknowledging that everyone is important. The style is considered useful when there is the need to bring different opinions together in order to get the best solution. (Assertive and cooperative).

Efficient and effective management of conflicts is fundamental to the development of any society, but the prevailing situations in Nigeria constitute a reversal of this reality. Managing conflict towards proactive and constructive action is the best approach in resolving conflict in the university. When conflict arises, we need to be able to manage them properly, so that it becomes a positive force, rather than a negative one, which would threaten the individual or group. If conflicts arise and are not managed properly, it will lead to delays of work, disinterest and lack of action and in extreme cases, it might lead to complete breakdown of the system.

In resolving university conflict, developing a constructive communication process and influential conflict negotiator's personality are very important. No doubt, schools cannot avoid experiencing one conflict or the other but a great deal of such conflict can be managed and be guided from disrupting school efforts towards attaining its manifest and latent goals if the conflicting parties are systematic in the way they communicate their grievances, situation of the conflict and their readiness to negotiate for peace and if the negotiator mediating the resolution process is of good personality (Agbonna; Yusuf & Onifade, 2014).

Conflict management in schools demands appropriate leadership style of the school administrator or chief executive. Leadership and administrative expertise remains central. A more participatory and supportive style of leadership and management behaviour is likely to assist in conflict management. Magaula (2017) articulated three strategies of peaceful crisis resolution between and among warring parties; mediation, arbitration and reconciliation. Clarification of goals and objectives is also vital. The clarification and continual refinement of goals and objectives, role definitions and performance standards help to avoid misunderstanding and conflicts. Focusing attention on super-ordinate goals that are shared by parties in conflicts may also help to defuse hostility and lead to more cooperative behaviour. Providing valid information and avenue for expression of views is needed to avoid blocking of communication flow that may lead to differences in perceptions. Effective management information system (MIS) is essential to provide requisite information which minimizes delays and ensures maximum utilization of resources. Most Nigerian universities lack effective computerized management information system for capturing, processing, storing, retrieving and disseminating relevant information (Alabi, 2012).

There is need for better understanding and cooperation between the University system as a whole and the government. The decision-makers and their advisers need to be better informed on how the universities operate, while the university community needs to acquaint itself with the ways of the government, generally. Invariably, the universities will neither

develop attitudes of hostility or servility towards the government, nor the government intolerant of the universities. Ibukun (2017), highlighted some conflict resolution measures such as the use of authority and command, problem solving, appeal to superior organisation goals, changing the structure of the organization, prevention and avoidance, expansion of opportunities and resources, compromise and agreement and changing the behaviour of people involved in conflict through dialogue.

10. CHALLENGES TO CONFLICT PRACTICES IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

Conflicts have made management of educational institutions in Nigeria to be the spotlight throughout the country. Educational institutions' conflicts in Nigeria are a phenomenon of great concern. Incidence and severity of institutional conflict has and continues to destroy the basic environmental conditions required to provide good environment for developing human resources for Nigeria. The chaotic situation has undermined many programmes aimed at enhancing the impartation of knowledge and skills in the future human resources for the country. As in many developing countries, Nigerian higher institutions witness series of organizational conflicts. Many of the conflicts lead to anarchy on campuses, some disorganize timing of school activities, destruction of lives and properties and in most cases, render school environments completely insecure for serious academic activities. In addition to these, many known school conflicts have resulted in protracted disharmony in school staff interpersonal relationship, increased indiscipline among students, disarmed school authorities, clogged channel of progressive communication and rendered institutions of learning ungovernable (Agbonna, 2016).

Most violent conflicts in Nigerian higher institutions of learning have been traced to contested bases of citizenship rights, greed, predatory rule, autocracy, and unresolved grievances. As a result of mismanagement of conflict and weak school-based security mechanisms, many mild school conflicts have turned violent and some become unresolved in Nigerian higher institutions. Among many unresolved conflicts in Nigerian higher education is the crisis of unsettled industrial agreement between the Federal Government and the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU). A crisis started as a nine - month national strike on April 2nd 2001 and eventually degenerated to a more complex conflict of the sacked 44 Unilorin lecturers. This crisis lingers till date (Agbonna; Yusuf & Onifade, 2014).

It has been observed that the causes of students' crises in tertiary institutions includes wide communication gap between the students and the school authority; delay in meeting students' demand by the school authority; failure on the part of the school authority to guarantee security of lives and properties; inadequate facilities such as lecture rooms, laboratories and equipment; drastic and obnoxious rules and regulations; students' reaction to harsh government policies; frustration and uncertainty from the larger society; academic stress; students' non-involvement in decisions that concern their welfare; students being forced to pay a special fee, etc, (Adeyemi, 2010).

Crisis in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, over the years, have led to breakdown of law and order, disturbance of public peace, loss of lives and properties. Aluede (2015) identified the effects of students' crises as closure of affected schools; loss of lives and properties among others. According to him, a record of students' unrest in Nigeria showed that in 1981, there was crisis in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria where students died and the Vice-Chancellor of the University dismissed; in 1984, many tertiary institutions rioted over the proposed introduction of tuition fees and the scrapping of catering services. This led to the closure of many Universities for months; in 1988, students rioted over the removal of subsidy from petroleum and allied products, this also led to the closure of many tertiary institutions for a period of six months, the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) also generated crisis in many tertiary institutions in Nigeria. In 2003, there was crisis in almost all the tertiary institutions in Nigeria as a result of increase in the prices of petroleum products.

Religious fundamentalism is another contributing factor to crisis in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Membership of one or the other of the various religious denominations entails a fierce sense of territory, sometimes physical, but unfailingly spiritual. This compulsive territoriality might be one of the remote reasons behind the increasing incidence of religious violence on the campuses. What is clearly evident is that each of the two dominant religions perceives itself as being involved with the other in a never-ending struggle for physical space and political resources on campus (Obadare, 2014). Suffice it to add that he sees the campus itself as a social space to be conquered and brought under their spiritual superintendence.

Ethnicity is another cause of conflict in Nigerian higher institutions (especially federal institutions). Ethnic groups in Nigeria come together to "fight" one another once a new Vice Chancellor is to be appointed. There are several cases of this type of problem in the country. Vice Chancellors are also under pressure when staff and students of the Universities are to be recruited and admitted respectively. It is interesting to note that many of these conflicts over vacant Vice Chancellorship positions started to occur in the late 1990s when the issue of ethnicity and religious fundamentalism became a critical factor in Nigerian politics (Uwazie, 2013). It is necessary to note however that unlike what obtains in Lebanon, Belgium, Cyprus, India and Malaysia where comparable constitutional provisions and public policy exist, the Nigerian Constitution does not reserve or earmark any quotas for any designated ethnic groups. Thus, each group in the federation adopts its own peculiar self-help strategies to get what it considers to be its own fair share of the "Nigerian national cake". The end product is widespread suspicion among groups and subgroups in the country and this makes dialogue and understanding to be highly expedient at the national, state and communal levels but difficult to attain in the country. Higher education has significant roles to play in dealing with this problem (Oloyede, 2015).

11. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conflict is an inevitable outcome of humans, groups and state interactions. The study has shown that conflict is a process, and it is inevitable because individual has interdependent relationship. It is generally perceived as unwholesome because of its destructive manifestations in terms of killings, maiming and destruction of property. The fact however remains that even though we agree that conflict is a necessary evil, there is need to avoid it where possible because of its dysfunctional consequences. It has been

observed that there is a rising spate of violent conflicts in Nigerian higher institutions. Its impact on Nigerian higher institutions makes conflicts unpalatable relations. Incessant violent conflicts in the tertiary institutions in the country cannot but impede educational development. People cannot engage in any developmental thinking in an environment characterized by conflict. It therefore implies that they will be denied peacetime capacity to develop new ideas, initiatives and innovations.

The following are the recommendations for the study:

i)   Universities constitution, laws and regulations should be made available to both academic and professional administrators and all staff so as to avoid communication gap and conflict within the system.

ii) The academic and professional administrators should continue to demonstrate spirit of tolerance so as to ensure the smooth running of the college.

iii) The management of universities, polytechnics and colleges of education should always explore the dialogue strategy as a foremost step in managing conflict before embarking on the others for higher administrative effectiveness in the institutions.

iv) Conflict management should not be seen to connote a rigid approach that suits all situations, rather, it should involve a series of concerted efforts to prevent and arrest a seemingly serious crisis.

v)   Conditions that promote effective conflict management should include consideration of a wide range of alternative solutions, a cooperative climate, an organized and orderly process, and avoidance of artificial conflict-reducing devices such as voting or relying on a leader to make the final decision.

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