



WORKPLACE CONFLICT AND EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT: *The continuous strike activity and the apparent discord between lecturers and other unions within the university system made it necessary for this study's main objective to investigate the connection between workplace conflict and employee performance at Anambra State's public universities. 3492 academic employees from the public universities that were chosen for the study made up the population, and the Krejcie and Morgan formula was used to determine the sample size, which came out to be 344. The data was collected using a standardized questionnaire that underwent reliability and validity testing. Simple regression analysis was used to examine the data, and tests of the hypotheses were done at the 5% significance level. The results showed that workplace conflict has a statistically significant and positive relationship with employees' performance in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria, with ($R = .989$, $R\text{-Square} = .978$, $F\text{ statistics} = 13017.646$, $P\text{-value}.000 < .05$). 98% of the variations in employees' performance are explained by workplace (interpersonal) conflict. Therefore, among others, it was recommended that the management of the universities need to go extra mile to find out lecturers that are having interpersonal issues in other to wade in and settle it and not just allowing the people involved to handle the issues themselves and there is need for a strong conflict resolution committee in various departments.*

KEYWORDS: Workplace conflict, Employee performance, Public universities, Strike.

JEL Codes: C93, D74, H12.



INTRODUCTION

Different organizations, depending on the nature and structure of the organization, have many things that could cause employees to conflict with each other, which is called interpersonal conflict. But generally, certain common occurrences generate rancor and disagreement in every organization, and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (UNIZIK) and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) are no different. These common occurrences include power tussle, resource allocation, work schedules and loads. Others are linked to communication gaps, value and interest mismatch. Pointing out these conflict-generating issues, Hotepo et al. (2010) postulate that conflicts of interests arise in groups as a result of lack of resources, different expectations, competition, lack of cooperation, interdependence and communication problems. According to Obasan (2011), there are several factors that contribute to workplace conflict and agitations, including unfavorable employment conditions, poor management-employee relations, a management stance against unionization, a lack of an efficient conflict-prevention mechanism, and non-consultation with employees prior to making important decisions that impact them. Misunderstandings regarding the nature of a task, its intended completion method, or its substance can also lead to conflicts (Tjosvold, 2008; Wright et al., 2017). There are disagreements about how to divide and allocate revenue, how to carry out the work, and how long and hard workers should put in (Nwafor & Baridam-Ngobe, 2020). Specifically, in the universities and for lecturers, there are interpersonal conflicts arising as a result of course allocation, whose textbooks students should buy, who will supervise who and class schedule. Where lecture halls are not enough, lecturers also clash in deciding who will use the available one first. There are also issues of membership to committees, promotion issues, power tussles between or among those vying for different elective positions in the universities. On the other hand, there is intergroup conflict on different issues like the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) always clashing with Non-Academic Staff of Universities (NASU) and other sister unions such as the National Association of Academic Technologists (NAAT) (Lukersmith, 2021). According to ASUU, other sister unions always seek to jeopardize the struggle of ASUU because other unions seem not to go on strike on their own, but wait for ASUU to initiate strike actions before they will initiate theirs. Workers in the universities (Federal and State governments) and their employees also clash on issues of salary and wages, working conditions, allowances and funding of the universities. So, the university system is one that is fraught with a lot of conflicting issues as a result of numerous critical internal stakeholders that are at loggerhead always for one issue/interest or the other.

The lingering ASUU imbroglio with the FG may to an extent be attributed to communication gaps as ASUU has on numerous occasions accused the FG representatives of not telling the president of the country the truth as explained by ASUU President, Prof Emmanuel Osodeke who has sort audience with the president of the country to tell him “the truth”, and that the president can resolve the issue at once. ASUU has also accused the representatives of government of not telling the public the truth or misleading them, just like the recent comment where the Minister of Labour on Thursday, 18 August 2022 while briefing state house correspondence said that the only outstanding issue with ASUU is the stand by the government to withhold the salary of lecturers for the 6 months that they have been on strike. These issues boil down to communication challenges and gaps, which is a huge cause of conflict in the university system (Emuron, 2020). This could lead to confusion about who is to do what and when. The government has also accused the Briggs Committee, which was tasked with negotiating with ASUU, of going too far. The committee has been accused by the minister of



labor, Chris Ngige, and the minister of state for education, Festus Keyamo, of allowing ASUU to set their own salaries without consulting them first and of driving out representatives from relevant ministries, including the ministry of finance, the commission on income and wages, and the budget and national planning and salaries. ASUU has also accused the ministers, especially the minister of labor as at the time of carrying out this research of not playing the conciliatory role it should play, rather, taking sides with government and thwarting the whole negotiation process, hence, pointing to job ambiguity from all angles which may affect the performance of the workers in the universities.

Scholars have also carried out research on how employees' performance could be affected through workplace conflicts, with varying outcomes. While Usendok (2022) found that workplace conflict has a positive relationship with employees' performance, Unguren and Arslan (2021) established a negative impact. It has also been revealed that no studies have been carried out in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (UNIZIK) and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) to examine this relationship. It is as a result of all these conflicting issues that this study becomes necessary at this point to examine workplace conflict and how it affects the performance of employees in the selected universities in Anambra State. The rest of this paper is structured as follows; literature review, methodology used, analysis of results, and conclusion and recommendations.

Objective of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to identify the extent to which workplace conflict relates to employee performance in public universities in Anambra State. Specifically, this study seeks to determine the extent of the relationship that exists between interpersonal conflict and work absenteeism among lecturers in public universities in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The research is guided by the following question:

- What is the extent of the relationship existing between interpersonal conflict and work absenteeism among lecturers in public universities in Anambra State?

Hypothesis of the Study

The null hypothesis of this study is stated below;

- H_0 : There is a significant relationship existing between interpersonal conflict and work absenteeism among lecturers in public universities in Anambra State.

Scope of the Study

The geographical scope is limited to Anambra State while the organizational scope covers UNIZIK and COOU, owing to the fact that those are the places where visible crises occur always. The only lecturers who are ASUU members for at least 5 years in the universities are included in the research because these people have witnessed at least two ASUU strikes (2020 and 2022).



LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Workplace Conflict

Workplace conflict is an organizational phenomenon that has been around for quite some time, and one would have thought that there will be a widely accepted definition of the term. However, the reverse seems to be the case as there is definitional confusion about the term as pointed out by some researchers. Conflict does not conform to a particular, well-recognized pattern, as noted by Aminu and Marfo (2010). In a similar vein, Tjosvold (2008) asserts that while organizational literature on conflict offers a variety of definitions of conflict—some of which are contradictory—there is no consensus over what constitutes workplace conflict. However, a point of convergence among all the definitions is that workplace conflict arises as a result of human interactions in the workplace. De Dreu and Gelfand (2008) state that researchers and authors tend to agree that conflict is an offshoot of social interaction and a social situation.

It is noteworthy to state at this juncture that conflict takes effect only when there is a misalignment of interest; where one sees another as a threat. De Dreu and Gelfand (2008) state that conflict arises where interests and activities of participants in the workplace or groups are essentially, or seemingly challenged, blocked, and disable the realization of one party's objectives. It is the presence of disagreement or discord that gives rise to conflict in the workplace. Workplace conflict is also defined as the disagreement that arises when the interests, values, or ambitions of various individuals or groups collide and obstruct one other's efforts to accomplish organizational goals (Kazimoto, 2013). According to Robbins and Judge (2009), it starts when one party believes that another party has negatively impacted, or is about to negatively impact, something that the first party values. From the aforementioned, it is clear that in order for a conflict to arise, someone's or a group's interests must be perceived as being in danger of being threatened by others.

Interpersonal Conflict

According to Barki and Hartwick (2001), interpersonal conflict is the kind of conflict that develops when interdependent parties feel negatively affected by perceived differences and obstacles to achieving their objectives. There are further categories into which this type of dispute might be divided. Five domains were proposed by De Raeye et al. (2008) to explain interpersonal conflict in the workplace: job content (requirements, tasks, latitude in making decisions, and responsibilities); work conditions (physical demands of the job); work relations (manager, colleagues, and social support); terms of employment (work schedule, overtime, autonomy in the workplace, work hours, holidays, and taking breaks); and the evaluation of work (job satisfaction, balance between achievements and rewards, consideration of effort, respect for work). Conflict may therefore arise when people interact in different ways and finds out that personality, value, morale and work ethics differ.



Intergroup Conflict

Just like the name implies, this type of conflict emanates from groups. That is, it is the type of conflict that is observed between or amongst different groups in the workplace. It could be groups in the form of departments, sections, agencies and even committees. For the fact that people belong to groups that overlap and are interdependent, conflict is a certain occurrence. Interdepartmental conflict is another term for this kind of dispute. Conflict between two or more groups or units inside an organization is referred to by this term (Chimere-Nwoji, 2017). According to Bankovskaya (2012), it is a conflict between several departments, teams, and groups.

This kind of dispute occurs when divisions, units, departments, or groups within an organization disagree on accepted standards and principles. Afzal et al. (2016) claim that because these conflicts are caused by factors connected to the organizational structure, such as vague work definitions, they are not personal in origin. Again, the root of these disputes may be variations in the performance requirements for different units and groups. Nwatu (2011) provides an example of this kind of contradiction when she notes that cashiers are paid according to the quantity of customers they serve at the counter, but customer service representatives are paid according to the level of happiness they deliver to customers. Conflicts inevitably develop because cashiers serve more consumers than customer service personnel. Intergroup conflicts are associated with tasks and relationships, and impatience, anger, and behaviors such as yelling, screaming, and swearing are common traits (Ayoko et al., 2003).

Communication Gap

The effective coexistence and cooperation of people/employees in an organization require constant communication. The extent to which that communication is effective, consistent, timely, through the right medium and in the right amount goes a long way in influencing the work environment and how employees will perceive it. Hence, communication is a determinant of conflict in organizations, especially in those firms where employee interaction reigns supreme like institutions of higher learning (Usendok, 2022).

When communication in an organization is open and flows in both ways, it reduces rumor and ambiguities and hence, reduces instances of conflict. According to Usendok (2022), teamwork and open communication foster the exchange of fresh ideas and reinforce professional bonds, all of which can boost employee morale. In a similar vein, Inyang (2004) asserts that harmony and understanding are fostered through appropriate and successful communication. Communication-related ambiguities might encourage conflict. Conflict arises when someone misinterprets a message or is denied access to information, leading to irritation and rage. Conflict arises in the workplace when one person asks another for information and they don't react appropriately (Ngemukung, 2022).

Employees' Performance

The performance of employees is one construct that has generated a lot of interest in the organizational lexicon. Possibly because of the critical role it places in determining the overall performance of organizations, hence, the enormous interest in it. Performance can be defined in a quantitative term, where the emphasis is laid on results such as profitability, return on investment and return on asset. Nonetheless, the nature of the company under study dictates the kind of performance indicators that should be applied. Key performance indicators for a manufacturing firm might be different from that of banks or high institutions. Performance could be narrowed down to either organizational performance or employee performance, albeit, they all are intertwined. However, the interest in this work is on employee performance.

Employee performance is measured in terms of how effective and efficient employees are in discharging their duties. This was the position of Donglin (2019) who states that employees' performance can be seen as how well employees in an organization execute their duties professionally. According to Nwafor and Baridam-Ngobe (2020), it is an employee's capacity to carry out their duties in accordance with the standards of an organization. It is the ability to create acceptable outcomes based on organizational plans (Hayati et al., 2014).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Here, the interaction or the interconnectivity of the variables of the study is shown to know how they relate to each other. This is shown in Figure 2.1 below:

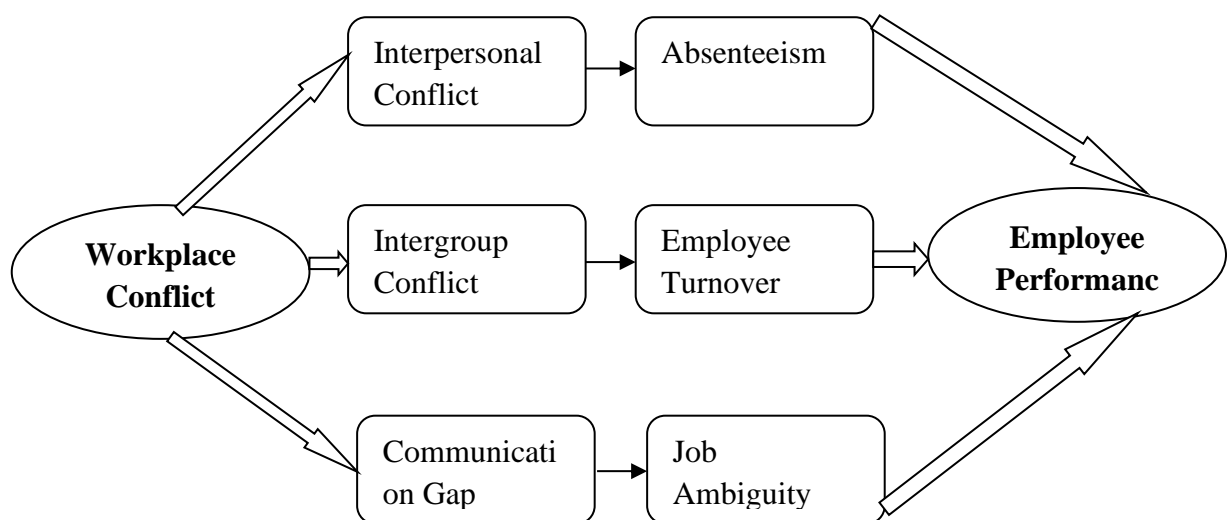


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1 is the conceptual framework showing the interconnectivity of the variables of the study. The two extreme oval shapes in the left and right hand side contain the broad variables, with the independent variable (workplace conflict) in the left and the dependent variable (employee performance) in the right. The variables in rounded rectangle shapes represent the decomposed variables for both the dependent and the independent variables. The first three (interpersonal conflict, intergroup conflict and communication gap) are variables used in



capturing workplace conflict while the rest (absenteeism, employee turnover intention and deviant behavior) are used in measuring employee performance. The arrows show the interconnectivity/flow of the connection between the variables.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher considered it imperative to review the theory which would assist immensely in giving this study a theoretical focus. As such, the Dispute/Conflict Theory is discussed.

Dispute/Conflict Theory

Karl Marx (1818–1883) introduced the dispute or conflict hypothesis, which holds that society is constantly at odds with itself over scarce resources. According to the thesis, dominance and power—rather than consensus and compliance—maintain social order (Osabiya, 2015). This disagreement theory holds that people in positions of money and power attempt to maintain them by any means necessary, primarily through the repression of the weak. The theory's central tenet is that members of society will cooperate to try to increase their personal wealth and power.

Many social phenomena, such as wars, revolutions, poverty, discrimination, arguments, fights, internal conflicts within organizations, and marital violence, have been explained by dispute theory. The ideas of social inequality, resource distribution, and conflicts between various socioeconomic classes or groups are fundamental to dispute theory. Marx's interpretation of conflict theory centered on the conflict between the two main classes. Every class is made up of individuals with similar interests and varying levels of property ownership. Marx (1868) postulated the existence of a class of people known as the bourgeoisie, who are thought to represent the majority of society's wealth and resources. The other group is the proletariat, which comprises members of the working class. He postulated that the proletariat, the dominant class, will be oppressed by the bourgeoisie, a minority within society.

Empirical Review

Works done by previous researchers are examined here to see what they have done, where they did it, how they did it and the result they got from their studies. The following works were, therefore, empirically reviewed:

Briggs (2022) conducted a study on employee job satisfaction and conflict management tactics in state and federal ministries located in Rivers State. Employees of Federal and State ministries were given the questionnaire; 200 workers were chosen at random from each ministry to comprise the sample. Descriptive statistics, correlation statistics, and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The study discovered and came to the conclusion that employee work satisfaction in the federal and state ministries in Rivers State is significantly correlated with conflict management techniques that involve compromise, avoidance, accommodation, and dominance.

Akwa Ibom State University employees' job performance and organizational conflict were studied by Usendok (2022). This study used a survey research design. 226 employees who were chosen at random from the workforce made up the participants. An established, well-validated structured questionnaire was used to generate the data. To examine the data gathered from the respondents, descriptive and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics were



used. The findings demonstrated a strong positive correlation between worker job performance and organizational conflict factors, such as goal dissimilarities, shared resources, task interdependence, and specialization. Moreover, the Pearson product moment correlation result showed that specialization and organizational harmony had the strongest significant positive link.

In Tanzania, Rwehumbiza and Mfugale (2022) investigated the impact of conflict management on worker performance, specifically focusing on the Dar es Salaam Maritime Gateway Project (DMGP). The study was restricted to DMGP personnel and used a case study research approach to gather the necessary primary data. Forty-five technical staff members participated in the study; they were purposefully and conveniently chosen for the sample. SPSS version 23 was used to code and then analyze the data that had been gathered. The results showed that even if they have the opportunity to voice their ideas, employees are afraid to confide in their managers about their inner worries because they feel insecure in their work. The findings also showed that involving the persons involved was the main strategy for resolving interpersonal problems. Employees at DMGP would rather resolve work-related conflicts with their direct supervisors than with outside parties. Additionally, DMGP's training and development programs have had a major impact on staff members' performance across several departments. In general, it was found that DMGP personnel' performance is greatly impacted by conflict management.

The impact of position ambiguity, time pressure, and job stress factors on employee performance was investigated by Zolkapli et al. (2022) in one of the water supply services companies located in Muar, Johor, Malaysia. 144 employees of the relevant company were conveniently selected by the study to take part in it. The responders returned each questionnaire with their full responses. Three analyses had been performed on the data using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS): regression, correlation, and descriptive. The findings showed a substantial and favorable correlation between position ambiguity and work effectiveness. Furthermore, regression analysis used in the study's data showed that job stress factors had a 55.9% impact on job performance. It is possible that additional factors not included in the study had an impact on 44.1% of the results. Additionally, it demonstrated that the most significant impact of occupational stress on job performance is position ambiguity.

The mediating function of job satisfaction on the relationship between role conflict, role ambiguity, and job performance was investigated by Unguren and Arslan (2021). In Alanya, one of the most popular tourist attractions in Turkey, staff members of 3, 4, and 5-star hotels completed properly organized questionnaires with which the data was gathered. By using structural equation modeling, the data was examined. The findings showed that role ambiguity and role conflict both directly affect hotel employees' job happiness and performance. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that role ambiguity and conflict have a moderating effect on job performance when it comes to job satisfaction.

Saidu (2021) explored how employees' performance in a few higher education institutions in Adamawa State, Nigeria, was affected by their conflict management approaches. For this study, data from primary and secondary sources were consulted; questionnaires were employed to gather primary data. The employees of three institutions—Federal Polytechnic, Adamawa State University, and College of Health and Technology Mubi—were chosen using the convenience sampling technique. With the assistance of a research assistant, the researcher distributed a sample of 358 questionnaires. The data analysis was performed using Smart-PLS software. The results offered empirical support for the importance of the conflict management style aspects.



The survey also revealed that needs, roles, pressures, goals, perceptions, and styles, as well as infractions of the agreements struck by the government, management, and unions, are the most frequent causes of conflict. Denial of promotion when it is due is another prevalent source of conflict.

Aremu et al.'s (2021) study looked at the impact of conflict management techniques on the long-term viability of manufacturing firms in Kwara State, Nigeria. Five manufacturing enterprises located in Kwara State, Nigeria, were specifically chosen, and fifty line managers were selected at random from among them. The method used to gather primary data was a structured questionnaire. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the hypotheses. The findings showed that third-party intervention conflict management techniques had a detrimental impact on organizational sustainability, whereas communication and negotiation conflict management strategies had a significant and beneficial impact.

Egerová and Rotenbornová (2021) investigated the reasons behind conflicts that arise between managers and employees as well as the conflict resolution techniques employed in the Czech Republic. The use of a qualitative methodology that included content and theme analysis was made. The purpose of the thematic analysis was to investigate the topics related to the reasons behind conflicts that arise between managers and employees. The styles of conflict management were determined by content analysis. The data utilized in both analyses consisted of 47 distinct written assignments that depicted conflict scenarios involving managers and employees. The analysis revealed that the most popular management style, utilized by both male and female managers, was fight. The results also showed that avoidance, adaptability, and collaboration are the three styles that employees most commonly adopt.

The impact of a work conflict and work stress on the productivity of PT. Paiton Operation & Maintenance Indonesia's Maintenance and Engineer Division staff was ascertained by Rai et al. (2021). 107 employees from the Maintenance and Engineer Division were given online questionnaires to complete in order to gather data. The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach of Smart PLS was used to analyze the data. Results indicated that employee performance is positively and significantly impacted by work conflict. The results of the study also demonstrated that employee performance is unaffected by job stress.

In order to investigate the impact of conflict management on employee performance in Nigeria, Wabi (2021) focused on banks. For this study, a qualitative research methodology was used. Primary data were gathered through interviews and questionnaires from a subset of the bank's employees. We gathered secondary data from published works. The study's data were arranged and shown using tables and percentages. To specifically examine the hypotheses, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient and simple linear regression were employed as statistical methods. The following were the study's main conclusions: There are frequently disputes at the bank. These encompass conflict in group management, interpersonal, and intrapersonal domains. Personality qualities, objectives, corporate policies, inadequate communication, and ineffective reward systems are some of the factors. A variety of conflict management techniques have been used, such as team resolution, mediation, accommodation, competitiveness, compromise, avoidance, and counseling. Both the organization and its employees suffer when there are conflicts.



Using The Oke-Ogun Polytechnic, Saki as a case study, Ahmed and Popoola (2021) investigated the evaluation of conflict management and employee organization performance in Nigeria's public sector. A survey design was used in the investigation. Purposive and stratified selection approaches were employed to choose a total of 100 respondents for the study, utilizing a questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. Descriptive statistics were used to evaluate the data, while regression analysis and the correlation coefficient were used to assess the hypotheses. The study found that adopting an efficient staff conflict management strategy will improve organizational performance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The nature of the investigation led to the adoption of a survey research design in this work. Using a questionnaire, observation, and/or interviews, researchers can gather information on a phenomenon from a sample of respondents through the use of survey research designs. This study collected data from sampled respondents (lecturers) about a phenomenon (conflict and employee performance) through a questionnaire. These characteristics made survey design the most suited for this work.

Population of the Study

The population of the study is 3492 academic staff of the selected universities. The source of this figure is the personnel department of the respective schools studied. The distribution of the population is given in Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1: Population Distribution of Selected Universities Firms

S/N	Name	Population
1	UNIZIK	2480
2	COOU	1012
	Total	3492

Source: Personnel Department of the Schools Studied, 2023

Table 3.1 shows the distribution of the population of the study, with UNIZIK having 2480 academic staff while COOU has 1012 academic staff, making a total of 3492 staff.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study made use of Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula to determine the sample size of the study. The workings are shown below:

$$s = \frac{x^2 NP(1 - P)}{d^2(N - 1) + x^2 P(1 - P)}$$

Where

s = Sample size



x^2 = Table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at 0.05% confidence level (3.84)

N = population size (3492)

P = population proportion (assumed to be 0.5 since this would provide the maximum sample size)

d = Degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (0.05)

$$s = \frac{3.84 (3492)(0.5)(1-0.5)}{(0.05)^2(3492-1) + (3.84) (0.5)(1-0.5)}$$

$$s = \frac{3333}{8.7275 + 0.96}$$

$$s = \frac{3333}{9.6875}$$

$$s \cong 344$$

In determining the proportion of questionnaires to be allocated to the studied institutions, Bowley's allocation formula was used and the workings are shown below:

$$nh = \frac{nNh}{N}$$

Where n = total sample size.

Nh = No. of items in each stratum in the population.

N = population size.

Allocation of the Sample Size

$$\text{UNIZIK} \quad 344 (2480) / 3492 = 245$$

$$\text{COOU} \quad 344 (1012) / 3492 = 99$$

From the calculation, it is seen that UNIZIK got a total of 245 copies of the questionnaire corresponding to the population proportion of the institution while COOU got a total of 99 copies of the questionnaire corresponding to their population proportion.

Method of Data Analysis

Using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20, a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics were used to evaluate the data. While simple regression is used in inferential statistics (to determine the strength of the association), frequencies and means are used in descriptive statistics. A significance threshold of 5% (0.05) was used to test the hypothesis. If, following analysis, the probability value (p-value) is less than the applied level of significance (0.05), the hypothesis is accepted; if not, the null hypothesis is accepted.



DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data AnalysisThe questionnaire distribution schedule is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Questionnaire Distribution Schedule

S/N	Institution	Distributed	Collected	Analyzed
1	UNIZIK	245	229	225
2	COOU	99	81	75
Total		344 (100%)	310 (90%)	300 (87%)

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4.1 shows the total number of distributed copies of the questionnaire, retrieved copies and the number analyzed for the study. According to the study's sample size, 344 copies of the questionnaire in total were distributed, as shown in the Table. 310 copies were collected representing 90% of the distributed copies of the questionnaire while 300 copies were analyzed as they were some questionnaire copies that were incompletely answered.

Descriptive Statistics for Research Question and Test of Hypothesis

Research Question

What is the extent of the relationship existing between interpersonal conflict and work absenteeism among lecturers in public universities in Anambra State?

Table 4.2: Distribution of Responses for Interpersonal Conflict and Work Absenteeism

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA (5)	A (4)	UD (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Verdict
Independent Variables (Workplace Conflict)								
Interpersonal Conflict								
1	I have no issues with any of my colleagues.	58	70	-	82	90	2.74	Reject
2	I am not dragging anything with anybody in my institution.	79	87	9	65	60	3.20	Accept
3	I do not rapport with everybody in the university.	112	80	4	104	-	3.67	Accept
4	There are those I do not relate well with in my university.	67	99	-	111	23	3.25	Accept
5	My values and those of some people do not match in my institution.	120	92	11	67	10	3.82	Accept
Dependent Variables (Employees' Absenteeism)								
6	I would stay away from work at any opportunity because of conflicts with my colleagues at my university.	102	73	-	80	45	3.36	Accept
7	I do not like coming to work because of some people in my institution.	121	117	-	52	10	3.96	Accept



8	My university is a pleasant place for me to always be because of the friendliness of my colleagues.	76	89	-	70	65	3.14	Accept
9	I like coming to work always, as I do not have any issues with anybody there.	34	90	7	121	48	2.80	Reject
10	Irrespective of individual differences in my university, it is a nice place to always be.	91	102	10	76	21	3.55	Accept

Source: *Field Survey, 2023*

The respondents' responses to questions about interpersonal conflict and job absenteeism are displayed in Table 4.2. Here, the mean is the subject of examination, with a threshold of three or higher. That is, any question on the questionnaire that has a mean of three or higher should be seen as occurring or entrenched in the universities; if not, it will be rejected. Starting with the questionnaire items used in measuring interpersonal conflict, when they were asked if they have no issues with any of their colleagues, a mean of 2.74 shows that they disagreed, meaning that they do have issues with their colleagues. A mean of 3.20 reveals that the respondents agreed that they were not dragging anything with anybody in my institution. However, they accepted that they do not have a rapport with everybody in the university with a mean of 3.67 which is higher than the level of acceptable benchmark. When they were asked if there are those they do not relate well with in their university, a mean of 3.25 indicates that they concurred. In a similar vein, they asserted that, with a mean of 3.82, their value and that of certain individuals do not correspond.

Regarding the absenteeism questionnaire, the participants expressed agreement, with a mean score of 3.36, that they would avoid work whenever possible due to disagreements with their university colleagues. On a similar note, they also agreed that they do not like coming to work because of some people in their institution as shown with a mean of 3.96. Similarly, with a mean of 3.14, the respondents agreed that their university is a pleasant place for them to always be because of the friendliness of their colleagues. However, they rejected that they like coming to work always as they do not have any issues with anybody there was indicated with a mean of 2.80. A mean of 3.5 reveals that they rejected that irrespective of individual differences in their university, it is a nice place to always be

Hypothesis Testing

There is a significant relationship existing between interpersonal conflict and work absenteeism among lecturers in public universities in Anambra State.

Table 4.3: Regression Result for Hypothesis One

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.989 ^a	.978	.978	.987

a. Predictors: (Constant), INTPSNAL

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Where:

INTPSNAL = Interpersonal Conflict



Table 4.3 presents the regression analysis result for hypothesis one which states that there is a significant relationship existing between interpersonal conflict and work absenteeism among lecturers in public universities in Anambra State. The correlation coefficient ($R = .989$) indicates that there is a positive association between the variables (interpersonal conflict and work absenteeism) as shown by the table. The result also shows that a 98% change in the dependent variable (absenteeism) is as a result of changes in the independent variables (interpersonal conflict) as shown by the coefficient of determination ($R\text{-Square} = .978$).

Table 4.4: ANOVA Output for Hypothesis One

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12690.281	1	12690.281	13017.646	.000 ^b
	Residual	290.506	298	.975		
	Total	12980.787	299			

a. Dependent Variable: ADNSENT

b. Predictors: (Constant), INTPSNAL

Source: *SPSS Output, 2023*

Where:

ADNSENT = Absenteeism

The results of the ANOVA generated during the regression analysis for the hypothesis are shown in Table 4.4. The table indicates that the sig (p-value) is .000 and the F statistics is 13017.646. The p-value is below the threshold of significance ($p\text{-value} < .05$), indicating a positive and statistically significant association between interpersonal conflict and job absenteeism.

Decision: Accept the alternate hypothesis.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study qualitatively analyzed the relationship that exists between workplace conflict and employees' performance in Anambra State public universities, using UNIZIK and COOU as case study. It was confirmed from the study that conflict arises in organizations because of disagreement between/among employees. For organizations to function, employees from different backgrounds, cultures, ages, qualifications and races are brought together. Most of these employees end up working as a team either in the same department, committee or group. Hence, conflicts are bound to happen on intrapersonal, interpersonal and intergroup levels when they do not agree on different issues like how tasks are to be executed, how roles are assigned and even on moral principles and values. The conflict could also be as a result of misinformation or lack of communication. It could also arise as a result of remuneration and conditions of service or not obeying agreements as is the case in this current impasse between ASUU and the Federal Government. When crises occur, performances of employees and by extension, the organization is usually disrupted as revealed in this study when positive relationships are shown to exist between interpersonal conflict and absenteeism, intergroup and turnover intention and between communication gaps and job ambiguity. Therefore, this study



concludes on the strength of this that workplace conflict has a statistically significant relationship with employees' performance in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations made in line with the findings of the study:

- i. Rather than letting the parties involved handle their own conflicts, university administrations should make a special effort to identify instructors who are experiencing interpersonal problems and intervene. The implementation of a robust conflict resolution committee across multiple departments can facilitate the resolution of conflicts before they worsen and become dysfunctional, which in turn prevents employees from reporting for duty and performing their responsibilities responsibly.
- ii. In order to resolve disputes that span many departments and units, university administrations must ensure that there are interdepartmental/unit conflict resolution committees that will be overseen by the university administration.
- iii. The FG as the employer needs to always respect agreements reached with unions to forestall constant industrial action and the concomitant employee turnover and brain drain in the university system.
- iv. Communication among departments, faculties and management of the institution and government should be as open as possible and two-directional (top-bottom and bottom-top) so as to make sure people at all times know what is expected of them to avoid ambiguity in roles, tasks and responsibilities.

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