



**CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF  
DELIVERY OF LIBRARY SERVICES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN CROSS  
RIVER STATE, NIGERIA.**

By

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the Conflict management and sustainable development of delivery of library services in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of this study, two objectives and null hypotheses were generated to direct the study. Literature review was done according to the variables under study. Survey research design was adopted for the study. A sample of three hundred and ninety-eight (398) respondents was selected for the study. The selection was done through the census sampling technique. The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was the statistical analysis technique adopted to test the hypotheses under study. All hypotheses were subjected to testing at .05 level of significance with relative degrees of freedom. The results of the analysis revealed that, avoidance technique and competing technique significantly relate to delivery of service in tertiary institutions. Based on the findings of the study it was recommended among others that management should adopt an open policy strategy so that different groups can move closer, collaborate and make some compromises where possible so that the objectives of setting up the Library will be achieved.

**Keywords:** Conflict Management, Sustainable Development, Library, Services, Institution.

## INTRODUCTION

Conflict among staff in any organization is inevitable, that if managed properly will bring catalyst for change and have a positive impact on the satisfaction and the delivery of services in the library. Conversely, unmanaged conflicts negatively affect both staff satisfaction and the delivery of service. When leaders of an organization for instance, ignore work place conflict, there is a tendency for delivery of services to be poor or inadequate at the long run.

Universities are centers of learning, teaching and research. In order to achieve this aims, it has become imperative for any established tertiary institution to have a library. Library is the heart of any tertiary institution, it supports reading, teaching and the research needs of its users and the parent institution. Delivery of services in the library is a component of business that defines the interaction between providers and client where the provider offers services.

The library is a repository of knowledge and a dynamic social institution, an indispensable resource center for reliable information and meant to preserve the recorded knowledge of man for use. Adebile and Ojo (2012) emphasized that a library is concerned with the collection, processing storage and dissemination of recorded information for the purpose of reading, study and consultation. Therefore, for any library to attain this goal, many activities must be performed by the librarians that should translate to library and information services.

Service delivery in library, according to Madu (2010), is the sum total of all library activities aimed at facilitating the use of the library and its resources; it is the responsibility of a librarian in a university library to make use of the available resources to provide answer to users' queries and meet their information needs. Service delivery is defined as the ability of a librarian to strive within and outside available resources to provide answers to users' queries and also to meet the overall information needs of users (Olanlokun, 2013). Effective service delivery implies satisfying the request of users. This entails providing the actual information or services that will meet the needs of information seekers (users). Library is to serve its users at any point in time and must be able to give out quality information in terms of currency, relevance, accuracy and ease of use to meet and satisfy the information needs of users. Therefore, if the library fails to meet the information needs of its users, then satisfactory and effective services have not been rendered. Hence, the following conflict management techniques can be applied in order to improve on the delivery of services in the library:

Avoidance technique which seeks to put off conflicts as much as possible, when used, can help restore peace in the work place thereby improve the delivery of service in the library. According to Adebayo (2009) the avoidance strategy seeks to put off conflicts indefinitely. By delaying or ignoring conflict, the avoider hopes the problem resolves itself without a confrontation. Those who actively avoid conflict frequently have low esteem or hold a position of low power. In some circumstance, avoiding can serve as a profitable conflict management strategy, such as after the dismissal of a popular but unproductive employee. The hiring of a more productive replacement for the position soothes much of the conflict. From a development standpoint, a person who consistently takes an avoiding approach to dealing with disagreements has likely experienced life events which reinforced the notion that conflict is bad (Albert, 2015). This may have started in childhood with a domineering family member who, perhaps had a problem with substance abuse or difficulty managing anger and violence. Expressions of disagreement many have been chastised and a sense of fear of retribution created. Family values that discourage arguing or displays of disapproval may also impact an individual's willingness to assert themselves when they have a differing perspective.

Another technique is competing which operates as zero-sum game, in which one side wins and the other side loses. Highly assertive personalities often fall back to competition as a conflict management technique. The competitive technique works best in a limited number of conflicts such as emergency situations. In this technique, both sides are in agreement to give a little to resolve the disagreement but this approach rarely leads to an optimal solution. It involves give and-take or sharing whereby both parties give up something to make a mutually acceptable decision. It may mean splitting the difference, exchanging concession, or seeking a quick, middle-ground position. When these techniques are put in place, it will reduce conflict as much as possible and this will eventually improve delivery of service in the library.

### **Statement of the problem**

Over the years, conflict has been a frequent occurrence in most libraries in Cross River State. The researchers' personal observation points to the fact that conflict exist among library staff in tertiary institutions in the state. This perhaps terms from the fact that unit heads in the libraries do not seem to apply those techniques that are capable of reducing or eliminating conflicts among the staff. The techniques such as; avoidance, competing, among others.

Today, we see some staff not dedicating themselves to their work schedules as they show laid-back attitude to their work schedule. At times, they do not come to work and this

leads to not delivering their work responsibilities appropriately. Some staff do not talk to each other, while some might even end up quarrelling during office hours. More so, most of them dump their duty for other menial activities that are detrimental to the productivity of the library activities.

Librarians and unit heads have tried to ensure that library staff commit themselves to their responsibilities by engaging them in the attendance books which every staff sign on daily basis in and out of working hours just to keep check of them, their activities and performance; constituting disciplinary committee to manage conflict among staff and organizing a monthly unit meeting in every unit in order to trash out the different problems among the staff and to keep check of their well being so that there will be no challenges among the staff and delivery of services.

Despite the effort of the librarian and unit heads in curbing these ugly trends in the library, this scenario (conflict) seems to continue seriously, hence posing a challenge to delivery of services in libraries, particularly the academic libraries where different class and group of people from various backgrounds meet. It is on this backdrop that the researchers poised to investigate the relationship between conflict management and delivery of library services.

### **Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of the study is to investigate conflict management and delivery of library services in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- 1) find out the relationship between avoidance technique and delivery of services among library staff
- 2) Ascertain the relationship between competing technique and delivery of service among library staff

### **Statement of the hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated to give direction to the study

- 1) There is no significant relationship between avoidance technique on delivery of services among library staff

- 2) There is no significant relationship between competing technique on delivery of services among library staff

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Avoidance technique and the delivery of services**

The avoiding technique neglects the concerns of both parties by evading the conflict or postponing a solution (Whetton & Cameron, 2000). The avoiding style of conflict management was found to make worse the negative effect of both tasks and relationship conflict (Liu, 2009), because the people involved are not actively seeking to deal with the conflicts and avoidance will naturally make matters worse. Tambari (2015) conducted a study on the Conflict Management Strategies among principals in Government Technical Colleges in Rivers State. The sample of 120 respondents (40 administrative staff and 80 teachers) was selected through simple random sampling technique. Three research questions were answered while two hypotheses were tested at 0.5 level of significance; the instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire which was validated by two principals. A reliability coefficient of 0.80 of the instrument was established through Alpha. It was found that avoidance and other conflict management strategies adopted by principals of government Technical college in Rivers State are based on the findings, it was recommended among others that principals should see conflict as being inevitable in their daily administrative activities, principals should adopt any strategy that can help in reducing conflict such as democratic principles and open treatment to others etc.

In a study conducted by Lazarus (2014), "conflict management strategies and employees' productivity in a Nigeria state civil service, the study examined the role of conflict management strategies on employees' productivity. Four conflict management strategies were considered which include collective bargaining, negotiation, avoidance and imposing. The descriptive survey design was adopted and self-developed questionnaire tagged conflict management strategies and employees productivity questionnaire (CMSEPPQ) was used in the data collection. The reliability of the instrument was tested and Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.92 was obtained for the whole instrument. Taro Yamane formula was used in determining sample size and stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting 240 respondents from a cross-section of four ministries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service, South

South, Nigeria. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multiple regressions were used to analyze the hypotheses. Collective bargaining and negotiation showed a significant positive contribution employees' productivity while that obtained for avoidance and imposing were significantly negative. Also collective bargaining and negotiation were significantly positively related to employee's productivity. Therefore, conflict in whatever level in the workplace should not be ignored but be effectively managed for better employees' productivity in the workplace.

Anderson (2016) courage to face the fear and stress inherent in the dynamics of conflict is gained through experiences in which managing disagreement is supported and encouraged. When incorporated into family or organisational life, the ability to know when and how to address differences results in better decisions and more productive outcomes. Learning to use good judgment in choosing what actions to take in response to conflicts is an important key to success. Routinely challenging the decision of other can cause unnecessary problems but selective disagreement. when handled appropriately has the potential to generate benefits. Avoiding conflict can be an appropriate choice; depending on the circumstances.

### **Competing technique and the delivery of services**

Competition is a conflict resolution technique which involves a strong desire of a person to attain or satisfy his interest at the expenses of others. Sayfa and Tokman (2000) noted that competition can be appropriate in certain circumstances when one knows that he is right on a conflict issue and would contest at all cost to prove that point right. In the management of schools, the competition option in conflict resolution is advantageous when a quick decisive action must be taken. Rashmi, and Pakcerrappa (2014) in their study conflict management strategies a comparative analysis of employees working for services sector" assessed conflict management strategies in-service sector. To generate data for the study, the authors adopted questionnaire method: A total of one hundred and twenty (120) persons, 60 executives and 69 journalists made up the study. Survey research was adopted for the study. Findings from the study revealed that overall analysis of all the conflict management styles reveals that in the executive category the most predominant style of conflict resolution is "competing style (84.38%) and the least resisted method is accommodating (53.14%), while in the case of journalism, the most preferred style is "collaborating style (78.85%), but along with compromising (74.54%) style. The least resorted style is "Competing style' 65(21%). A total

difference in the mode of resolving conflicts can be noticed by this empirical enquiry and it was concluded that depending on the mode of work, the management style of conflict varies.

Thomas and Kilmarn (2014) portrayed competing as a power driven mode being high in assertiveness and low in cooperativeness. It puts parties in a win/lose relationship where one attempts to achieve his/her goals at the expense of another. It may involve "hard bargaining" or the use of a person's authority, position, wealth, or other forms of influence. There is not much consideration for the feelings, views and goals of the other party nor is there interest in collaboration or compromise. The goal is to win or succeed in achieving one's desired outcome when pitted against that of another who desires something different.

Study (strategic Agility and Competitive Performance in the Nigerian Telecommunication Industry) conducted by Ade (2012) examines the relationship between strategic agility and competitive performance using data generated from nine (9) firms in Nigeria's telecommunication industry. A five-point Likert type scale based on 21-items derived from existing literature was used to measure and assess the location of the sampled telecommunication firms on different dimensions of strategic agility. Using a multiple informant survey, respondents' rating on all the strategic agility items were summed up and averaged to obtain a strategic agility index for each participating firm. Strategic agility data were generated from the questionnaire that was completed by members of the Top Management Team (TMT) of each company. Data on profit growth, sales revenue, and financial strength operating efficiency and performance stability were collected from the firms' records. Results from the analysis showed a significant relationship between strategic agility and competitive performance. It was found that strategic agility influences the competitive performance of telecommunication firms in Nigeria (with a coefficient of 3.419). It was also found that strategic agility has a significant impact on and is a good predictor of competitive performance ( $R^2=0.610$ ).

Simulyan (2010) views library staff who practice the competition technique of conflict resolution as their personal goals which are more important than the people and therefore see nothing wrong. Simulyan noted further that conflict as a win-lose situation or as a contest of power in which one person must fail so that the other can succeed without the opportunity for compromise, have great respect for power and would submit to arbitrators only if their power is greater and tend to lead in the blind management style, that is autocratic, over-confident and seldom seeks feedback.

Zhenzhong (2007) conducted a study on "Competing or Accommodating technique, an Empirical Test of Chinese Conflict Management Styles investigated the distinctness of Chinese conflict management styles. The study provides support for this issue by using multiple negotiation simulations to illustrate how Chinese people handle conflicts and how their preferred conflict management styles affect their negotiation behavior and outcomes in business negotiation. The study had a sample of 200 Chinese students, a seven (7) point Liker scale was used to elicit data from respondents. One-way ANOVA was used to analyzed the data. Findings from the study revealed that compromising and competing, instead of accommodating, are two preferred methods for conflict resolution in China.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research design used for this study is survey research design. According to Isangedighi, Joshua, Asim and Ekuri (2004), survey research design involves the collection of data to accurately and objectively describe existing phenomena. Studies that made use of this approach are employed to obtain a picture of the present conditions of particular phenomena.

The population of the study comprises all library staff in federal and state owned tertiary institutions in Cross River State summing up to four hundred and two (402) staff (see Table 1). The sampling technique adopted is the census population study which is a type of purposive sampling technique that involves examining the entire population i.e. census approach. The sample for the study comprises of three hundred and ninety-eight (398) library staff from six (6) tertiary institutions. The instrument for data collection is the researchers constructed instruments titled; Conflict Management Technique and Delivery of Services Questionnaire (CMTDSQ).

To determine reliability of research instrument (questionnaire) a trial test was done using 30 librarians from the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria who were not part of the actual study. Split half reliability test was used to determine the reliability estimate of the instrument. Here, the researchers gave the instrument once to the respondents to complete. But at the time of scoring, two set of scores were derived (odd and even). The scores derived from the two sets were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and corrected with Spearman Brown Prophecy Formula. The reliability coefficient ranges from 0.75 to 0.92. The reliability coefficients were high enough and reliability.



**Table 1:** Distribution of population and sample of the study

S/N	School	Location of institute	Population
1	University of Calabar	Calabar	228
2	University of Cross River State	Calabar	105
3	College of Health Technology	Calabar	12
4	Institute of Technology Management	Ugep	2
5	Federal College of Education	Obudu	20
6	Cross River College of Education	Akampa	35
			402

Source: Registry department of each institution 2020

### **Presentation of result**

In this section each hypothesis is re-stated, and the result of data analysis carried out to test it is presented. Each hypothesis of the study was tested at .05 level of significance.

**Hypothesis one:** There is no significant relationship between avoidance technique and delivery of library service in tertiary institutions. The independent variable in this hypothesis is avoidance technique; while the dependent variable is delivery of service in tertiary institutions. To test this hypothesis, avoidance technique and delivery of service in tertiary institutions was correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between avoidance technique and Delivery of library service in tertiary institutions (N=398)

Variables	X	SD	r-value	Sig.
Avoidance technique	18.07	1.88	0..295*	.000
Delivery of library service in tertiary institutions	26.14	3.12		

\* Significant at .05, df = 396

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 2 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0..295 is significant at .05 level of significance with 396 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between avoidance technique and delivery of service in tertiary institutions was rejected. This result implied that, avoidance technique has a significant positive relationship with delivery of service in tertiary institutions. The positive r implied that the higher avoidance technique, the higher the delivery of service in tertiary institutions tends to be. On the other hand, the lower the avoidance technique ,the lower the delivery of service in tertiary institutions tends to be.

**Hypothesis two:** There is no significant relationship between competing technique and delivery of service in tertiary institutions. The independent variable in this hypothesis is competing technique; while the dependent variable is delivery of service in tertiary institutions. To test this hypothesis, delivery of service in tertiary institutions was correlated with competing technique using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between competing technique and Delivery of library service in tertiary institutions (N=398)

Variables	X	SD	r-value	Sig.
Competing technique	17.46	2.19		

			0.327*	.000
Delivery of library service in tertiary institutions	26.14	3.12		

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\* Significant at .05, df = 396

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 3 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.327 is significant at .05 level of significance with 396 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between competing technique and delivery of service in tertiary institutions was rejected. This result indicated that, competing technique has a significant positive relationship with delivery of service in tertiary institutions. The positive r implied that the more positive competing technique is, the higher delivery of service in tertiary institutions tends to be. On the other hand, the lower the competing technique, the lower the delivery of service in tertiary institutions tends to be.

### **Discussion of findings**

The result of the first hypothesis revealed that there is a significant relationship between avoidance technique and delivery of library service in tertiary institutions. The finding of this hypothesis is in line with the view of Adebayo (2009) who observed that the avoidance strategy seeks to put off conflicts indefinitely. By delaying or ignoring conflict, the avoider hopes the problem resolves itself without a confrontation. Those who actively avoid conflict frequently have low esteem or hold a position of low power. In some circumstance, avoiding can serve as a profitable conflict management strategy, such as after the dismissal of a popular but unproductive employee. The hiring of a more productive replacement for the position soothes much of the conflict. From a development standpoint, a person who consistently takes an avoiding approach to dealing with disagreements has likely experienced life events which reinforced the notion that conflict is bad. This may have started in childhood with a domineering family member who, perhaps had a problem with substance abuse or difficulty managing anger and violence. Expressions of disagreement many have been chastised and a sense of fear of retribution created. Family values that discourage arguing or displays of disapproval may also impact an individual's willingness to assert themselves when they have a differing perspective.

The result of the second hypothesis revealed that there is a significant relationship between Competing technique and delivery of library service in tertiary institutions. The finding of this hypothesis is in line with view of Commission (2014) who noted that

competition can be appropriate in certain circumstances when one knows that he is right on a conflict issue and would contest at all cost to prove that point right. In the management of schools, the competition option in conflict resolution is advantageous when a quick decisive action must be taken. In the executive category the most predominant style of conflict resolution is "competing style (84.38%) and the least resisted to method is accommodating (53.14%). while in the case of journalism, the most preferred style is "collaborating style (78.85%), but along with it compromising (74.54%) style too is used. The least resorted style is "Competing style' (65-21%) A total difference in the mode of resolving conflicts can be noticed by this empirical enquiry and it was concluded that depending on the mode of work the management style of conflict too varies.

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### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that avoidance technique and competing technique significantly relate to delivery of library services in tertiary institutions. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There should be collaboration between management and staff in building strong delivery of services
2. Labor should include rest and breaks so that staff can have time to recover from fatigue, either physically or mentally.
3. The Management should adopt the best technique that go well with policies and culture of the library in order to better fit in with the ever changing environment.

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