INTERNAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: A STUDY OF GOMBE STATE UNIVERSITY AND FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF KASHERE

Nasiru Anas
Department of Sociology, Gombe State University
Corresponding author's address: nasiruanas27@gsu.edu.ng

Baffa A. Umar
Department of Sociology, Bayero University, Kano

Aminu M. Dukku
Department of Sociology, Bayero University, Kano

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Keywords

Internal Conflict, Institutional Effectiveness, Staff Unions and University Management

Abstract

Research Problem: *Internal conflicts have been observed to be in existence in all human organisations including universities. Internal conflicts could be described as the forms of competitions disagreements and frictions and its manifestation in the forms of arguments, protests, and demonstrations.*
Methods/theory: *The research employed primary data collection instrument to collect data from respondents with the aid of questionnaires. From 1,065 questionnaires distributed only 1,000 were duly filled and returned. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data collected. Further Dahrendorf towards a theory of social conflict served as theory framework.*
Results: *Findings from study showed that the major common types of internal conflicts experienced in the study universities among others include; conflict between university managements and academic staff unions and non-academic unions as well. The major offenses leading to internal conflicts include, among others; absence of staff from duty and staff inefficiency at work. The study found that dialogue and use of conflict management committee were found to be effective in managing internal conflicts. The study revealed also that; consultation and verbal warning were found not to be effective.*
Conclusion: *It has been concluded that, internal conflicts are inevitable in human life, and so are they in higher institutions of learning including universities and they can lead to demonstrations and incessant closure of universities whenever they occur.*
Key contribution to knowledge: *This study has contributed to the literature on internal conflict management strategies and institutional effectiveness in universities. There was no any study of this nature in the study universities, therefore, the findings of the study differed from other previous related study in the universities because it has showcased a new knowledge on the types of internal conflict and institutional effectiveness of internal conflict management strategies in handling internal conflict in*

the study universities.
Recommendations: *Based on the findings, the study recommended, among others, on the need for improved consultations, interdiction and honoring local agreements reached with local unions in the study universities.*

Introduction

Organizations are established for the purpose of achieving desired goals. Whether these organizations are private or public, formal or informal institutions, leadership plays a key factor in steering their affairs to achieve the desired goals and in minimizing internal conflicts. It is also a way of influencing the activities of employees; specifically, leaders are engaged in coordinating, managing human and non-human resources in actualizing the organizational goals. The absence of good leadership can lead to the failure of organizations in achieving their goals; as a result, this can also influence internal conflict (Yusuf, Umar & Aina 2014). Internal conflicts, therefore, have been observed to be in existence in all human organisations. Internal conflicts could be described as the forms of competition, oppositions, disagreements, frictions between two or more parties and its manifestation in the forms of arguments, protests, demonstrations, aggression and other destructive behaviors.

While internal conflict occurrence has been observed to be inevitable and ubiquitous in human organisations, the strategies for managing it have remained topical issues and matters of concern to individuals, groups and scholars (Adeyemi & Ademilua, 2012). Furthermore, internal conflict management strategies refer to the internal mechanisms used by the various authorities in resolving organizational conflict. The mechanisms include avoidance, compromise, third party intervention, cooperation, democratic process as well as confrontation. Other measures include divide and rule tactic, effective communication, problem solving, adjudication, consultation, neglect or silence, dialogue, negotiation, arbitration and mediation (Adebayo, 2007). Institutions of higher learning exist because they have goals to attain, which includes providing accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities, preparing students with knowledge and skills for self-reliance, promoting and encouraging scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service and to contribute to national development through high level manpower training, among others (Olalekan, 2018). These goals can be effectively attained when the human resources within the institutions are properly managed for their positive impacts on productivity. This also will help in reducing the spread of internal conflicts in the institutions.

There were studies conducted in Nigeria which examine the internal conflict management strategies that cut across areas of human endeavours. With respect to the academic environment, studies were conducted to examine the internal conflict management strategies in many Nigerian universities, including the public and private ones by Joseph and Joseph (2007), Olalekan (2015), Igbinoba et al (2019) and Baffa et al (2022), among others. It has been observed from these studies that Nigerian universities have for decades been faced with crises ranging from conflict between students and academic staff, academic staff and non-academic staff, academic staff and management of universities and non-academic staff and management of universities. There are also inter and intra conflicts between units,

departments, divisions and directorates and amongst staff. Based on the available literature, the most rampant internal conflict is between staff and the university managements over staff development, conditions of service, staff union associations and university managements over staff welfare and refusal of managements to honour agreements reached.

Similarly, internal conflict between students' unions and university managements are equally frequent which, most at times, results from inadequate social amenities on campuses, such as electricity and water supply, transportation, among other factors (Olalekan, 2015). These internal conflicts have given rise to distrust and hostility among professional associations, academics, non-academic staff and students, thus, contributing in hampering smooth, effective and efficient administration in the universities; this may lead to revolts, protests, unrest and violence, as well as incessant closure of schools for months (Victor and Stella-Maris, 2013).

Furthermore, literature shows that, internal conflicts in many universities arises due to disagreements between staff unions and managements and between unions over conditions of services, welfare among other factors which, at times, affects the academic calendar, thereby rendering school environments completely insecure for serious academic activities which is not beneficial to students, institutions and the society at large (Adoja, 2014). Other studies, however, revealed that internal bureaucratic structure, poor communication and organizational policies are major causes of internal conflicts in many Nigerian universities (Peter et al; 2021). Similarly, internal conflict management strategies are been employed to resolve internal conflicts whenever they occur. Some of these internal conflict management strategies include compromise/dialogue, problem solving, avoidance/preventive, delay/negligence, autocratic/forcing and religious exercise (Joseph and Joseph, 2007). Other strategies are accommodation, collaboration, competition and university conflict management committee. In this regard, studies that investigated the internal conflict management strategies in Nigerian universities have increased tremendously across many disciplines. The main concerns of these studies are to gain more insight on the internal conflict management strategies (Asgari et al., 2008).

Furthermore, internal conflict management strategies and institutional effectiveness has received little research and it is unclear whether the issue is being addressed in the universities. In nigerian universities also, studies on the institutional effectiveness of internal conflict management strategies are sparse. Many studies focus on the theoretical analysis of internal conflict management and challenges associated with them, and none have systemically examined the specific internal conflict management strategies and institutional effectiveness in the context of Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere especially employing empirical studies. This study therefore examines the internal conflict management strategies and institutional effectiveness in Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere. The objectives of the study include; to examine the common internal conflicts being experienced in Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere and to explore the institutional effectiveness of the specific internal conflict management strategies being used in resolving internal conflicts in Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere.

Literature Review

Many empirical researches were conducted to determine the effectiveness of these internal conflict management strategies in resolving internal conflicts in Nigerian public sector organizations, such as universities. In public

sector organisations for instance, a study was conducted by Osabiya (2015) on conflict management and resolution strategy in Nigeria public sector. From the findings of the study, it was discovered that, scarce resources, poor communication, power struggle, external pressure and leadership styles were the factors responsible for internal conflict in public sector organisations in Nigeria. The study also showed that internal conflict can be resolved through compromise between employees and managements. The study recommended that workers should be given the chances to be involved in decision-making process so as to reduce the spread of internal conflicts in public sector organisations in Nigeria. Also, effective communication network between workers and management can equally help in reducing the internal conflicts.

A similar study conducted by Olukoyade (2015) on the impact of workplace conflict management on organizational performance in a Nigerian manufacturing firm. The findings of the research revealed that, internal conflict arose over multiple factors of organizational experiences based on the economic and goal incompatibility orientations in the workplace. The study revealed that collective bargaining, compromise and accommodation are effective internal conflict management strategies. The study discovered workers union-management of internal conflict was the most prevalent type of industrial conflict in the organization. The study concluded that, internal conflict was unavoidable phenomenon in organizational life and it could contribute to or detract from organizational performance depending on the internal conflict management methods.

Furthermore, research conducted by Onyejiaku, Ghasi and Okwor (2018) on management of conflict and its implications on Nigerian public sector organisations. The findings of the research indicated that, the inadequacy of resources, personality differences, communication problems were the main causes of internal conflicts in Nigerian public sector. Similarly, the study found that, collaboration, accommodation and avoidance were the internal conflict management strategies used by the Nigerian public sector in handling internal conflict. The study concludes that, internal conflict management strategies are the keys for organizational growth and survival. Furthermore, in Nigerian tertiary institutions, for instance, a study conducted by Joseph and Joseph (2007) on the incidence and management of conflicts in secular and non-secular universities in South West-Nigeria discovered the use of compromise/dialogue, problem solving, avoidance/preventive, delay/negligence, autocratic/forcing and religious exercise as conflict management strategies. But these strategies were not effective in management of internal conflicts in the universities. The study therefore, recommends for the university authorities to look for the better alternative strategies for resolving internal conflicts with the aid of committee system. In another study conducted by lgbinoba et' al (2019) on workplace conflict management and administrative productivity of staff of selected ICT Driven public universities discovered that accommodation, avoidance, collaboration, competition and compromise were internal conflict management strategies in Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomosho, Federal University of Technology, Akure and Ondo State University of Science and Technology, Okitipupa. In addition, the study recommended for the university managements to consistently address the issue of internal conflicts and strikes by adopting alternative strategies through university management conflict committee in resolving the university conflicts as the usual remedies have not been adequate.

Furthermore, the National Universities Commission guidelines on university management enshrined that the managements should exhibit democratic leadership style in

handling the affairs of the universities and in minimizing internal conflicts. Similarly, the Nigerian University Policy on handling internal conflicts via the university conflict management committee help many universities to handle and resolved internal conflicts. For instance, the university conflict management committee established in many universities in Nigeria has been effective in resolving internal grudges, grievances and disharmony among staff, between staff associations and the university managements. This equally enhances a constructive communication process that paves the way for the negotiators and to be guided from disrupting the university strategies towards attempting its manifestation and latent goals for conflicting parties that are systematic in the way they communicate their grievances (Olalekan. 2018). This is evident in Lagos State University (LASU) and Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba (AAUA) where the performance of conflict management boards improved since their establishments in the universities. The conflict management boards in LASU and AAUA were effective in the management of internal conflicts. The conflict management board has helped significantly in terms of peace building and consultation. This implies that the conflict management boards in the two universities established strategies that create avenues for discussions and dialogue for managing internal conflicts (Osakede et al. 2018). This is in line with the fact that, the managing internal conflicts in Nigerian tertiary institutions demands democratic or participative leadership style through effective communication.

Contrary, in Ekiti State University, given the fact that, the causes of internal conflict between workers unions and the university management are enormous which include; late payment of renumerations, communication gap, arbitrary and confusing standards for promotion, wages and benefits, refusal of the university management to honour the demand of staff; the conflict management committee could not work effectively to address internal conflict in the university thereby making it weak and inefficient (Alamu & Ajayi, 2023).

It is therefore unrealistic and in fact impossible to completely eliminate internal conflicts within the universities; especially it has both positive and negative dimensions. The real managerial challenge therefore, is to find some methods of managing internal conflicts from becoming debilitating, while still retaining the full positive potentials of competition, creativity, growth and improved job satisfaction and morale.

Research Gap: While many studies focus on conflict management strategies on organizational performance, its implications and as well as administrative productivity of staff among other issues, this study hence bridged this gap by examining the common internal conflicts and went far to explore the institutional effectiveness of the specific internal conflict management strategies in resolving internal conflict in Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere.

Theoretical Framework

Ralf Dahrendorf's most outstanding contribution to the study of conflict was through his work on towards a theory of social conflict (1958). Much of his work was concerned with factory organization and the place and status of workers in such an organization (Joseph. 2010). He thus made significant contribution to industrial sociology and industrial democracy which intrinsically involve owners of industries and trade unions/workers. Industrial democracy introduced conflict regulation and management into the workplace so that, the suddenness of conflict and its intensity could be reduced or checked. Conflict regulation, he argued, constitutes machinery for forcing dominant groups in industrial setting to recognize the interests of subjected groups and

incorporates these interests in organizational and industrial policy (Dahrendorf, 1958). For Dahrendorf, authority and power are too scarce resources competed for by individuals in an organization. Internal conflict arises because of the struggle for positions of authority and power and not even control of means of production. Therefore, in any organization, there are two classes called the "Ruled and the Ruler or those without authority/power and those with authority/power respectively". Those with authority have interest in maintaining the status quo while the organizational members want authority to be fairly shared and/or re-distributed. This call for a redistribution of authority through roles brings internal conflict; until it is done, the organization will continue to engage in to ensure stability (Joseph, 2010).

The approach to a theory of social conflict taken here can be tellingly illustrated in the example of an organizational enterprise. An organizational enterprise is, among other things an imperatively coordinated group. It contains positions which are associated with expectation and right of exercising authority and other positions whose occupants are subjected to authority. There are managers of many departments and there are workers. The authority of managers is institutionalized and legitimate. It is guaranteed by legalistic and quasi-legalistic sanctions (disciplinary, fines, demotion, and dismissal, among others).

An internal conflict between managers and workers is thus structurally unavoidable. Therefore, the assumption, from these quasi-groups; interest groups emerge as soon as the conditions of organization including (communication within the quasi-groups, regulated recruiting into the quasi groups, freedom of coalition, leaders and ideologies, technical means are on hand). The emerging interest groups in organisations like universities are employers' associations and trade unions i.e ASUU, SSANU, NASU and the like. The internal conflict between these interest groups and university managements varies in its intensity in direct relation to the conditions of conflict, especially to the degree of mobility from one group to another and to the presence of effective mechanisms for regulating internal conflicts (channels for collective bargaining, arbitration, institution etc.). This internal conflict can be leads-either through negotiations or through strikes-finally to changes in the structure of industrial organisations and in the position of the groups involved.

Dahrendorf's theory of social conflict has been criticized despite benefitted from the Marxist theory of class struggle when constructing his own class theory and functionalist can also be seen in his ideas. Despite its criticisms, Dahrendorf theory of social conflict is relevant for the research study as it sees organizational internal conflict exists regardless of whether the managers are owners of the entrepreneurs or whether they are agents elected by bodies of stakeholders or whether they are government officials; that is, relationships of ownership in principles do not affect either the existence or the intensity of organizational internal conflicts. The theory shows that internal conflict can never be abolished in organisations such as universities especially when two or more interest groups work together in the universities. These interest groups work to protect their rights and privileges associated with staff welfare, conditions of services among other issues. But, whenever there is internal conflict in the universities, the management strategies as well as internal conflict regulation mechanisms helped in reducing the intensities of the conflicts whenever they occur as clearly shown by empirical evidences recorded. These regulation mechanisms which helped in reducing the intensities of internal conflicts include dialogues, committee, query/written warning, suspension, termination and

dismissal of staff among other vital regulation mechanisms in the universities.

Materials & Methods

The study adopted an exploratory based survey research design to examine internal conflict management strategies and institutional effectiveness in Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere. To improve the depth and reliability of the study, quantitative data was collected with the aid of questionnaires distribution on the selected sample of the study. The study locations were Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere. The target population of the study includes all staff of Gombe State University and Federal University, Kashere. The Gombe State University has a total population of 1,173 from which 584 were academic staff while 589 were non-academic staff. Similarly, Federal University Kashere has a total population of 2,284 out of which 695 were academic staff, while 1,589 were non-academic staff. Therefore, the general population of the study were 3,457 which comprises of staff of both Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere. From the combined population, one thousand and sixty-five (1065) were selected as sample size for the research study using Krejcie and Morgan Sample Size Calculator with margin of error of 2.5% and 95% confidence level.

From the 1065 questionnaires distributed, only 1000 were duly filled and returned. Also, the study employed a primary data collection instrument which were the questionnaires on the selected key stakeholders in the study universities. Also, multistage sampling method was further found to be appropriate in selecting the sample size for the study. First, stratified sampling method was employed to divide the population into two strata: academic and non-teaching staff from which samples were drawn using simple random sampling. The essence of using simple random method was to give staff from different departments, divisions and units an equal chance of participating in Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere. In drawing the sample size for the study, existing academic faculties and major divisions in the two universities to which staff were deployed were selected with a view to ensuring disproportional representation of their staff. The data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistics which involved the use of tables, frequencies; percentages. The data analysis was done with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 16). Ethical principles, including informed consent of the respondents, voluntary participation and confidentiality were observed.

Below are the tables showing population and sample size of academic and non-teaching staff of Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere.

Table 1: Staff of Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere

	Academic Staff	Non-teaching Staff	Total
Gombe State University	584	589	1,173
Federal University of Kashere	695	1,589	2,284
Grand total	**1,279**	**2,178**	**3,457**

Table 2: Selected Sample of the Study from Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere

	Academic Staff	Non-teaching Staff	Total
Gombe State University	167	196	363
Federal University of Kashere	306	396	702
Total	**473**	**592**	**1065**

5. Results

3.1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Age	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
20-24 years	33	3.3
25-29 years	160	16.0
30-34 years	305	30.5
35-39 years	253	25.3
40-44 years	100	10.0
45-49 years	115	11.5
50 years and above	34	3.4
Total	**1,000**	**100.0**
Sex	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Male	638	63.8
Female	362	36.2
Total	**1,000**	**100.0**
Educational Qualification	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Secondary Education	81	8.1
Diploma/NCE	150	15.0
HND/B.Sc	421	42.1
Masters	231	23.1
Ph.D	117	11.7
Total	**1,000**	**100.0**
Marital Status	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Single	244	24.4
Married	622	62.2
Separated	46	4.6
Divorced	59	5.9
Widowed	29	2.9
Total	**1,000**	**100.0**
Monthly Income in Naira	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Less than 50,000	160	16.0

50,000 to 99,999	63	6.3
100,000 to 149,999	50	5.0
150,000 to 199,999	406	40.6
200,000 to 249,999	131	13.1
250,000 to 299,999	56	5.6
300,000 to 349,999	34	3.4
350,000 to 399,999	21	2.1
400,000 to 449,999	52	5.2
450,000 and above	27	2.7
Total	**1,000**	**100.0**
Nature of appointment	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Permanent	970	97.0
Contract	30	3.0
Total	**1,000**	**100.0**
University affiliation	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Gombe state University	378	37.8
Federal University of Kashere	622	62.2
Total	**1,000**	**100.0**
Academic cadres	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Academic staff	486	48.6
Non-teaching staff	514	51.4
Total	**1,000**	**100.0**
Year of service	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1-5 years	295	29.5
6-10 years	384	38.4
11 years and above	321	32.1
Total	**1,000**	**100.0**

This table analyzed the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents including age, sex, educational qualification, university affiliation and years of service among other demographic features. The age distribution of the respondents in table 3.1 shows 30.5% falls between 30-34 years, 25.3%% aged between 35-39 years, 16.0 % were between 25- 29 years, 11.5% were between 45-49 years, 10.0% falls between 40-44 years, years and 3.4% falls between 50 years and above. The sex distribution of the respondents depicts that, 63.8% were males and 36.2% were females. The data shows that, 42.1% of the respondents were B. Sc certificate holders, 23.1% had Masters and 15.0% had Diploma/NCE certificates. Similarly, 11.3% of the respondents had Ph.D. and 8.1% were Secondary School Certificate Holders. From the data, it has shown that, majority of the respondents had HND/B. Sc certificates. The table also, shows 62.2% of the respondents were married, 24.4% were single, while 5.9% were divorced. The 4.6% of the respondents were separated and 2.9% were either widowed or widower.

Similarly, the table shows 40.6% earn between 150,000 to 199,999 thousand naira monthly, 16.0% earn less than 50,000 thousand naira monthly, 13.1% earn between 200,000 to 249,999 thousand naira and 6.3% earn between 50,000 to 99,999 thousand naira monthly. The 5.6% of the respondents earn between 250,000 to 299,999 thousand naira, 5.2% earn between 400,000 to 449,999 thousand naira, 5.0% earn between 100,000 to 149,999 thousand naira and 3.4% earn between 300,000 to 349,999 thousand naira. Also, 2.7% of the

respondents earn between 450,000 thousand naira and above and 2.1% earn 350,000 to 399,999 monthly.

The table also shows 51.4% of the respondents were non-teaching staff of the Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere and 48.6% were academic staff of the universities. The 62.2% were also academic and non-academic staff of the Federal University of Kashere. The 37.8% of the respondents were academic and non-academic staff of the Gombe State University. The table shows 62.2% were also academic and non- academic staff of the Federal University of Kashere. Finally, the table indicated that, 38.4% of the respondents' spent between 6-10 years working, 32.1% spent between 11 years and above working in the universities and 29.5% spent between 1-5 years working. The table shows majority of the respondents have spent between 6 to 10 years working.

3.2: Common Internal Conflict Experienced in Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Internal conflict between academic staff unions and non-teaching staff unions	383	38.3
Internal conflict between university managements and non-teaching staff unions	172	17.2
Internal conflict between university managements and academic staff unions	156	15.6
Internal conflict over miscommunication between units, directorates and departments	102	10.2
Interpersonal conflict among staff	88	8.8
Others	99	9.9
Total	**1,000**	**100.0**

The table 3.2 analyzed the common internal conflict experienced in Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere. The table display five common types of internal conflicts in the study universities. First, the table shows 38.3% of the respondents views internal conflict between the academic staff union and non-teaching staff unions, where 17.2% views internal conflict between the university managements and non-teaching staff unions. The 15.6% of the respondents views the existence of internal conflict between the university management and academic staff unions in the universities. The 10.2% of the respondents views internal conflict between units, directorates and departments largely over miscommunication and 8.8% views staff interpersonal conflict among staff in the universities. The 9.9% had identified other types of internal conflicts in Gombe State University and Federal University, Kashere, respectively. These include; within and between the departments, units and directorates over examination results, conflict over selection procedures for study fellowship, among others. The data has shown that, the most common type of internal conflict in the universities was between academic and non-teaching staff unions.

3.3: Institutional Effectiveness of the Specific Internal Conflict Management Strategies being Used in Resolving Internal Conflicts in Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere.

	Frequency & Percentage				
	Very effective	Effective	Not effective	Undecided	Total
Dialogue	516 (51.6)	330 (33%)	109 (10.9%)	45 (4.5%)	1000 (100%)
Consultation	516 (51.6%)	258 (25.8%)	205 (20.5%)	21 (2.1%)	1000 (100%)
Committee strategy	414 (41.4%)	265 (26.5%)	250 (25%)	71 (7.1%)	1000 (100%)
Effective communication	449 (44.9%)	362 (36.2%)	142 (14.2%)	47 (4.7%)	1000 (100%)
Verbal warning	674 (67.4&)	167 (16.7%)	125 (12.5%)	34 (3.4%)	1000 (100%)
Query/written warning	439 (43.9%)	316 (31.6%)	186 (18.6%)	59 (5.9%)	1000 (100%)
Withholding/Deferring Increment of Staff Salary	450 (45%)	315 (31.5%)	201 (20.1%)	34 (3.4%)	1000 (100%)
Reduction of Grade	458 (45.8%)	375 (37.5%)	118 (11.8%)	49 (4.9%)	1000 (100%)
Interdiction	108 (10.8%)	114 (11.4%)	727 (72.7%)	51 (5.1%)	1000 (100%)
Suspension of staff	425 (42.5%)	388 (38.8%)	139 (13.9%)	48 (4.8%)	1000 (100%)
Termination of Appointment	462 (46.2%)	278 (27.8%)	200 (20%)	60 (6%)	1000 (100%)
Dismissal of staff	460 (46%)	168 (16.8%)	302 (30.2%)	70 (7%)	1000 (100%)

The table 3.3 have identified the specific internal conflict management strategies used in resolving internal conflict in the study universities. the table shows the majority of the respondents (51.65) opined that dialogue is very effective in resolving internal conflict especially between the university managements and staff unions because it is being applied at the beginning of the conflict before it escalates to a level beyond control. similarly, majority of the respondents (51.6%) opined that; consultation is not effective in addressing internal conflict in the universities especially between staff unions and university managements and between staff unions. The data further shows respondents majority (41.4%) have indicated that; committee strategy is very effective in resolving internal conflicts in the study universities especially between the university managements and staff unions, between staff unions and between staff in the departments, directorates and units.

From the analysis also, it has shown by the majority of the respondents (44.9%) that, communication is very effective in addressing internal conflict in the study universities. This is between the university managements and departments, directorates and units, between university managements and staff unions and within the faculties, departments and directorates. Furthermore, majority of the respondents viewed that verbal warning is not

effective in handling internal conflict in the study universities especially on staff who is absent from time to time, on staff who is not doing his/her work as at when due and on staff who is always coming to work late. Also, majority of the respondents (43.9%) have indicated that, query/written warning is effective in handling internal conflict in Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere respectively on staff who engaged in physical fight, on staff also who are inefficient at work and on staff who are not productive. Also, majority opinions indicated that withholding/deferring of salary increment is very effectively in resolving internal conflict in the study universities especially on staff who refused to carry out official instructions, staff absent from duty without permission, physical fight among staff, corruption and on staff who engaged in sexual harassment.

From the data obtained, majority of the respondents viewed that, reduction of grade is very effective in handling internal conflict in the study universities on staff that steal university properties and on staff also who refused to answer query/written warning and also on staff who abscond from duty for several days or months. The majority respondents (72.7%) indicated that, interdiction is not effective as management strategies of resolving internal conflict in the study universities on staff that steal office properties and who also involved in examination malpractice and sexual harassment. The majority responses indicated that suspension of staff is very effective in handling internal conflicts in the study universities on staff who involved in examination malpractice, staff absent from duty and on staff that steal office properties. Also, majority responses show that, termination of staff appointments is very effective in resolving internal conflict in the study universities on offenses including sexual related offenses, stealing of office properties and certificate forgery. Finally, dismissal of staff is very effective, though significant percent of the respondents indicated that it is not effective as well. This is on major offenses including sexual harassment, examination malpractice, corruption and insubordination.

Discussion

First, the finding of the study shows respondents' views on the common internal conflict experienced in Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere. The findings show the common types of internal conflicts experienced in Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere which includes; between university managements and academic staff unions, between university managements and non-academic staff unions, between academic staff unions and non-academic staff unions, internal conflicts over miscommunication between units, directorates and departments, interpersonal conflicts among staff in the universities among others. From the findings, it has shown that, majority opinions indicated the prevalence of internal conflict between the academic staff unions and non-academic staff unions in Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere.

These findings relate with Dahrendorf towards a theory of social conflict where he argued that authority and power are too scarce resources competed for by individuals in an organization. Internal conflict arises because of the struggle for positions of authority and power and not even control of means of production. Therefore, in any organization, there are two classes called the "Ruled and the Ruler or those without authority/power and those with authority/power respectively". Those with authority have interest in maintaining the status quo while the organizational members want authority to be fairly shared and/or re-distributed. When there

is no fair in the exercise of authority related to the condition of service, welfare and other fringe allowances by the university managements on academic staff, non-academic staff, as well as miscommunication between units, directorates and departments as well can results to internal conflicts between the university managements and staff.

The data above have supported the earlier findings made in different universities in Nigeria. A study conducted by Osadeke et al (2018) in South Western Universities in Nigeria revealed the most common internal conflicts to include conflict between academic staff unions and the university authorities, conflict between academic staff unions and non-academic staff unions, conflict between non-academic staff unions and university managements and interpersonal conflict among staff. Furthermore, Olaleye and Arogundade (2013) research on the common types of internal conflicts in Nigerian Universities in the South West using Lagos State University and Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba found that the most common types of internal conflicts include between academic staff and the university managements, non-teaching staff and the university managements, academic staff and non-teaching staff unions as well as interpersonal conflict among staff. Similarly, Victor and Stealla-Maris (2013) have further examined the common causes of internal conflicts in Nigerian universities taking South Western Nigerian Universities. For them, continued competition for scarce resources like research fund, teaching and students' amenities, staff pay and other welfare services all have claims on the limited resources at the disposal of the university managements.

Furthermore, the study findings show majority respondents viewed that dialogue is very effective in handling internal conflict in Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere. These findings relate to the literature which indicated that dialogue is very effective in handling internal conflict (Joseph and Joseph, 2007). Igbinoba et al (2019) studies on workplace conflict management and administrative productivity of staff of selected ICT driven public universities discovered that dialogue among other strategies were effective in handling internal conflict.

The findings also reveal majority respondents viewed that, consultation is not effective in resolving internal conflict in the study universities especially between staff unions and university managements and between staff unions. A study conducted by Ndum and Stella-Maris (2013) and similar others contrary to the findings of the study sees consultation as significantly effective in managing internal conflicts in public universities in nigeria. Other studies including upshot of conflict management approach on employee productivity in Nigerian tertiary institutions by Aoghene and Udjo (2023) sees consultation among other strategies as significantly effective in resolving internal conflict and improving employees' productivity.

The respondents' views on the effectiveness of committee indicated/shows majority respondents viewing committee strategy of resolving internal conflict is very effective in Gombe State University and in Federal University of Kashere as well in resolving internal conflict between the university managements and staff unions, between staff unions and between staff in the departments, directorates and units. Also, relevant literature revealed effectiveness of committee in handling internal conflicts. For instance, a study by Adeyemi and Ademilua (2012) revealed that committee involving participatory decision-making were significantly effective in managing internal conflicts in public universities in Nigeria.

Similarly, the findings viewed respondents' opinions on the effectiveness of communication where majority respondents opined that, it is very effective in handling internal conflict in the study universities between university managements and departments, directorates and units, between university managements and staff unions and within the faculties, departments and directorates. These findings corroborate with a finding of a study carried out on conflict management in the nigerian university system by Ndum and Stella-Maris (2013) which revealed that effective and constructive communication among other strategies were found to be effective in handling internal conflict in the study universities.

In the same vein, findings of the study also show majority respondents affirmed that, verbal warning is not effective in handling internal conflict in both Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere especially on staff who is absent from time to time, on staff who is not doing his/her work as at when due and on staff who is always coming to work late. This is supported by earlier studies by Igbinoba et al (2019) and Adeyemi and Ademilua (2012) where they revealed that verbal warning is not effective in handling internal conflict. Also, query and written warning is effective in handling internal conflict as indicated by majority respondents on staff who engaged in physical fight, on staff who are inefficient at work and on staff who are not productive. This has been supported by a study conducted by Adeyemi and Ademilua (2012) on conflict management strategies where they confirmed that query/written warning is effective strategy of handling internal conflict. This is on staff who are inefficient at work as well as staff that are not productive.

The respondents' opinions with regard to the effectiveness of withholding/deferring of salaries of staff shown majority views as very effective in the study universities on staff who refused to carry out official instructions, staff absent from duty without permission, physical fight among staff, corruption and on staff who engaged in sexual harassment. In Federal University of Kashere, withholding of staff salaries was effective before the implementation of Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System, but now, it is not effective. Staff who commit offenses which need to be dealt with through withholding of their salaries by the university management could not be dealt with, largely because the university management does not pay salaries. As cited by Baffa et al (2022), withholding/deferring of salaries of staff though not sufficient enough has been a strategy of resolving internal conflict on offended staff. It is effective whenever it is applied. Furthermore, responses on the effectiveness of reduction of grade shows majority views that, it is very effective in resolving internal conflict in the study universities on staff that steal university properties and on staff also who refused to answer query/written warning and also on staff who abscond from duty for several days or months. Reduction of grade as argued by many scholars goes the same way with withholding of staff salaries and it is been effective in handling internal conflict argued by Baffa et al (2022). Also, interdiction from the majority opinions shows that, it is not effective in handling internal conflict on staff that steal office properties and who also involved in examination malpractice and sexual harassment. This is contrary to findings of a study by Baffa et al (2022) who confirmed that interdiction is mostly used alongside with withholding of staff salaries and reduction of grade and they are mostly effective in addressing internal conflicts.

The study findings also display effectiveness of suspension where majority respondents viewed that, it is very effective in resolving internal conflict in Gombe State

University and Federal University of Kashere on staff who involved in examination malpractice, staff absent from duty and on staff that steal office properties. Also, the findings similarly show majority respondents views termination of staff appointments as very effective strategy of handling internal conflict in the study universities on offenses including sexual related offenses, stealing of office properties and certificate forgery. Finally, dismissal of staff is equally very effective strategy of getting offended staff out of the universities as indicated by majority respondents on major offenses including sexual harassment, examination malpractice, corruption and insubordination.

From the above, even with complete internal conflict management strategies, some of the strategies were effective in addressing internal conflict in the study universities, some were not effective in resolving internal conflict as well. This relates with the Dahrendorf's arguments which sees that organizational internal conflict exists regardless of whether the managers are owners of the entrepreneurs or whether they are agents elected by bodies of stakeholders or whether they are government officials; that is, relationships of ownership in principles do not affect either the existence or the intensity of organizational internal conflicts. Also, Dahrendorf sees that, internal conflict is present even if the complete system of its regulation has been realized. Regulations influence the intensity of the internal conflict, but no mechanism is imaginable which fully abolishes internal conflict. Therefore, while some of the management strategies work effectively, some might not work effectively in resolving internal conflicts in Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere.

Finally, this study has contributed to the body of knowledge on internal conflict management strategies and institutional effectiveness in universities. While previous studies were conducted both in private and public universities in nigeria, but were not too broad to look into broader internal conflict management strategies and institutional effectives in both public and private universities. This study therefore differed with previous studies conducted in public and private universities in nigeria. Similarly, there was no any study of this nature in the study universities, therefore, the findings of the study differed from other previous related study in the study universities because it has showcased a new knowledge on the types of internal conflict and institutional effectiveness of internal conflict management strategies in handling internal conflict in the study universities.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Internal conflicts have been observed to be in existence in all human organisations including universities. It could be described as all forms of competition, oppositions, disagreements, frictions between two or more parties and its manifestation in the forms of arguments, protests, demonstrations, aggression and other destructive behaviors. Based on this, internal conflicts in tertiary institutions can lead to competition, disagreement and misunderstanding which may lead to demonstrations, strikes and incessant closure of schools. Hence, it is impossible to attain a conducive environment in the higher institutions characterized by internal conflicts. There are major offenses committed by staff in the study universities that influences internal conflicts among which are absent of staff from duty posts for several days or weeks, inefficiency of staff at work, physical fight among staff, stealing of university properties, examination malpractice and sexual harassment. Therefore, internal conflict management strategies such as dialogue, committee system, effective communication, query/written warning, withholding of staff salaries, reduction of grade, suspension of staff, termination of staff

appointments and dismissal were found to be effective in managing internal conflicts in Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere whenever they occur. Based on the conclusion, the study recommended among other things on the:

i. While consultation is very effective in managing internal conflicts, it needs to be improved by the managements of Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere and this significantly will reduce the intensity of internal conflicts in the study universities.

ii. While internal conflicts occur between the university managements and academic and as well as non-academic unions over refusal of the university managements to honour local agreements reached with staff unions. On this noted, the Managements of Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere need to honour local agreements reached with staff unions and this will help in reducing the intensity of internal conflict arisng from refusal of the university managements to honour agreements reached with staff unions.

iii. While communication is very effective in resolving internal conflict as revealed by majority respondents, though not quite significant, the managements of Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere respectively need to improve on communication with members of staff at one hand and staff unions on the other hand and this will help a lot in reducing the frequent occurrence of internal conflicts in the study universities arising over poor communication.

iv. While verbal warning is not effective on staff who are absent, not doing their work as at when due and always coming to work late, the managements of Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere need to provide punishment measure for staff that are not coming to work regularly and this will help in making them become punctual to their duty post and improve their productivity and performance.

v. While, there is no central committee established in the study universities mandated for resolving internal conflict whenever they occur, the managements of Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere need to establish University Conflict Management Committee and this will help in tackling any given type of internal conflict as they arise in the universities.

vi. While interdiction is not effective in handling internal conflict, the managements of Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere respectively need to uphold interdiction where staff is always been punished easily by either getting their salaries stopped or half pay.

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