CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND PRODUCTIVITY OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

BY

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ABSTRACT

Conflict is an inevitable experience in any human environment, including universities, which have diverse interests, needs, and goals. Hence, the complex and diverse interests among university staff in the university environment inevitably breed conflicts which, if not properly managed, can affect staff productivity. This study examined conflict management strategies and the productivity of academic staff in selected Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study was anchored on Structural-Functional and Human Needs Theories. A two-stage sampling procedure was used to select 321 respondents for the study. The first stage was the convenience selection of three (3) public universities, namely Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Olabisi Onabanjo University and Tai Solarin University of Education, while a simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents (academic staff). Primary data were collected on the causes of conflict, the rate of conflict occurrence, conflict management strategies adopted and staff productivity, the effects of conflicts, using a structured questionnaire and in-depth interviews. Data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation, while Chi-square statistics and Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) were used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. Results showed that 58.1% of the respondents were male, while 41.9% were female. 73.7% were married, 69.2% held a PhD degree, and 72.6% were between the ages of 26 and 55 years. Results further showed that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that disputes relating to promotion ($\bar{x}$ =4.79), disparities in salary, benefits and workload distribution ($\bar{x}$ =4.77), limited resources like office space and laboratory facilities ($\bar{x}$=4.75), and changes in institutional policies, administrative structure ($\bar{x}$ = 4.74) are the main causes of conflicts. The majority (59.7%) of the respondents report that conflict sometimes occurs, while 66.0% reported a low prevalence of conflict. The in-depth interview reports confirmed that conflicts

reduced staff cordiality and collaboration, negatively affected work performance, and bred unhealthy rivalry. It hindered teachers' delivery to students, thereby reducing productive outcomes in the workplace. Conflicts among the respondents were commonly managed through compromise ($\bar{x}$ = 4.69), obliging ($\bar{x}$ = 4.66), collaborating ($\bar{x}$ = 4.63) and avoidance ($\bar{x}$ = 4.63). The majority (55.2%) of the respondents have a moderate level of productivity. Chi-square results showed that respondents' age (χ^2=15.35, df=8), marital status (χ^2=10.96, df=6), gender (χ^2=11.06, df=2) and types of institutions (χ^2=15.93, df=4) were significantly ($p<0.05$) associated with their productivity. OLS results revealed that disparities in salaries of academic staff, benefits and workload distribution are significantly ($p<0.05$) related to productivity (β= 0.12). Additionally, there is a significant ($p < 0.05$) relationship between compromising (β = 0.25), avoiding (β = -0.18), and obliging (β = 0.12) and respondents' productivity. The study concluded that conflict management strategies adopted in the selected universities enhance the productivity of academic staff. The study recommended that university management should incorporate conflict management strategies into in-service training programmes to understand conflict dynamics and be able to deal with them constructively, thereby improving job performance and productivity.