CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN ANAMBRA STATE

NUEL-OKOLI CHINONYE M
Department of Business Administration
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University
Igbariam

&

MBAH STELLA IFEYINWA (Ph.D)
Department of Business Administration
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University
Igbariam

&

OKEKE GOODFAITH N.
Department of Business Administration
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University
Igbariam

ABSTRACT
This study was aimed at identifying the effect of conflict management on organisational performance in private universities in Anambra state. A descriptive survey research design was used and the sample size selected was 166 academic staff. Data collected through the questionnaire were described using descriptive statistics while Pearson product moment coefficient of correlation was employed to test the hypotheses and establish the relationship between conflict management strategies and its implications on organisations performance. This study however, has shown there is a significant positive contribution of conflict management strategies to organisational performance. The study concluded that Power, style, culture and goal play significant role in managing organisational conflicts. Based on the findings, the study recommended that the management of the private universities should create additional channels of communication with employees as means of obtaining prompt feedback on organizational policies, so that conflicting interest will not arise.

Keywords: Conflict Management, Performance, Power, Style, Culture, Strategies

INTRODUCTION
Background to the Study
University worldwide is regarded as the citadel of learning, the fountain of intellectual development and a ground for the production of leaders of tomorrow. According to Ike (1999) a university fulfils one major function, it is a knowledge and value provider. In other words, a university progresses when it is able to provide knowledge and value and when it is not properly managed by the administrators and staff, it then fails in its function of providing knowledge and value. This according to Nwankwo (2000) explains why merit has been the watchword in the university system – an institution in which a student must first be certified worthy in character and learning before being admitted into the Honours Degree.

The role of universities in human capital development, research and technological innovation cannot be underestimated. All over the world, investment in University education is a critical component of national development effort. Nations today depend increasingly on knowledge, ideas and skills which are produced through researches in the universities. Nations invest in university education because society expects it to contribute to national development in three principal ways. First, society expects its university to produce the highly skilled personnel in technology, engineering, management and other professions. Secondly, universities have the responsibility of producing their own corps of academic personnel that is, the
intellectual resource pool that will, through scientific research generate new knowledge and innovation to solve developmental problems. Thirdly, universities produce teachers, administrators and managers for other levels of human resources development institutions (Ajayi, 2014). Therefore, these roles can only be achieved when human resources are employed to utilize other resources such as raw materials, machineries, money and information. Organizational performance comprises the actual output or results of an organization as measured against its intended outputs. According to Richard et al. (2009) organizational performance should be related to factors such as profitability, improved service delivery, customer satisfaction, market share growth, and improved productivity and sales. Organizational performance is therefore affected by a multiplicity of individuals, group, task, technological, structural, managerial and environmental factors. Individual incompatibilities between the employees and its unions and university management can adversely affect work output resulting in conflicting performances. As organizations are made up of different people with different attitude, beliefs, abilities and personality, conflict becomes inevitable. There is no organization that can effectively carry out its day to day activities without encountering some form of conflict. Therefore, conflict is the commonest, general and wide- spread phenomenon that is synonymous with group activity and interaction (Uwa, 2014). Conflict refers to a situation in which there are incompatible goals, cognition or emotion within or between individuals or groups that led to opposition (Uya, 1992). This definition recognises three basic types of conflict; goal conflict which arises when the desired outcomes are incompatible between groups, cognitive and affective conflict. Cognitive conflict arises as a result of incompatibility of ideas, affective conflict on the other hand usually arise when there is an incompatibility in emotions. Conflict can also arise when two or more values, perspective and opinions are contradictory in nature and have not been agreed upon. Conflict has both positive and negative effect on organization that is why there is a need for effective conflict management strategy. Conflict management refers to attempt to control or regulate conflict through a number of measures. Conflict management strategies refer to the internal mechanisms used by the various authorities in resolving conflict (Adeyemi and Ademilua, 2012). Albert (2001) averred that there are productive and destructive conflicts. A conflict is said to be positive when it is constructively discussed by the parties and amicable terms for settlement reached. Constructively managed conflict induces a positive performance while poorly managed conflict heats up the environment to bring about ‘dislocation of the entire group and polarization, reduced productivity on job performance, psychological and physical injury, emotional distress and inability to sleep, interference with problem activities, escalation of differences into antagonistic position and malice and increased hostility (Akaniji, 2005). Through conflict management a cooperative atmosphere is created for promoting opportunities and movement directed towards non-violent, reconciliation or basic clashing interest (Uchendu, Anijaobi and Odigwe, 2013). It is against this background that this study attempts to examine the effect of conflict management on employee performance in private universities in Anambra state.

Statement of the Problem
Conflict arises in an organization when an individual perceives that his goals are threatened or hindered by another person’s activities (Agwu, 2013). As most organizations have devoted a greater part of economic time and effort to settle conflict related issues, such situation has continued unabated, hence posing a negative challenge to industrial and economic growth of an organisation. Although, management scholars believe that conflict cannot be completely ruled out in any organization but then, incessant occurrence of organizational conflict could have an adverse effect on the organization. Most conflicts in the Universities, arise from the inability of the management to fulfil its collective agreement as stipulated in its terms of employment with its employees resulting in employees embarking on industrial action. Employees’ industrial action usually results in loss of man-hours, machine-hours, output, skilled personnel, employees’ morale and organizational reputation etc (Okotoni, 2002; Agwu, 2013). Just like any other organisation, Universities have been experiencing incessant labour unrest. Therefore, it becomes pertinent to examine which of the conflict management strategies could endanger increase in employees’ performance in the workplace given the fact that conflict is inevitable.

Objectives of the Study
The major objective of this study is to examine the influence of conflict management strategies on employees’ performance. Specifically, the objectives of the study include: 168
1) To determine the extent of relationship between power and organizational performance.
2) To examine the extent of relationship between style and organizational performance.
3) To ascertain the nature of relationship between culture and organisational performance.

Research Questions
The following are the research questions;
1) What is the extent of relationship between power and organizational performance?
2) What is the extent of relationship between style and organizational performance?
3) What is the nature of relationship between culture and organisational performance?

Research Hypotheses
In view of the above research questions and objectives, the following null hypotheses were formulated:
1HO: There is no significant relationship between power and organizational performance.
2HO: There is no significant relationship between style and organizational performance.
3HO: There is no significant relationship between culture and organisational performance.

Significance of the Study
This study will add to the body of knowledge by enlightening the students on how they can cope with conflict, so as to enable them perform as expected in their studies. Furthermore, this study would also help to further research and add to knowledge build-up in the university. Again, from this study, students would be able to device exemplary means of ensuring excellent performance even with the occurrence of an industrial action. Policy makers may also find the outcome of the study useful for future planning.

Scope of the Study
The scope of this study is limited to the relationship between conflict management and organisational performance in private universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. The universities under study include all academic and non-academic staff of Madonna University Okija, Tansian University Oba, and Paul University Awka.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: Nature of Conflict
Conflict is a situation of disagreement between two parties. A conflict situation is therefore one that is characterized by the inability of those concerned to iron out their differences. Conflict is an inevitable feature of organizational life. The state of health of an organisation lies along a continuum that ranges from a conflict-free organisation to a conflict ridden organization. Organisations like the universities is not immune from conflict (Olaleye & Arogundade, 2013). Therefore, conflict behaviour is an individual’s reaction to the perception that one’s own and another party’s current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously (Vliert, Huismans & Euwema, 1995). Robbins & Judge (2007) define conflict as a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected or is about to negatively affect something that the first cares about.

Hellriegel & Slocum (1996) defines conflict as opposition arising from disagreements about goals, thoughts or emotions within or among individuals, teams, departments, or organisations. This definition recognises three basic types of conflicts:
   a) Goal Conflict: When results or preferred outcomes are incompatible.
   b) Cognitive Conflict: When ideas or thoughts are perceived to be incompatible.
   c) Affective Conflict: It involves negative feelings or emotions such as anger.

Views on Conflict
1) Traditional View (1930-1940): One school of thought says that conflict must be avoided as it reflects malefaction within the group. Conflict is viewed negatively and is associated with violence and destruction. Conflict is as a result of poor communication and lack of trust between people. Conflict can be eliminated or resolved only at high level of management. According to this view, all conflicts should be avoided. Thus, there is need to pay attention to causes of conflict and correct them in order to improve group and organization performance (Robbins & Judge, 2007). Most conflicts have negative connotations, invoke negative feelings and often lead to destruction. Whether the effect of conflict is good or bad depends on the strategies used to deal with it (Rahim, 1986).
2) The Human Relations or Contemporary View (1940-1970): Conflict is a natural occurrence in all groups. The human relations school accepts conflict. It believes that conflict may benefit a group’s performance (Robbins & Judge, 2007). Dispute happens from time to time and it is not wise to put too much effort into avoiding or preventing the conflict. Concentrating only on large or critical conflicts allows people to resolve the conflict in a better and more effective way (Leung, 2010). According to this view, conflict is seen as a natural and inevitable outcome of people working together in groups and teams. Thus it needs not necessarily be viewed negatively, but rather positively as a potential force in contributing to the performance of individuals (Robbins & Judge, 2007).

3) The Interactionist View: According to this view, conflict is not only a positive force, but is also necessary for an individual to perform effectively. Resolving conflicts means challenging normal processes and procedures in an effort to improve individual productivity or introduce innovative systems (Robbins & Judge, 2007). Conflict is necessary to perform effectively, but not all conflicts are good. This school of thought has identified several types of conflict:
- task conflict, relates to the content and goals of the work;
- relationship conflict, which focuses on interpersonal relationships; and
- process conflict, which relates to how the work gets done (Robbins & Judge, 2007).

The interactionists interpret conflict in a totally different way from traditionalists and people with a contemporary view. According to interactionists, conflict can be identified as either dysfunctional or functional. Conflict is a part of people’s lives and a natural phenomenon in all organizations. A low level of conflict will not be harmful for daily operations but will help to create smooth functioning by better understanding of existing issues. Conflict at the desired level can inspire creativity when handling issues and resolving conflict. Thus, conflict can be positive in work environments, but whenever a critical or major conflict occurs, it should be resolved as the undesired level of conflict can be harmful and dysfunctional for the organization (Leung, 2010).

Sources of Conflict
Fajana (2000) identifies two sources of conflict and they include:
1) Internal Sources: This is so called because they refer to factors which are inherent within the framework of an organization. Fajana (2000) states that the major prime factor of internal sources of conflict is the “Opposing interests” of industrial actors. These “divergent interests” will bring about conflict in attempts by the two parties in organizations to try to share what Ajibade (2004) calls “industrial cake”. Apart from the above, it is another statement of fact that there is usually “power relationship” between the two actors in an industry which no doubt produce conflict and make such inevitable.

2) The External Sources: These are so called because they are outside the four walls of an organization. It may occur when the third party intervention to industrial dispute becomes one sided or biased. A good example is where government as the third and regulatory party tries to formulate policy or enact laws that favour one party at the detriment of the other. Such may generate conflict.

Process of Conflict
Conflict is a process in which one party suggests that its interest is being opposed by another party. As a role, people see only the observable part of conflict – angry words and actions of opposition. But this is only a small part of the conflict process (Mcshane and Glinow, 2008).
The conflict process consists of five stages (Robbins & Judge, 2007):
- potential opposition or incompatibility;
- cognition and personalization;
- Intentions;
- Behaviours; and
- Outcome.

Functional and Dysfunctional Effects of Conflict
The benefits of conflict include the following (Omisore & Abiodun, 2014):
1. Inspire creativity: Fortunately, some organizations view conflict as an opportunity for finding creative solutions to problems. Conflict can inspire members to brainstorm, while examining problems from various perspectives.
2. Improve future communication: Conflict can bring group members together and help them learn more about each other. From learning each other’s opinion on topics relevant to the organization’s growth to understanding each member’s preferred communication styles, conflict within an organization can give members the tools necessary to easily solve conflicts in the future.

3. Share and Respect Opinions: As organization members work together to solve conflict, they are more willing to share their opinions with other members of the group. Conflict can also cause members to actively listen to each other as they work to accomplish the organizational goals.

4. Facilitates an understanding of the problems, people have with one another and leads to better coordination among individuals and departments, in addition to strengthening intra-group relationship.

5. Satisfies certain psychological needs like dominance, aggression, esteem and ego, and thereby provides an opportunity for constructive use and release of aggressive urges.

6. Motivates individuals to do better and work harder. One’s talents and abilities come to the forefront in a conflict situation.

The dysfunctional effects are:

1. Conflicts affect individual and organizational performance. Resolving conflicts takes a toll on managerial time and energy which could be more productively spent.
2. In a conflict situation, people may promote their self-interests or personal gains at the cost of others or the organization.
3. Intense conflicts over a prolonged period affect individuals emotionally and physically, and give rise to psychosomatic disorders.
4. Time spent on conflicts, if cost, could have been spent doing more productive things.
5. Conflict may lead to work sabotage, employee morale problems, decline in the market share of product/service and consequent loss of productivity

**Pondy’s Model of Organizational Conflict**

One of the most widely accepted models of organizational conflict was developed by Louis Pondy cited in Jennifer and Jones (2007) which viewed conflict as a dynamic process that consists of five sequential stage.

![Diagram of Pondy’s Model of Organizational Conflict](image)


**Latent Conflict** – According to Jennifer and Jones (2007), at this stage there is actually no conflict. But the potential to cause conflict is present though hidden.

**Perceived Conflict** – This is the stage were one party becomes aware that conflict exist as a result of the awareness of the fact that its goals are been thwarted by the action of another party. At this point in time, each party begins to search for the origin and the cause of the conflict, analyze the event that led to the occurrence of the conflict and able to state clearly that conflict exist.

**Felt Conflict** – At this stage, each party to the conflict develop a negative and hostile feeling against the other party. They develop this attitude of us- versus- them and begin to blame the other group as the cause
of the conflict. Now as the party to the conflict argue out their view, it is usually blown out of proportion and conflict ensue.

**Manifest Conflict** – At the stage haven’t felt the existence of conflict, one party decides to react and map out ways of dealing with the party whom they feel is the cause of the conflict. Also, both parties begin to hurt one another and thwart each other goals. Manifest conflict can take the form of open aggressiveness or even violence between people and group may occur.

**Aftermath of Conflict** – The conflict sooner or later in one way or the other someone get fired and serve as a scarp goat, the organisation reorganize and even fail as a result of the conflict. Every conflict episode leaves a conflict aftermath that affects the way both parties perceive and respond to a future conflict episode. If conflict can be resolve by compromise or collaboration before it reaches the manifest stage, the conflict aftermath will promote good future working relationship. If conflict process is not resolve early enough that will lead to a conflict aftermath that sour the relationship in the organisation and makes people believe that the working culture in the organisation is uncooperative.

**Conflict Management Strategies**

Conflict management implies integration of all factors which can contribute to conflict resolution or its prevention. Those factors are improvement of communication and practicing discipline in the organization, as well as having in mind the life phases of parties included. Thomas (1992) identified two primary conflict handing intentions namely; Cooperativeness and Assertiveness. Cooperativeness means the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns; while Assertiveness means the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy his/her own concerns. These two basic dimensions of behaviour can be used to define five specific methods of dealing with conflicts, as shown on the grid below:

1) **Competing** - Is assertive and uncooperative - an individual pursues their own concerns at the other person's expense. This is a power-oriented mode, in which one uses whatever power seems appropriate to win one's own position - one's ability to argue, one's rank, economic sanctions. Competing might mean “standing up for your rights,” defending a position which you believe is correct, or simply trying to win.
2) **Accommodating** - Is unassertive and cooperative - the opposite of competing. When accommodating, an individual neglects their own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person; there is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode. Accommodating might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person's order when one would prefer not to, or yielding to another's point of view.

3) **Avoiding** - Is unassertive and uncooperative - the individual does not immediately pursue their own concerns of those of the other person. They do not address the conflict. Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically side-stepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation.

4) **Collaborating** - Is both assertive and cooperative - the opposite of avoiding. Collaborating involves an attempt to work with the other person to find some solution which fully satisfies the concerns of both persons. It means digging into an issue to identify the underlying concerns of the two individuals and to find an alternative which meets both sets of concerns. Collaborating between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights, concluding to resolve some condition which would otherwise have them competing for resources, or confronting and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.

5) **Compromising** - Is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. The objective is to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution which partially satisfies both parties. It falls on a middle ground between competing and accommodating. Compromising gives up more than competing but less than accommodating. Likewise, it addresses an issue more directly than avoiding, but does not explore it in as much depth as collaborating. Compromising might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position.

Other conflicts that can come from variety of sources are:

1) **Goals:** Conflict can happen as a result of conflicting goals/priorities. It can also happen when there is lack of shared goals.

2) **Styles:** Individuals have different styles. One’s thinking/communication style might conflict with other person’s thinking/communication style, but one can adapt to conflict when he/she wants to.

3) **Power:** Conflict can arise from the fact that power consists of the ability of one person or group to get others to do what they would not otherwise wish to do. Power can resolve conflicts at situations, as well as arise conflicts if used inappropriate.

4) **Culture:** Conflict caused by differences in cultural values and beliefs that place people at odds with one another. Cultural conflicts are difficult to resolve, as parties to the conflict have different beliefs.

**Organisational Performance**

Performance includes productivity, quality, consistency, employee’s satisfaction and financial results. Organisation performance has been the most vital issue for every organisation either profit or non-profit organisation. It is expedient for managers to know the factors that affect the performance. According to Rivers (2005), the hidden costs of unresolved conflict in organizations are enormous and finding effective ways to manage and resolve organizational conflicts can have a significant impact on productivity and hence organisational performance. Kaplan and Norton (1992) argue convincingly that the mix of measures which an organisation should use to assess its workers performance should be based around four different perspectives:

- Financial Measures: Such as sales growth, profits, cash flow and increased market share.
- Customer Measures: That is, the customer perspective, which looks at, for example, delivery time, service quality, product quality.
- Internal Business Measures: Cycle time, productivity employee skills, labour turnover.
- Innovation and Learning Perspective: Including such elements as ability to innovate and improve.

It is the managers responsibility to identify what could be the possible cause(s) of conflict and resolving them early enough to avoid interference with the performance of individual in the organisation. Performance of an organisation is one of the major indicators which inform stakeholders in any business that the business is doing well and as a result their investment is secured. Conflict or unresolved conflict among employees that is not well managed by the manager can affect the organisational performance negatively and the achievement of the goals and objectives of the enterprise. This is in agreement with Mgbekem (2004) that negative effect of conflict can cause individuals or groups to become hostile and can
cause them to withhold information and resources. Henry (2009) posited in his research that positive effect of conflict can improve the quality of decisions, stimulate involvement in discussion and building group cohesion. However, when conflict is not properly managed organisation will not reap the above mentioned advantages of conflict.

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study is anchored on the Structural-Functionalism Theory propounded by Persons (1960) in Alade (1998). The theory postulates that individuals normally adjust to a given structure in an organisation but any change in the structure of the organisation causes conflict and destabilizes the organisation. Conflict should be minimised by minimizing structural changes in order to maintain stability with both the individuals as well as the institutions. The implication is that universities should be mindful of their organisational charts and careful at making changes that may not be easily accepted by the university community (Okotoni, 2002). Another theory that lends credence to this study is the Conflict Process Theory proposed by Goldman (1966), in Alade (1998). The theory states that the observation of conflicts pertaining to major organisational offices is a reliable procedure for sampling the developmental tendencies of the organization as a whole. Therefore when organisation experience positive/non-destructive role conflicts, innovations and creativity would emerge; this will further lead to better conflict resolutions and conflict avoidance thus improving the management effectiveness and efficiency in accomplishing set goals and objectives of the organisation.

**EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Name of Author</th>
<th>Title of the Paper</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ojo &amp; Abolade</td>
<td>Impact of conflict management on employees’ performance in a public sector organisation</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Descriptive Survey Design</td>
<td>Organisation should embark on training and retraining of employees in area of conflict management so as to create a conducive working environment for the employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Uwa</td>
<td>Role of conflict management strategies on employees’ productivity in a Nigerian civil service.</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Descriptive Survey Design</td>
<td>Workers at all level should be trained and given the right behavioural orientation on how to handle conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Amineh &amp; Ali</td>
<td>Relationship between strategies of conflict management and performance of southern oil company</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Descriptive Survey Design</td>
<td>Mathematical function of strategies of conflict management relationship with organization effectiveness was provided in form of a regression model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Oseremen &amp; Osemeke</td>
<td>Managerial approach to conflict management in an organization</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Descriptive Survey Design</td>
<td>Managers at all levels should acquaint themselves with potential causes of conflict in their organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Osabiya</td>
<td>Conflict management in the workplace and how to improve organization and working life through better employment relations</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Descriptive Survey Design</td>
<td>Workers should be more involved in decision making process in Nigerian Public Services, so as to reduce the rate of conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Olaleye &amp; Arogundade</td>
<td>Types, causes of conflict and management techniques of</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Descriptive Survey Design</td>
<td>To maintain peace among the university administrators, Academic staff and students for effective administration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design
This study employed a descriptive survey research design. It was adopted because the design was judged to be the most realistic of other designs. It investigates phenomenon systematically, especially the qualities of a given population or area of interest. Data were collected from sampled academic staff of selected private universities in Anambra State for the study in order to determine the relationship between conflict management (independent variable) and organisational performance (dependent variable).

Population of the Study
The target population was made up of all academic staff of the selected private universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. The population was made up of 166 academic staff of the selected private universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Sampling Size/Sampling Technique
Since the population was small, (166 academic staff) purposeful sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study. Hence the study used one hundred and sixty six (166) academic staff as sample size.

Instruments for Data Collection
This was done by distributing copies of questionnaire on two different occasions to determine the level of consistency. The results obtained were not the same but highly correlated which implies that the research instrument was reliable for the research work. Data collected through the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics while Pearson product moment coefficient of correlation were employed to test the hypotheses and establish the relationship between conflict management and its implications on organisations performance.
PRESENTATION OF DATA

Analysis and Discussion of Results

The inferential statistical tool used was Pearson product moment correlation statistics. This was used to find out the extent of relationship between the dimensions of conflict management and organisational performance.

Hypothesis One

H01: There is no significant relationship between power and organizational performance.

The result of the analysis is presented on the table below:

Table 1: Test of Significance of Pearson's Correlation between Power and Organisational performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Organisational Performance</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>-0.480**</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Performance</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>-0.480**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey 2017

The result above shows that there is a negative relationship between power and organisational performance among academic staff in selected private universities in Anambra State, r. (139) = -0.480, P<0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis which indicated no significant positive relationship between variables was accepted.

Hypothesis Two

H02: There is significant relationship between style and organisational performance.

The result of the analysis is presented on the table below:

Table 2: Test of Significance of Pearson's Correlation between style and Organisational performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Organisational Performance</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>0.510**</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Performance</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>0.510**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey Result (2016)

The result above shows that there is a significant positive relationship between style and organisational performance among academic staff in selected private universities in Anambra State, r. (139) = 0.510, P<0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis which indicated no significant positive relationship between variables was rejected.

Hypothesis Three

H03: There is significant relationship between culture and organisational performance.

The result of the analysis is presented on the table below:

Table 3: Test of Significance of Pearson's Correlation between Culture and Organisational performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Organisational Performance</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>0.631**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The result above shows that there is a significant positive relationship between culture and organisational performance among academic staff in selected private universities in Anambra State, \( r = .631, P<0.05 \). Therefore, the null hypothesis which indicated no significant positive relationship between variables was rejected.

**Discussion of Findings**

One common type of conflict found in this study is conflict between academic and university administrators and management. The most common causes of conflict found in this study include communication gap. This was in agreement with the work of Alade (1998), who pointed out that effective communication channel was vital to an organisation and that the continuous healthy existence of any organisation depends on how well its communication channels operate.

1. This study however, has shown there is a significant positive contribution of conflict management strategies to organisational performance, with the exception of power. Findings have also revealed that power as a conflict management strategy has a negative significant contribution to organisational performance. \( r = -.480, P<0.05 \). This therefore means that power is a conflict management strategy that can discourage organisational performance.

2. Other findings have shown that there is a significant positive relationship between conflict management strategies of style and organisational performance.

3. This study revealed that culture has a significant positive relationship with organisational performance. Best’s position (2004) seems to be at variance with the finding that regards culture as an effective conflict management strategy. This is because Best asserted that the use of force may probably lead to human rights violation of various descriptions. Another finding has shown that goal has a significant positive relationship with organisational performance. This seems to give credence to the literature which says that the manager discourages the difference between the parties involved in the conflict and encourages what they have as common interest. Of course, this position was supported by Szilagyi in (1981) when he asserted that, “shared common interest on certain issue facilitate movement towards a common goal”.

In addition, style and culture were significantly positively related to organisational performance. The results of this study have been supported by other similar studies (Meyer, 2004; Rahim and Burtzman, 1989, Vigil-King, 2000). Meyer (2004) observed that cooperative conflict management strategies (style and culture) tend to yield beneficial outcomes in the workplace.

**Conclusion**

This study has examined the relationship between different conflict management strategies and organisational performance in private universities in Anambra State. The conclusion that may be drawn based on the findings of the study is that power, style, culture, and goals have been found effective as means of managing conflict. Culture was found to be the most effective because it has the highest correlation coefficient value of .760, while power was found to be the least effective because its correlation coefficient was -.480. In view of this, the researcher rightly conclude that if the organisation can effectively and efficiently manage conflict within its operation, this will lead to high level of organisational performance which will result into achievement of the organisational goals and objectives. Successfully managing conflict has a domino effect, allowing managers to create a workplace where employees can thrive. Darling and Fogliasso (1999) conclude that it is impossible to eliminate conflict totally. Managers who try to eliminate conflict will not last long, while those who manage it well will typically experience both institutional benefits and personal satisfaction.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that the management of private universities in Anambra State should take the following measures to manage organizational conflicts to the barest minimum:
1) The management of the private universities should create additional channels of communication with employees as means of obtaining prompt feedback on organizational policies so that conflicting interest will not arise.

2) Embarking on regular training workshops for its employees should be enhanced to eliminate ignorance and reduce areas of friction between workers and management and eliminate unnecessary labour unrest.

3) Competition for supremacy should not be the priority of the staff of organizations but rather working together in peace and unity to achieve a common goal for the good of the organizations.

4) Management should formulate policies that will ensure that conflicts that may occur within the organisation are quickly resolved.

5) Participatory, rather than autocratic style of management should be encouraged by organizations.

6) Management should clearly define the role of each job to prevent overlapping of functions in the organization as this has been found to be the cause of most conflict in recent time.

REFERENCES


