An assessment of the effect of conflict resolution mechanisms on institutional effectiveness in Bayero University Kano

* Abdulsalam Abubakar[1] and Riyauddeen Zubairu Maitama[2]

[1&2]*Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Bayero University, Kano – Nigeria.*

Corresponding Author: abdulsalamabubakarfana170@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates the effect of conflict resolution mechanisms on institutional effectiveness in Bayero University, Kano. Recognizing that conflicts are inevitable in complex institutional settings, the research aims to assess how structured approaches to conflict resolution influence the operational, administrative, and academic performance of higher education institutions. Using a quantitative survey research design, data were collected from a stratified random sample of 346 academic and non-academic staff across various faculties and administrative units within the university. The study focuses on key conflict resolution mechanisms such as mediation, grievance redress and negotiation, , and examines their relationship with institutional effectiveness in terms of goal achievement, staff commitment, and service delivery. Multiple regression analysis was employed to determine the extent to which these mechanisms predict institutional effectiveness. The findings reveal that effective conflict resolution significantly enhances institutional performance by fostering a collaborative work environment, reducing workplace tensions, and promoting organizational harmony. The study recommends the institutionalization of inclusive and participatory conflict management frameworks to sustain productivity and institutional resilience. These results contribute to the broader discourse on organizational behavior and higher education management in developing countries.

Keywords: Conflict resolution, grievance redress, institutional effectiveness, mediation, negotiation.

1. Introduction

Conflict is an inherent feature of any human organization, and universities are no exception. Institutions of higher learning bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds, academic disciplines, ideologies, and interests, thereby creating fertile ground for various forms of conflict. These conflicts, if not properly managed, can undermine the core functions of teaching, research, and community service (Rahim, 2011). Conflict resolution mechanisms such as mediation, negotiation, arbitration, and dialogue, serve as strategic tools for managing interpersonal and organizational tensions and restoring institutional harmony (Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2014).

In the context of Nigerian public universities, persistent conflicts between academic and non-academic staff, management, and labor unions have historically disrupted academic calendars, lowered staff morale, and weakened institutional effectiveness (Adebayo & Omotosho, 2021). Bayero University Kano (BUK), as a leading public university in northern Nigeria, is not immune to these challenges. Tensions often arise from resource allocation, role ambiguity, leadership styles,

communication gaps, and perceived injustice in decision-making processes. Effective conflict resolution, therefore, is not only necessary for improving workplace relationships but also fundamental to achieving institutional goals, promoting productivity, and ensuring long-term organizational sustainability (Onigbinde, 2020).

Institutional effectiveness refers to the extent to which an institution achieves its mission and goals through efficient operations, quality service delivery, and stakeholder satisfaction (Cameron, 1986). In universities, this encompasses academic excellence, administrative responsiveness, staff engagement, and a conducive environment for learning and innovation. Without proper conflict management strategies, these objectives become increasingly difficult to attain. The growing demand for accountability and performance in Nigerian tertiary education underscores the urgency of adopting systematic conflict resolution practices that align with global best practices (Obasan, 2020).

1.2 Statement of the problem

Despite the proliferation of formal and informal conflict resolution mechanisms in Nigerian universities, institutional effectiveness remains a pressing concern. At Bayero University Kano, recurring conflicts, ranging from interdepartmental disputes to prolonged industrial actions, continue to challenge administrative efficiency and disrupt academic activities. Previous studies have focused predominantly on the causes and frequency of conflict in Nigerian universities (Akinwale, 2011; Alabi, 2014), with limited empirical attention given to how specific conflict resolution mechanisms contribute to or hinder institutional effectiveness.

Moreover, anecdotal evidence suggests that while conflict resolution committees and staff grievance units exist within the university, their capacity to resolve disputes impartially and sustainably is often questioned. The apparent disconnect between conflict management practices and measurable institutional outcomes raises critical questions: Are existing mechanisms effective? How do they influence staff performance, organizational cohesion, and service delivery?

This study, therefore, seeks to fill this empirical gap by assessing the effect of conflict resolution mechanisms on institutional effectiveness in Bayero University Kano. Understanding this relationship is essential for informing policy interventions, improving administrative practices, and strengthening institutional resilience in the face of increasing complexity and competition in the Nigerian higher education sector.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Concept of Conflict in Organizations

Conflict, in its broadest sense, is a situation where there is a perceived divergence of interests or beliefs between individuals or groups (Robbins & Judge, 2017). It is an inevitable element of human interaction, particularly within complex organizations such as universities, where individuals from diverse educational, professional, cultural, and ideological backgrounds coexist. Rahim (2011) categorizes organizational conflict into interpersonal, intrapersonal, intergroup, and interdepartmental conflicts. In academic environments, these tensions may stem from disparities in expectations, inadequate communication, competition for scarce resources, unclear job roles, or leadership styles (Mba, 2013).

Universities are traditionally regarded as centers for intellectual freedom, yet they are not immune to internal disagreements that may hinder institutional objectives. According to Ojo (2012), academic

institutions in Nigeria have frequently been marred by conflicts that affect teaching, research, and administrative productivity. Therefore, understanding the nature, triggers, and manifestations of conflict is critical for university administrators and policymakers.

2.2 Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Conflict resolution mechanisms refer to the systems, structures, and processes put in place to identify, manage, and resolve disputes in a constructive and sustainable manner (Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2014). These mechanisms can be formal or informal, ranging from grievance redress channels, negotiation and mediation frameworks, arbitration, conciliation, to employee assistance programs. Effective conflict resolution focuses not merely on suppressing conflict but on transforming it into a catalyst for institutional growth and team cohesion (Rahim, 2011).

According to Udeh, Ugwu, and Eze (2016), the choice and application of a resolution mechanism largely depend on organizational culture, power dynamics, institutional values, and the perceived neutrality of the parties involved. Mediation and negotiation are often cited as the most effective mechanisms in academic settings due to their participatory and non-adversarial nature (Obasan, 2020). Conversely, where conflict is mishandled—either ignored or approached through intimidation or suppression the consequences often include reduced morale, work disruption, and even systemic institutional failure (Onigbinde, 2020).

2.3 Institutional Effectiveness

Institutional effectiveness is a multidimensional construct that reflects how well an organization achieves its mission, goals, and performance benchmarks over time (Cameron, 1986; Banta, 2009). In higher education, this encompasses academic excellence, administrative efficiency, infrastructural

development, staff satisfaction, quality assurance, and student success rates. Cameron (1986) emphasizes that effective institutions are not merely efficient in output, but resilient, adaptive, and responsive to internal and external challenges.

In the Nigerian university context, institutional effectiveness has become an urgent concern due to declining global rankings, infrastructural decay, and persistent strikes by staff unions such as ASUU, SSANU, and NASU. As Alabi (2014) and Akinwale (2011) argue, the frequent disruptions in academic calendars and administrative dysfunctions can often be traced back to unresolved or poorly managed internal conflicts.

2.4 Conflict Resolution and Institutional Effectiveness

A growing body of literature highlights the critical relationship between conflict resolution mechanisms and institutional effectiveness. Effective conflict management fosters trust, employee engagement, and collaboration, factors which are essential for institutional growth (Kazimoto, 2013). When conflicts are addressed fairly and inclusively, staff are more likely to exhibit commitment, motivation, and higher performance levels, thereby positively impacting the institution's overall output (Rahim, 2011; Mgbekem, 2004).

Conversely, persistent and unresolved conflicts often result in absenteeism, low productivity, strained relationships, and high turnover rates, all of which significantly diminish institutional effectiveness (Adebayo & Omotosho, 2021). Thus, the success of any educational institution partly lies in its capacity to institutionalize equitable and contextually appropriate conflict resolution frameworks that align with both academic and administrative goals.

Empirical studies across different geopolitical and institutional contexts have explored the nexus between conflict resolution mechanisms and organizational or institutional effectiveness. One of these studies specifically on public universities in Nigeria was carried out by Adebayo and Omotosho (2021), where they found out that institutions employing collaborative conflict resolution approaches experienced improved staff performance and greater administrative stability. Their regression analysis revealed that mediation, dialogue, and shared decision-making were positively correlated with employee motivation and operational efficiency.

Mgbekem (2004) similarly conducted a comprehensive analysis of administrative conflict in Nigerian universities and linked ineffective conflict handling to increased incidences of strikes, disruptions, and declining academic standards. According to the study, most institutions lacked structured conflict resolution policies and often resorted to authoritarian strategies that only aggravated tensions. In the study of Alabi (2014), where he involved three federal universities, identified poor leadership, opaque communication, and marginalization of staff in decision-making processes as central drivers of conflict. The research emphasized the importance of inclusive governance and transparent resolution procedures in maintaining institutional peace and functionality.

Moreover, Udeh et al. (2016) explored conflict management strategies in southeast Nigerian universities and found that institutions with established grievance resolution procedures and fair leadership practices demonstrated significantly better performance metrics than their counterparts. The authors noted that informal mechanisms, such as peer counseling and staff mediation panels, often yielded quicker and more durable resolutions than formal litigation-based approaches. Onigbinde (2020) also examined conflict resolution from a performance management lens and observed that consistent application of internal resolution mechanisms improved employee satisfaction and reduced operational costs associated with disputes and litigations.

Globally, research has supported the relevance of structured conflict resolution to institutional success. In the United States, Amason and Sapienza (1997) demonstrated that functional conflict focused on ideas and processes could improve decision quality and performance in academic institutions when managed effectively. However, affective conflict that is rooted in personal dislike or hostility was found to have a detrimental effect on organizational harmony and productivity. Also, Kazimoto (2013), in his study of Tanzanian universities, found a strong positive relationship between the adoption of integrated conflict resolution strategies and improved organizational performance. Institutions that promoted open communication, transparency, and participatory decision-making reported higher staff morale, stronger teamwork, and better student satisfaction ratings. Similarly, Rahim (2011) provided a cross-cultural empirical review and showed that conflict resolution strategies such as integrating, compromising, and obliging were significantly associated with job satisfaction and institutional coherence in both Western and non-Western educational institutions.

These empirical findings collectively suggest that conflict resolution is not merely a reactive necessity but a proactive tool for enhancing institutional effectiveness. Yet, the effectiveness of these mechanisms is deeply influenced by organizational culture, leadership, resource availability, and stakeholder participation—factors that are context-specific and require localized

examination, such as this study intends to do in the case of Bayero University Kano.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by the Human Relations Theory, which emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships, communication, and employee satisfaction in the workplace. Developed by Elton Mayo during the Hawthorne Studies, the theory asserts that organizational effectiveness improves when workers feel valued and involved in decision-making (Mayo, 1933). Conflict, from this perspective, is not necessarily destructive but can be a catalyst for growth if managed constructively through inclusive and participatory mechanisms such as mediation, negotiation, and grievance procedures.

In the context of Bayero University Kano, where diverse categories of staff interact within a complex institutional structure, the Human Relations Theory offers a useful lens for understanding how well-structured conflict resolution mechanisms can foster cooperation, trust, and institutional harmony. It supports the view that effective conflict resolution enhances job satisfaction, staff morale, and ultimately institutional performance (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939).

3.Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative correlational survey design to examine the relationship between conflict resolution mechanisms and institutional effectiveness in Bayero University Kano. The target population included academic and non-academic staff, and a sample of 346 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure fair representation across various faculties and administrative units. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale, covering key constructs like mediation, grievance redress, negotiation, and indicators of institutional effectiveness which include staff productivity, efficiency, and academic output.

The data collected were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20). Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize respondent characteristics, while multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesized relationship between conflict resolution mechanisms and institutional effectiveness.

4.0 Results and discussion

Table 4.1: *Model summary of the regression analysis*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.694	0.482	0.476	0.522

Model Summary: R^2 = 0.482; Adjusted R^2 = 0.476; Std. error = 0.522

Table 4.1 shows a statistically significant model for predicting Organizational Effectiveness using three key predictors: mediation, grievance redress, and negotiation. The model yielded a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.694, indicating a strong positive relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. This suggests that as the effectiveness of conflict resolution mechanisms significantly increases institutional effectiveness. With a total variance (R^2) of 0.482, the model suggest that approximately 48.2% of the variance in institutional effectiveness can be explained collectively by the three conflict resolution mechanisms. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.476 accounts for the number of predictors used, thus confirming high degree of explanatory power.of the model. Furthermore, the corresponding F-statistic

of 55.214 with a significance level of p = 0.000, indicated that the model is statistically significant. The standard error of the estimate was 0.522, also indicated the average deviation of the predicted

value from the actual observed values of organizational effectiveness is relatively low. This suggest that the regression model provides a fairly accurate prediction of the dependent variables.

Table 4.2

summary of multiple Regression analysis showing the effect of mediation, grievance redress and negotiation on institutional Effectiveness

Variables	B	SE B	B	t-Value	P	Decision
MED > Mediation	0.310	0.080	0.295	3.875	<.001	Accepted
GVR > Grievance Redress	0.228	0.073	0.212	3.123	0.002	Accepted
NEG > Nrgotiation	0.384	0.078	0.365	4.923	<.001	Accepted

Decision Rule: At 5% significance level (α = 0.05), any variable with **p < 0.05** is considered statistically significant.

Table 4.2 present the summary of multiple regression analysis showing the varying effect of the individual predictors on institutional effectiveness. Looking at the individual predictors, negotiation strongest predictor, with an unstandardized beta coefficient (B) of 0.384 and a standardized beta (β) of 0.365. This implies that for every one-unit increase in the effectiveness of negotiation strategies, institutional effectiveness increases by 0.384 units. The associated p-value of less than 0.001 indicates that this effect is statistically significant at the 5% level. This finding suggests that open dialogue, collaborative bargaining, and mutual concessions significantly enhance organizational harmony and performance. Mediation also exhibited a positive and significant effect on institutional effectiveness, with a B-value of 0.310 and a β-value of 0.295. This shows that a one-unit improvement in mediation practices corresponds to a 0.310-unit increase in institutional effectiveness. The p-value of less than 0.001 further confirms the statistical relevance of this variable. Mediation, as a structured and neutral approach to conflict resolution, helps prevent escalation and promotes trust and cooperation, thereby improving

institutional climate and productivity. As for the Grievance redress mechanisms, despite showing a slightly weaker effect, still significantly contributed to the model. It recorded a B-value of 0.228 and a β-value of 0.212, with a p-value of 0.002. This suggests that when employees have access to timely and fair grievance handling systems, their sense of justice and inclusion increases, which, in turn, contributes to organizational efficiency and cohesion.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that all three conflict resolution mechanisms; mediation, grievance redress, and negotiation significantly and positively predict institutional effectiveness. Among these, negotiation had the highest standardized beta value, affirming its role as the most impactful mechanism, it addresses interpersonal conflict resolution by involving a neutral third party, typically a senior staff to facilitate dialogue. Its significance in this study implies that when mediation is timely and unbiased, it fosters trust and collaboration, thereby boosting productivity and staff morale.

The grievance redress mechanism is also statistically significant, but it was perceived to be less accessible in some departments. This dimension involves procedural clarity, timeliness of response,

and perceived fairness. The lower beta value suggests that although formal grievance procedures exist, their effectiveness may be hindered by bureaucratic bottlenecks or lack of staff awareness. Negotiation is found to be the strongest predictor, encompassing both distributive and integrative negotiation strategies. Its prominence indicates that conflict situations resolved through dialogue, compromise, and consensus-building contribute most to institutional effectiveness. This dimension promotes shared understanding and reduces adversarial tendencies in the workplace.

These findings align with previous studies that suggest effective conflict resolution mechanisms improve institutional harmony and goal achievement and efficiency (Adebayo and Omotosho, 2021; Mgbekem, 2004; Alabi, 2014; Udeh et al., 2016; Onigbinde, 2020; Kazimoto ,2013 and Rahim, 2011)

5. Conclusion and recommendations
Conclusion
The study concludes that effective conflict resolution mechanisms, specifically mediation, grievance redress, and negotiation positively influence institutional effectiveness in Bayero University Kano. The presence of structured mechanisms reduces workplace tensions, improves morale, and facilitates smoother operations across academic and administrative units. The findings reinforce the idea that managing conflict proactively is crucial for sustaining institutional development, particularly in higher education environments with diverse staff categories and interests.

Recommendation
Based on the empirical findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered to enhance institutional effectiveness through improved conflict resolution:

i. Bayero University should institutionalize Conflict Resolution Policies, the institution should develop a comprehensive conflict resolution framework that clearly outlines procedures for mediation, negotiation, and grievance redress. These mechanisms must be accessible, transparent, and regularly updated.

ii. The study also recommends the establishment of Decentralized Conflict Units, conflict resolution offices should be established at the faculty and departmental levels to ensure prompt and localized resolution of issues, thereby reducing delays and bottlenecks.

iii. Participatory Dialogu should be Strengthened**,** the university should promote a culture of regular dialogue between management and staff unions or associations, incorporating negotiation into administrative routines. This will help address grievances before they escalate.

Grievance Redress Accessibility should be enhanced, Channels for reporting and addressing grievances must be made more visible and user-friendly, possibly through anonymous reporting platforms or designated officers in each department.

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