

ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION PRACTICES, CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AND ACADEMIC STAFF PRODUCTIVITY IN LAGOS STATE TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

The study focused on organisational communication practices, conflict resolution strategies and Academic staff productivity in Lagos State Tertiary Education Institutions. Six research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Hypotheses 1-3, 5 and 6 were analysed using Pearson product moment correlation analysis, while hypothesis 4 was analysed using multiple regression analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24.0. The population of the study was 1664 Academic Staff from Lagos State Tertiary Education Institutions. The sample of this study was selected using the multistage sampling procedure. In the first stage, five faculties\schools were selected from each Institution using simple random sampling technique. Then, from each of the selected faculties \schools, the simple random sampling technique was used to select three Heads of department, hence, the total of respondents were 45 HODs. Thirdly, purposive sampling technique was used to select 21 academic staff from each of the selected Faculties. Thus, the respondents from these faculties/schools were 315 Lecturers, making a total of 373 respondents selected, however, 346 administered questionnaires were retrieved and used for the study. Three main instruments titled: Organisational Communication Practices questionnaire for Lecturers (OCPQ), Conflict Resolution Strategies questionnaire for Lecturers(CRSQ) and Academic Staff Productivity questionnaire for Heads of department and Deans(ASPQ) were used to collect data, after ensuring their validity and the reliability with a coefficient of ($r= 0.8$), ($r= 0.9$) and ($r=0.89$) respectively. The findings indicate that there is a very weak, positive and non-significant relationship between organisational communication practices and academic staff productivity in Lagos State Tertiary Educational Institutions ($r = 0.015$, $N = 346$, $\rho > 0.05$) and also that there is a negative and non-significant relationship between conflict resolution strategies and academic staff productivity in Lagos State Tertiary Educational Institutions ($r = -0.242$, $N=346$, $\rho > 0.05$). The study therefore recommended that there should be adequate and proper flow of communication and dialogue between management, Government and academic staff, for conflict to be resolved, thereby curbing incessant strike or industrial actions.

Keywords: Organisational communication, Conflict resolution, Academic staff productivity, Tertiary educational institutions

Introduction

Communication is seen as the life wire of every human interaction, relationship and co-habitation. It cuts across all facets of human life and endeavours, such as business, family life, education, Government, religion, social life, international, internal, external, economy and so on. Ganiyu (2019) postulated that Communication is not just for conveying information but to persuade and influence people. Therefore, as much as communication skills are important to managers, the enablement to cajole and win over others is even more important. Allen (2018) perceived communication as the aggregate of all things a person does to create understanding with another person; it involves a systematic and unending process of speaking, listening and understanding. Communication in organisations is so vital that a breakdown or barrier in it can lead to conflict or disorder and if not managed, can further degenerate to crisis in such an organisation.

An organisation can be said to be a group of people who come together to achieve a united purpose, aims and objectives. Abari and Mohammed (2018) defined an organisation as the structure of relationships among position and jobs, which is developed for the purpose of realizing common goals and objectives.

Organisational communication as viewed by Onasanya (2021) is how an Organisation represents, present, and constitute their organisational climate and culture, the attitudes, core values and objectives that characterise the organisation and its members. Organisation seek people who can adhere to and give instruction, attentively listen, provide useful feedback, get along with colleagues and clients, network, provide accurate information, function adequately in groups and promptly resolve problems and relay ideas in a clear manner.

Thus, organisational communication practices are the types or kind of a system of communication that operates in a particular organisation. It is important that such practices are those that enhance a free flow of communication line among superiors and subordinates in order to reduce or minimize conflict and hence, enhance productivity. Meanwhile, Conflicts in organisations are mostly generated as a result of misinformation or ambiguity in communication interpretation. A Conflict can be perceived to be a form of misunderstanding or disagreement between or among people which can lead to quarrels, malice, grudges, fighting or disorderliness. A Conflicts, to Obasan (2004), as cited in Abari, *et al.*, (2022), have been seen as a natural component of organisational life and can occur within an individual, between people, between individuals and the group to which they belong and between two or more organisations. Also, Adeniji (2009), in Abari *et al* (2022) posited that conflict is wide spread in human societies, which means that it may occur in every human institution, including schools, universities, business, and social organisations.

Conflicts always exist in the life of individuals, groups, social structures and societies in general. It inevitably arises between management and staff and between management themselves as holding different views which are both natural and healthy to a group. A conflict occurs when individuals or groups are not obtaining their own self-interest. Some forms of conflict can be destructive to the institution, for instance, when they take attention away from other important issues facing an institution (Amie-Ogan & Eziri, 2021).

The ultimate measure of efficiency is the capacity to deliver a good or service. In particular, productivity is a measure of the manner in which specific resources are managed to meet their specified quantities and quality goals in good time (Orunbon, 2020). Productivity is also defined as a metric that compares output to input (goods and services) (energy, materials, labour, etc., utilized to bring result, which is the output). In the education field, productivity factor is a sine qua non tool for assessing and monitoring an organisation's results (Kennedy, 2016). Productivity is a necessary means of assessing and tracking an organisation's performance, including the education sector (Edo & Nwosu, 2018). In addition, Inatimi (2018) sees productivity as the proportion of how an enterprise turns input capital (works, materials, machinery etc.) into commodities and services (individuals, industry and countries). Productivity is the performance over and above input result; it is optimum use of existing resources in order to achieve the specified objectives. Productivity eliminates waste and generates sustainable quality by using multiple approaches, including collective transparency, collaboration, capacity building and encouragement for employees to achieve the organisation's objectives (Orunbon, 2020). The effectiveness of teachers can be calculated by teachers' success in the school system. Productivity of teachers is the number of teachers produced; here the result refers to the quality of teachers produced or produced annually (Musibau & Adigun, 2010 cited in Mohammed & Orunbon, 2020).

Literature Review

Concept of Communication

Communication is one of the keys to success in every living being: human, animal or plants' interaction, relationship, business or worship. Human beings communicate in several ways, by speech, sign language, music, writing and so on, the animals also communicate in different ways, for instance, the birds: chirp, the cock: crows, the sheep: bleats, the dog: barks, the cat: meows, the Lion: roars, and so on. The plants also communicate in their own ways, the tree branches sway sideways, the planks tweak when broken, also, the sun shines to tell the time, the thunder blasts to say it is about to rain. Communication is therefore a major aspect of human and animal co-existence and co-habitation, it is by communication war emanates and it is by it war is abated. According to Uttarrakhand (2021), Communication is the process by which a message or

information is exchanged from a sender to a receiver. For example a production manager (sender) may send a message to a sales manager (receiver) asking for sales forecasts for the next 6 months so they can plan production levels. The sales manager would then reply (feedback) to the production manager with the appropriate figures.

Concept of Organisational Communication

Bolarinwa and Olufemi in Nathaniel (2020) emphasized that the study of organisational communication involves the interplay of two complex concepts, organisation and communication. An organisation is a legal entity having different units coming together to utilize available resources in other to achieve the goals and objectives of the organisation (Onasanya, 2021).

Concept of Conflict

The concept of Conflict has a wide and varied meaning and interpretation to many Scholars all over the globe, to the Upsala Conflict Data base (USDP), Wallensteen and Sollenberg (2005) in Axt and Milosooki (2006). An armed conflict is defined as a contested incompatibility that concerns government or territory or both, where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least twenty-five battle- related deaths.

According to Fajana in Ojo and Abolade (n.d), conflict can be defined as a disagreement between two or more parties who perceive that they have incompatible concerns. It exists whenever an action by one party is perceived as preventing or interfering with the goals, needs or actions of another party. Conflict can be regarded as a reality of management and organisational behaviour and can be related to power and politics. Many conflicts are created by factors, which include gender, socio-economic status ethno-cultural, and racial tensions. Certain environments serve as sources of conflict. Poor communication, competition, opposing ideas, and perceptions about personal success and failures and incompatible goals breed conflict, Devon & Bourne (2018).

Concept of Conflict Resolution Strategies

Adeyemi and Ademilua in Amoda, Awe, Ogunade and Yakubu (2021), see conflict management strategies as internal mechanisms that enable various authorities to get to the root of problems in order to resolve conflict in a manner that is acceptable to the conflicting parties. Conflict resolution is an important aspect of corporate management. Richard (2011) as cited in Agbo (2020) notes that the aim of conflict management is not to create an ideal corporate situation since that is not attainable given the divergences in the individuals goals, etc. However, conflict management systematically uses the available conflict resolution strategies to build an effective mechanism Conflict resolution is described by Doe and Chinda (2015) as cited in Shanka and Thuo (2017) as “the reduction, elimination, or termination of all forms of conflicts.”According to Doe and Chinda, conflict resolution requires negotiations, bargaining, mediation and arbitration.

for conflict management in corporate organisations. Although there may be existing mechanism and procedures already in place to deal with conflicts whenever they occur, some organisations with reactive managers rise to the situation when it occurs.

Organisational Communication Practices and Academic Staff Productivity in Lagos State Tertiary Education Institutions

(Garnett, Marlowe, & Pandey, 2008; Pandey & Garnett, 2006 in Nwosu, 2017) assert that several studies emphasize that effective communication can enhance organisational outcomes. Communication can influence the perceptions and opinions about persons, communities, organisations, governments, and even society. One of the outcomes of administrative communication is related to the flow of information, regulations, policies, and procedures. As a managerial tool, communication is frequently expected to share information with members, to coordinate activities, to reduce unnecessary managerial burdens and rules, and ultimately to improve organisational performance.

Effective communication results in numerous positive outcomes for managers. These include increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, and greater commitment to organisational goals (Clampitt & Downs, 1993; Pincus 1986 in Ogunola & Akporara, 2015). The communication serves a vehicle by which

organisations are embedded in their environment: the inputs and outputs of organisation are mediated through communication (Ogunola *et al.*, 2015). The quality of communication has great impact on the quality of employee productivity at different organisational levels (Yuelan & Jing, 2018). Such an influence occurs due to the following fundamental factors: leadership communication and, on the other hand, the communication strategies oriented to good employee relations. Hence, the organisational behaviour must be directed by communication strategies that contribute to creating a better work environment or climate, thereby guaranteeing the highest productivity of workers (Hernández, Parra, García, Beleño, Romero & Duran, 2017). Moreover, the communication process complexity implicitly leads to the interaction of two or more people, groups of people, or work teams that can be interdisciplinary and belong to different departments and are as within the same institution. All this gives the internal communication a relational character, which entails all the social structures in an institution (Ololube, 2012).

Conflict Resolution Strategies and Academic Staff Productivity in Lagos State Tertiary Education Institutions

Traditional workplace practices and systems with their hierarchical structures, tight divisions of labour, narrowly defined jobs, detailed rules, limit employee involvement, and managerial decision making, authority, and control are no longer adequate since they foster conflicts (Hener, 2010). The high-performance work place emphasizes conflict management as a cornerstone of the effective high-productivity in work place.

Due to frequent conflict in tertiary institutions of learning, productivity in most institutions has taken a comparatively nosedive sequence (Jehn, & Bendersky, 2013). The frequent agitation by academic staff for improved working conditions and other interests have led to a down toll which eventually affects academic productivity performance. Conflicts in institution of learning have destabilizing effects on the overall productivity of the institution. It leads to under productivity since valuable time and resources (human and material) are used in controlling and managing conflicts rather than in enhancing output and productivity. Conflicts also lead to interpersonal disharmony in the institution which makes attainment of educational goals difficult. Attaining educational goals is possible if efforts are always made to reduce the overall level of conflict in the institutions (Agbo, 2000).

Umana (2019) also asserts that Conflict is an unpleasant fact in any institution as long as people compete for jobs, resources, power, recognition and security, which will always result into a situation whereby they frustrate each other in an attempt to achieve their objectives. Management-labour conflicts arise in group because of the scarcity of freedom, position, and resources. People who value independence tend to resist dependency and for interdependence and, to some extent conformity with a group. Generally, conflicts are known to have created problems of disquieting dimensions to institutions and reducing productivity, thus, the need to isolate strategies for their resolutions with the hope of optimizing educational productivity.

Therefore, management is duty bound to resolve conflicts properly for the sake of increasing educational productivity. Conflicts in Institutions occur in different dimensions and various strategies may be employed to resolve them, such as noted above, depending on the Government and the management. During the military regime, under General Babangida Ibrahim (1988), because of lack of communication and conflict over the non-implementation of elongated salary scale, there was a strike by ASUU which lasted for 18 months, the military employed coercive/autocratic style. Six Universities including LASU, OAU, UNILAG and three others were shut down. The students bore the brunt of the strike, academic activities were on hold, hence, no productivity. However, in the current strike action of ASUU as a result of lack of implementation of better condition of service agreement with federal Government, the Lagos state Universities did not join this strike, perhaps as a result of functional communication between the management and the academic staff of the institutions, for instance, the Vice Chancellor of Lagos state university on several occasions address the university staff (academic & non-academic) on her willingness to always listen and attend to the issues bothering on welfare of staff and students. Secondly, as stated above, the university also adopt congregation/ dialogue strategy where every member of the university converge together to discuss issues bothering staff and if possible proffer solutions. This in effect has

reduced the level of conflicts and agitations in the university, and probably increased the level of productivity as lecturers and students are regularly in class.

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between organisational communication practices and academic staff productivity in Lagos State Tertiary Educational Institutions, Lagos, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between conflict resolution strategies and academic staff productivity in Lagos State Tertiary Educational Institutions, Lagos, Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design of survey and correlation type. This is because the study examined the relationship that exists between/ among organisational communication practices, conflict resolution strategies and Academic staff productivity in Lagos state tertiary educational institutions, Lagos, Nigeria. On the other hand, the descriptive design was adopted to make a description about the influence of organisational communication practices and conflict resolution strategies on Academic staff productivity in Lagos state tertiary educational institutions, Lagos, Nigeria. The population of the study comprises all Academic staff of the Lagos state tertiary educational institutions, Lagos. These Institutions and the number of Academic Staff in each are herewith presented and depicted in Table 1.

Lagos State University, Ojo (LASU); Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Michael Otedola College of Education now Lagos State University of Education, Oto-Ijanikin (LASUED); Lagos State Polytechnic now Lagos State University of Science and Technology, Ikorodu (LASUSTECH)

Table 1: Population of the Academic Staff in Lagos State Tertiary Educational Institution, Lagos, Nigeria

INSTITUTION	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
LASU	642	237	879
LASUED	201	173	374
LASUTECH	321	90	411
TOTAL	1164	500	1664

Source: Academic Staff Establishment LASU, Registry dept. (LASUED), (LASUSTECH)

The sample size of this study was derived using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) population and sample size determinant, also in line with research advisor (2006) model. Furthermore, the sample of this study was selected using the multistage sampling procedure. In the first stage, five faculties/schools were selected from each Institution using simple random sampling technique. Then, from each of the selected faculties/schools, the simple random sampling technique was used to select three Heads of department, hence, the total of respondents were 45 HODs. Thirdly, purposive sampling technique was used to select 21 academic staff from each of the selected Faculties. Thus, the respondents from these faculties/schools were 315 Lecturers, making a total of 373 respondents selected; however, 346 administered questionnaires were retrieved and used for the study. These Lagos state tertiary educational institutions are:

1. Lagos State University, (LASU), Ojo, Faculties of Education, Arts, Science, Social Science and Management Sciences.
2. Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Micheal Otedola College of Education now Lagos State University of Education (LASUED), Oto-ijanikin, faculties /schools of Arts, Sciences, Social Sciences, Vocational and Technical Education, Languages.
3. Lagos State Polytechnic now Lagos State University of Science and technology, (LASUSTECH), Ikorodu, faculties /schools of Arts, Sciences, Engineering, Environmental sciences, Management and business studies.

The research instrument used for this study was a self-structured questionnaire titled: Organisational Communication Practices Questionnaire for Lecturers (OCPQ), Conflict Resolution Strategies Questionnaire (CRSQ) for Lecturers. Secondly, another questionnaire responded to by the Heads of Department and Deans is Academic Staff Productivity Questionnaire (ASPQ). The OCPQ and CRSQ were divided into four sections, A, B, C, D. Section A was designed to contain Items on the demographic data of the respondents.

While section B contained items to gather data on organisational communication practices. Section C contained items to gather data on conflict resolution strategies. However, the Likert rating scale was adopted for both Questionnaires with 4 points for the option Strongly Agree (SA), 3 points for Agree (A), 2 points for Disagree (D), 1 point for Strongly Disagree (SD). To ensure its validity, the researcher adopted content and face validity of the instrument. Thus, the instrument was critically scrutinized by the experts in the field of Test and Measurement in order to ensure the correctness and appropriateness of the instrument and its items. The research instrument was subjected to test-retest reliability test the questionnaire was administered in two other departments selected from other faculties in the institutions which were not be part of the faculties sampled for the study. These include ten (10) Lecturers from each of the institutions, totaling 30 Lecturers that were outside the selected sample. The instrument was administered twice within an interval of two weeks and the scores obtained from the two sets of administration were subjected to Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis used to establish the reliability of the instrument.

The data collected was subjected to inferential statistical analysis. The inferential statistics used was Pearson's product moment correlation to test hypotheses with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. The two hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between organisational communication practices and academic staff productivity in Lagos State Tertiary Educational Institutions, Lagos, Nigeria

Table 2: Organisational communication practices and academic staff productivity

		Organisational communication practices	Academic staff productivity
Organisational Communication Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.015
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.914
	N	346	52
Academic Staff Productivity	Pearson Correlation	0.015	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.914	
	N	346	52

The result of the test performed indicates that there is a very weak, positive and non-significant relationship between organisational communication practices and academic staff productivity in Lagos State Tertiary Educational Institutions ($r = 0.015$, $N = 346$, $\rho > 0.05$). The implication of this is that there is a positive influence of organisational communication practices on academic staff productivity. This shows that the organisational communication practices do not determine academic staff productivity to a very low extent. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected; hence, there is no significant relationship between organisational communication practices and academic staff productivity in Lagos State tertiary educational institutions.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between conflict resolution strategies and academic staff productivity in Lagos State Tertiary Educational Institutions, Lagos, Nigeria

Table 3: Conflict resolution strategies and academic staff productivity

		Conflict resolution strategies	Academic staff productivity
Conflict resolution strategies	Pearson Correlation	1	-.242
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.085
	N	346	52
Academic staff productivity	Pearson Correlation	-0.242	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.085	
	N	346	52

Table 3.4 shows that there is a negative and non-significant relationship between conflict resolution strategies and academic staff productivity in Lagos State Tertiary Educational Institutions ($r = -0.242$, $N = 346$, $p > 0.05$). This implies that conflict resolution strategies do not significantly influence academic staff productivity in Lagos State Tertiary Educational Institutions, Nigeria. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between conflict resolution strategies and academic staff productivity in Lagos State Tertiary Educational Institutions is hereby not rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one revealed that there is a very weak, positive and non-significant association between Organisational Communication Practices and academic staff productivity in Lagos state tertiary educational institutions, Lagos state, Nigeria. This finding is in consonant with Garnett, Marlowe & Pandey, (2008) and Pandey and Garnett (2006), who stated that effective communication enhances organisational outcome. They further expressed that as a management tool, communication frequently assist in the share of information with members, to coordinate activities, to reduce unnecessary management burdens and rules, and ultimately improve organisational performance. This finding also corroborate Clappitt and Down, 1993, Pincus 1986 who asserted that effective communication results in positive outcomes for managers with reference to increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, greater commitment to organisational goals. This finding also is in tandem with Yuelan and Jing (2018), who postulated that the quality of communication have great impact on the quality of employee productivity at different organisational levels. This finding was consistent with Hernandez, Parra, Garcia; Beleno, Romero & Duran (2017) who stated that such communication influence occurs as a result of fundamental factors such as leadership communication, employee relations and organisational behavior directed by communication strategies that contributed to creating a better work environment or climate, thereby guaranteeing the highest productivity of workers. This finding also corroborated Ayeni & Akinola (2020), who investigated organisational communication and teachers' productivity in secondary schools in Ondo state, Nigeria. It was found that significant relationship exist between principals' communication strategies and teachers' productivity ($r=0.680$, $p<0.05$).

Findings of analysis in hypothesis two revealed that there is a negative and non-significant relationship between conflict resolution strategies and academic staff productivity in Lagos State Tertiary Educational Institutions, Lagos, Nigeria. This findings corroborated Herner (2010), who asserted that traditional work place practices and systems with their hierarchical structures, tight division of labour, narrowly defined jobs, detailed rules, limit employees involvement and managerial decision making, authority and control are no longer adequate, since they foster conflict. The findings was consistent with Jehn and Bendersky(2018), who asserted that due to frequent conflict in tertiary institutions of learning, productivity in most institutions has taken a comparatively nosedive sequence. They further posited that frequent agitation by academic staff for improved working conditions and other interests have led to a down toll which eventually affects academic staff productivity. This finding further supported the submission of Agbo (2000), who postulated that conflict in institutions of learning have distabilising effects on the overall productivity of the institution. He stated further that it leads to under-productivity since valuable time and resources are used in controlling and managing conflicts rather than in enhancing output and productivity. This finding was in agreement with Umana (2019), who asserted that conflict is an unpleasant fact in any institution, resulting to people competing for jobs, resources, power, recognition and security which always result into a situation whereby they frustrate each other in an attempt to achieve their objectives. They further submitted that conflicts generally are known to have created problem of disquieting dimensions to institutions and reducing productivity, thus the need to isolate strategies for their resolutions with the hope of optimising educational productivity. This finding was in consonant with Olukayode (2015), who investigated the impact of workplace conflict management on organisational performance in a Nigerian manufacturing firm. The study found out that there was a significant positive relationship between conflict management strategies that is accommodation, collective bargaining, compromise with organisational performance.

Conclusion

The study concluded that organisational communication practices, conflict resolution strategies are important determinant of productivity among academic staff of Lagos state tertiary education institutions. It can also be concluded from the study that there is a notable influence of effective conflict resolution strategies on

academic staff productivity in Lagos state tertiary education institutions. Also, it can be concluded that formal, informal or oral communication moderated or influence relationship between organisational communication practices and academic staff productivity in Lagos state tertiary education institutions. It can further be concluded that conflict resolution strategies identified such as compromise, avoidance/delay, forcing/coercive and emergency moderated and influenced the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and academic staff productivity in Lagos state tertiary education institutions, Lagos, Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. The management of Lagos state tertiary educational institutions should ensure that effective organisational communication practices as contained in the organogram of the institutions is upheld. That is, the line of communication that will enhance or promote staff productivity should be maintained and sustained.
2. There should be effective and encompassing conflict resolution strategies adapted to foster commitment which will bring about high productivity, thereby curbing incessant strike or industrial actions.
3. Incubation of ideas and conceptions whereby, new ideas are communicated to members of staff through various means bulletin, news-letter, memos and so on, also discussed in conferences/converging, then given time to mature before gradually being introduced, should be adopted to forestall or resolve conflicts.

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