

## **UTILIZING MORAL INTERVENTION TECHNIQUE FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT WITHIN UNIVERSITIES IN ENUGU STATE**

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**Abstract**

*The main purpose of the study was to determine the intervention technique utilized for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State. One research question and one null hypothesis was formulated and tested at .05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was utilized for this study. The population for the study comprised all the 5,225 academic staff members within private and public Universities in Enugu State. The sample size for this study was 522 academic staff members in private and public Universities in Enugu State. The researcher used proportionate stratified random sampling technique to draw 10% of private and public Universities in Enugu State. A structured questionnaire validated by three experts was used for data collection. Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate was used in computing its reliability coefficient of the instrument. Reliability index of .81, was obtained from the instrument, indicating that the instrument is highly reliable and suitable for the study. 522 copies of questionnaire were administered by the researcher with the help of three research assistants that were properly briefed on the content of the questionnaire and its mode of administration to ensure that the questionnaire was properly administered. Out of 522 distributed copies of the instrument only 520 copies were retrieved, 5 copies were not retrieved. The data collected was analyzed using Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) with Standard Deviation (SD) to answer the research question. However, the null hypothesis was tested using t-test statistic at .05 level of significance. From the result of the findings, it was concluded that moral intervention technique was utilized to a great extent for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State. It was concluded that there was no significant difference in the mean response scores of academic staff members within private and public universities on the extent to which moral intervention technique was utilized for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State. The researcher recommended among others that deliberate efforts should be made by management of universities at utilizing moral intervention technique for conflict management within public and private Universities in Enugu State.*

**Keywords:** Moral Intervention, Technique, Conflict, Management

### **Introduction**

The fundamental issues in the effective management of conflicts in any society lie in giving room to individual and group participation, which is

paramount to organizational development. Whenever conflict occurs, it must be managed and handled constructively; else it will threaten the very existence of the institution, and the nation and society at large

(Olaleye & Arogundade, 2018). Oluka (2018), posited that Nigerian Universities are being confronted with various constraints, such as poor infrastructures, increase in tuition fee, extortion of money from students by the lecturer and sexual harassment, among others. These have given rise to distrust and hostility among the stakeholders of higher institutions, hence militating against the smooth, effective and efficient administration in the institutions (Rahimi 2016). Educational administrators seemed not to have been proactive to the threat posed by conflict in higher institutions, which might engender the progress and development of the institutions if not properly managed. Some of such instance is the recent crisis that disrupted academic programmes of Lagos State University (LASU) in 2015, where the union prevented the vice chancellor Prof. John Obafunwa and some key officials in entering the main campus to perform their duties, singing and shouting 'Obafunwa must go'.

In June 2019, the management of Ekiti State University, Nigeria closed the school due to crisis caused by the students. The students in their large number gathered at the satellite gate of the institution where they chanted solidarity songs. It was gathered that in a bid to dissuade the students from going ahead with the protest, the school management hurriedly summoned the officials of the student Union to an emergency meeting, but it appeared that the efforts of the management was ignored by the students who had already occupied the main entrance to the campus (June 16th, 2019, Vanguard Newspaper). Also similar incidents occurred in Adekunle Ajasin University Akungba Akoko (AAUA), Ondo State, Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) and University of Benni (UNIBEN), to name a few, where students set some of the school properties ablaze and destroyed properties worth millions, resulting in closing down the academic programmes for months.

Some scholars have claimed that conflict is perceived as negative, dysfunctional and destructive

(Olaleye & Arogundade, 2018), and (Posigha & Oghuvwu, 2019), while others are of the opinion that conflict serves as a catalyst for innovation, creativity of production and efficiency (Akorede 2015). The definition appears curious as numerous writers believed that conflict implies negative implications to everyone concerned. However, Adejuwon and Akorede (2020), showed that conflict enhances positive results. Nonetheless, Olaleye & Arogundade (2018), are of the view that conflict may be dysfunctional if not well-managed. Other scholars such as Oladele (2017), and Adesina (2020), posited that conflict engenders interaction of persons or a group of people in relation to different expectations, interests and backgrounds in society. Going by the claim made by Oladele (2017), and Adesina (2020), above, conflict can be viewed as unavoidable and a normal part of a society or an organization. According to Rahimi (2016), conflict is an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement or differences within social entities. Ibrahim (2017), perceived conflict as a situation in which two or more values, perspectives and opinions are contradictory in nature and have not been agreed upon. Uya (2018), defined conflict as a situation in which there are incompatible goals, cognition or emotion within or between individual and groups that led to opposition.

In a nutshell, it is an activity that takes place when conscious beings wish to carryout mutually inconsistent acts concerning their wants, needs and obligations. Ositoye (2021), asserted that conflict can be disagreement that exists between one or two parties. According to him, it creates situations where both parties perceived a situation in different directions in reaching compromise on issues of common interest. Thus, it may lead to protest, strikes and disruption of work activities. From the examination of various definitions, conflict can said to be a misunderstanding that arises when one or two people have different views or pursue different goals in an organization. It is what usually occurs between students and staff (management), who are the

university stakeholders. Although conflict may impede the attainment of one goal, the consequence may be beneficial if they produce new information which in turn enhances decision making and lengthy delays over issues or disintegration of new team efforts, thus, the need for conflict management.

Conflict management entails the establishment of various mechanisms to eliminate the misconception or negative feeling aspects of conflict to enhance learning and group outcomes so as to pave the way for people to achieve their goals (Adeniji, 2019). Oni (2017), averred that conflict management enhances capacity through a number of measures by working with the parties involved in conflict. The above definition covers the entire area of handling conflicts positively, being proactive at and preventing conflict. In the view of Adaeze (2014), it is a diagnostic process or dialogue where strategies and intervention are designed to curtail the conflict. This implies that when conflict arises, the need is to become a positive solution provider, rather than generating a negative one, which threatens the individual or group, so as to cover conflict limitation, containment and litigation. From the examination of various definitions, conflict management is seen as measures put in place in managing conflict towards constructive action in resolving organizational conflict. This indicates that when conflict arises, the need for proper management is imperative so as to enhance positive results. Such proper management according to Udoka (2016), among others includes the use of moral intervention techniques.

Moral intervention is a technique that teaches the staff and students the moral functioning, involving the meta-moral characteristics which include social orientation, self-control, compliance, self-esteem and empathy. Nelson and Quick (2015), noted that through teaching the students meta-moral characteristics and psychological morality, the school authority influence staff and students' moral development. Ekwomchi (2021), posited that moral intervention techniques teaches and encourages good

behaviour, morality and worthiness in character. It is a technique that aims to empower people to make healthy and informed choice about their lifestyles. Ramadiro and Vally (2015), contended that effective moral intervention technique should teach responsible behaviour and the inculcation of self-discipline. Measures under moral intervention techniques include; frequent organization of seminars and workshops, role modeling, token economy, assertive training, sports and social activities (Kwambe, 2020). Okutua (2022), noted that most institutions unknowingly utilize moral intervention technique in form of in-service training, seminars and workshops which have been used to build moral cautiousness in the staff members. Kuti (2023) noted that the moral intervention have been useful in building rapport among staff members and strengthening social interaction in institutions. Despite the fact that these techniques are assumed effective in managing conflicts in school settings, it is not certain on the extent to which authority of universities utilizes this technique in managing conflict both within public and private Universities in Enugu State. Thus, proprietorship of universities are variables of serious concern in this study.

Utilization of moral intervention technique for conflict management cuts across both private and government owned universities in Nigeria. The high demand and the problems envisaged by the government to fund universities alone, led to granting license to private individuals, religious organizations and corporate organizations to establish private institutions like other nations of the world. (Chidiobi, 2014). Private universities are non-public or independent tertiary institutions who do not receive governmental funding and are usually, administered by denominational or secular boards: They are universities operated for profit, while government owned universities are those institutions which are owned, managed, controlled, financed and inspected by the government. Akpan (2017), asserted that it is expected of the government through the Ministry of Education to take close surveillance on



both private and government owned institutions to checkmate if actually both types of schools are meeting up to the set standard of universities in the country for improved performance of students in academics generally.

The difference between private and public universities in the utilization of moral intervention for conflict management can be attributed to their ownership structures. Adietomre (2017), stated that government who bears the burden of paying salaries to workers not minding if they are productive, owns the public universities, while on the other hand, Adietomre (2017), noted that the private schools owned by private individuals or organizations dictates the way and manner their school should be run. In the same vain, Balogun (2015), observed that there are more facilities for teaching and learning in the private universities than the government owned universities. Adietomre (2017), noted that universities owners, be it private or public, has the sole authority to insist on utilizing moral intervention or not. Akpan (2017), asserted that be it as it may, the fact remains that the utilization of moral intervention in universities is for the best interest of the institution and society and should be adhered to, by both the government owned universities and the private as well.

Considering the fact that conflict management in universities is vital to staff and students' progress and achievement in the universities, yet the extent it is utilized for conflict management in both public and private owned Universities in Enugu State is yet unknown, literatures available to the researcher did not show any recent work and empirical evidence on extent moral intervention is utilized for managing conflict within Universities in Enugu State. This created a gap and problem that necessitated this study. Hence the researcher considers it very necessary and timely to ascertain the extent to which the moral intervention is being utilized for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Conflicts in Nigerian tertiary institutions are like growing monsters. Prevailing crises that Nigerian universities are currently confronting are more than what they were in the past. Conflict has remained an instrument employed by students or groups in the pursuit of their personal or collective goals and the forums put in place by the management are much more far-reaching than ever before. However, the consequences of globalization and dynamic changes in the management of organizations have contributed positively and negatively to the Nigerian Universities. Therefore, it is required to curb crisis which has become more rampant in the Nigerian universities resulting in a total unrest, poor academic performance of students and poor learning environment.

Management specialists have proposed several ways of dealing with the process of conflict management, however, no strategy to the knowledge of the researcher is targeted towards utilizing moral intervention for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State. Therefore, the need to explore moral intervention techniques for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State has become imperative. It is therefore against this background that the researcher is motivated to investigate the extent to which moral intervention is being utilized for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State, hence this study determines the extent to which moral intervention is being utilized for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to:

1. ascertain the extent to which moral intervention techniques is utilized for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research question guided the study;

1. To what extent is moral intervention technique utilized for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State?

### **Hypothesis**

The following null hypothesis was formulated and was tested at .05 level of significance.

**HO:** There is no significant difference in the mean response scores of academic staff members in private and public Universities on the extent to which moral intervention technique is utilized for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State.

### **Methods**

Descriptive survey research design was utilized for this study. Descriptive survey research design, according to Nworgu (2015), is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. A descriptive survey research is concerned with specified population of persons, item or situation, in a defined geographical location. The descriptive survey research design is considered suitable for the study as it solicits for information from the respondents directly and affords all the respondents equal chance of being chosen for the study. The population for the study comprised all the 5,225 academic staff members in private and public Universities in Enugu State. It comprises of 4,146 public and 1,079 private academic staff members in the 8 Universities in Enugu State. This is based on data obtained from the Personnel Unit of each of the institutions. The sample size for this study is 522 academic staff members in the private and public Universities in Enugu State. The sample is made up of 252 public and 270 private university academic staff members in Enugu State respectively. The researcher used proportionate stratified random sampling technique to draw 10% of private and public Universities in Enugu State. This is in line with Uzoagulu (2012) which states that when the respondents' population are in the thousands 10% of the entire population can serve as the sample.

A structured questionnaire named "Utilizing Moral Intervention Techniques for Conflict Management Scale (UMITCMS)", developed by the researcher was used for data collection. The instrument has two sections; A and B. Section A contained the

respondents bio- data while section B has 7 items, structured to assist the researcher in providing answers to the research question that guided the study. The response format for the instrument was a 4-point scale of Very Great Extent (VGE), Great Extent (GE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE). Each response option has a numerical value assigned to it as follows;

Very Great Extent (VGE) = 4 points

Great Extent (GE) = 3 points

Low Extent (LE) = 2 points

Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1 point

In order to ensure the validity of the instrument, draft copies of the instrument together with the research topic, purpose of the study, research questions, hypotheses and the developed instrument were given to three experts. Two experts were from the Department of Adult and Continuing Education, while the other expert was from the Department of Mathematics and Computer Education, all from Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. The experts were requested to assess the relevance, adequacy, suitability and comprehensiveness of the items in addressing the research questions as well as the clarity of the instruction to the respondents. The initial 5 generated items were increased to 7 items as suggested by the validators, while barrel questions and grammatical errors were corrected as well. The validators' comments were used to draft the final instrument that was used for data collection. To ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument, the researcher conducted a trial test using 20 academic staff members within private and public universities in Anambra State. This served as a similar population for the study. The respondents were assured of complete confidentiality of all information they supplied. The choice of Anambra State was dictated by the fact that both states have the same educational characteristics in terms of administration, population and environment. The respondents were allowed to complete the instrument at their own convenience. The responses to the

various items of the questionnaire were used in computing its reliability coefficient using Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate. The reliability index stood at .81, indicating that the instrument is highly reliable and suitable for the study. 522 copies of questionnaire were administered by the researcher with the help of six research assistants that were properly briefed on the content of the questionnaire and its mode of administration to ensure that the questionnaire was properly administered. Appointment was booked with the respondents for collection at a later date for those who were not able to fill their own copies of the instrument because of the nature of their job. Out of 522 distributed copies of the instrument only 520 copies were correctly filled and retrieved, 2 copies were not retrieved. The data collected was analyzed using Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) with Standard Deviation (SD) to answer the four research questions. However, each of the four null hypotheses was tested using t-test statistic at .05 level of

significance. The analysis was done with the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The decision rule; real limit of the mean scores was applied, therefore, the upper and lower limits of the mean is as follows;

Mean scores from 3.50 – 4.49 Very Great Extent (VGE)

Mean scores from 2.50 – 3.49 Great Extent (GE)

Mean scores from 1.50 – 2.49 Low Extent (LE)

Mean scores from 0.50 – 1.49 Very Low Extent (VLE)

The null hypotheses were not rejected when the p-value was less than .05 and was rejected when the p-value was equal or more than .05 level of significance.

### **Results**

**Research Question:** To what extent is moral intervention technique utilized for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State?

**Table 1: Mean Responses and Standard Deviation on the Extent to which Moral Intervention Technique Utilized for Conflict Management within Universities in Enugu State**

**N=520**

S/N	Extent to which moral intervention technique was utilized for conflict management in Universities include;	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	SD	DEC
1.	periodic organization of religious activities to boost good moral conducts on campus	187	196	134	3	3.09	0.80 GE
2.	daily teaching of moral instruction through school social media links	203	229	48	40	3.14	0.88 GE
3.	organization of campus fellowship on campus	144	164	118	94	2.69	1.06 GE
4.	increase of academic work load to reduce students' leisure time.	170	169	174	7	2.97	0.85 GE
5.	provision of effective guidance and counselling services on Campus.	130	138	138	114	2.55	1.09 GE
6.	providing mentorship seminar program for individuals on campus	165	174	180	1	2.97	0.82 GE
7.	closing monitoring of emotional health of individuals on campus	130	134	148	108	2.55	1.08 GE



## GRAND MEAN

score, the answer 2.85 to the research question, is that

Table 1 above presents the results of data analyses for the research question. The Items had mean responses that were higher than the cut-off point as indicated in the real limit of number. The standard deviation for the items raised is small indicating that the respondents' responses for the items raised are homogenous and closely clustered around the Mean. The grand mean (2.85) was also high. Going by the decision rule for interpreting the respondents mean

moral intervention technique to a great extent is utilized for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the mean response scores of academic staff members in private and public universities on the extent to which moral intervention technique is utilized for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State.

**Table 2: t-test Analysis on the Mean Response Scores of Academic Staff Members in Private and Public Universities on the Extent to which Moral Intervention Technique was utilized for Conflict Management within Universities in Enugu State.**

STATUS	N	SD	df	t-cal	Sig.	Dec.
Public	250	2.91 .950	518	1.56	.12	Do not reject H0 <sub>1</sub>
Private	270	2.78 .900				

Table 2 shows that the t-calculated value for the difference in mean response scores of academic staff members in private and public universities on the extent to which moral intervention technique is utilized for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State is 1.56, significant at .12 level of significance, which is greater than .05 set for the study. Going by the decision rule, the null hypothesis of no significant difference is therefore not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean response scores of academic staff members within private and public Universities on the extent to which moral intervention technique was utilized for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State.

## Discussion

The findings in the research question indicated that moral intervention technique was utilized to a great extent for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State. The comparison of the comparison of academic staff members in private and public Universities on table seven showed that there is no significant difference in the mean response scores of academic staff members within private and public Universities on the extent to which moral

intervention technique was utilized for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State. This finding is in line with Okutua (2022), who noted that most institutions unknowingly utilize moral intervention technique in form of in-service training, seminars and workshops which have been used to build moral cautiousness in the staff members. The finding also agrees with Kuti (2023) who posited that moral intervention have been useful in building rapport among staff members and strengthening social interaction in institutions. It is also in line with Ekwomchi (2021), stated that most universities give moral intervention techniques to individuals to teach and encourage good behaviour, morality and worthiness in character. The finding tally with the position of Ramadiro and Vally (2015), which noted that effective moral intervention technique should teach responsible behaviour and the inculcation of self-discipline. Thus, moral intervention technique should be encouraged within public and private Universities in Enugu State.

## Educational Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study hold implication for the government, administrators of Universities and staff members.

The findings of this study hold serious implication on the government who are saddled with the responsibility of providing quality education to its citizenry as it will assist the government in making policies and guidelines with regards to conflict management in the Universities. The finding of the study would serve as a guide to the government on the need for conflict management technique in Universities for an improved academic environment in the Universities in Enugu State and Nigeria at large. The study holds implication for administrators of Universities as it explores conflict management technique and recommendations that will help to facilitate effective and efficient conflict management and learning environment in Universities in Enugu State.

The study holds implication for the staff members in the Universities as it would assist them in making

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- adjustments and exhibiting positive attitudes towards others in the Universities. Due to the need for conflict management in Universities, this study shall help in creating awareness on the need for utilization of moral intervention technique for conflict management within Universities in Enugu State and the world at large.
- Recommendations**
- Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made.
1. Moral intervention technique should be encouraged in all public and private Universities in Enugu State.
  2. Deliberate efforts should be made by university authorities at moral intervention technique for conflict management in public and private Universities in Enugu State.
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