PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS

Ogunjimi Omobola Oluwagbemisola & Saheed Olasunkanmi ODUOLA
Dept. of Public Administration, Faculty of Administration, Obafemi Awolowo University,
Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria
Lateefat Bukola BABARINDE
Dept. of Accounting and Finance, Faculty of Management Sciences, Ajayi Crowther University,
Nigeria

ABSTRACT
The study identified the public relation strategies in managing conflict and examined the effect of public relation strategies on conflict management in the University of Lagos. This study utilised both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected through the administration of questionnaires. The set of questionnaires were administered to academic and non-academic staffs and final year students of the University of Lagos to gather information in order to identify Public Relations Strategies in managing conflict and the effect of Public Relations Strategies on conflict management in the University of Lagos. For the purpose of questionnaire administration, purposively sampling technique was used to select two hundred and fifty (250) staff respondents drawn from different departments and three hundred and fifty (350) students were also purposively selected across the faculties and departments in University of Lagos. The secondary sources of information that were employed included relevant official publications and records from the University of Lagos bulletin, journal articles, periodicals and internet sources. Data collected through the use of the questionnaires from the staffs and students of the University of Lagos are analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, tables and frequency distribution as well as regression.

Finally, the findings show that compromise or dialogue, collective bargaining, effective communication and confrontation are Public Relations Strategies adopted in conflict management by the University of Lagos management. Also, Public Relations experts are given the chance to take part in decision-making process while management is faithful to the bargain of public relations.
The study concluded that Public Relations Strategies such as collective bargaining and effective communication are effective in managing conflict. On the other hand, problem-solving and avoidance and preventive, are less effective in managing conflict.

Keywords: Public relations, Conflict management, Strategies, communication, management

1. Introduction

The structurally differentiated character of contemporary work-organizations, whether in the

manufacturing or service industry inevitably generates conflicts of interest? These conflicts of interests arise in groups because of the scarcity of freedom, position and resources (Hotepo, Asokere, Abdul-Azeez and Ajemunigbohun, 2010). Workplace conflict is thus endemic despite the best of management practices in organizations and manifests in various forms as an intrinsic and unavoidable feature of the employment relationship. It is by nature an ever-present process and more likely to occur in hierarchical organizations where people with a divergent view, opinion and background interact. However, conflict in work-relations is not an aberration, since it creates or provides an opportunity for correction and reconciliation for the betterment of both the organization and the workers (Osad and Osas, 2013).

According to Kazimoto (2013), workplace conflict is described as the presence of discord that occurs when goals, interests or values of different individuals or groups are incompatible and frustrate each other's' attempt to achieve objectives in an organization. It is a communication process and an inevitable consequence of transactional relationship manifesting in disagreement and dissonance with and between individuals and groups in the work environment. In this context, workplace conflict is a fact of life in any organization as long as people will compete for jobs, power, recognition and security (Adomie and Anie, 2005). Therefore, the task of management is not to suppress or resolve all conflicts but to manage them in order to enhance and not to detract from organizational performance.

Educational institutions of all levels, especially tertiary institutions in Nigeria are not excluded from having conflicts. Nigerian Universities also have their fair share of conflicts and crises such as: Kafaru Tinubu vs Students crisis 1974; Ali must Go vs. student crisis on 1978; Rice crisis vs. Ahmadu Bello University 1981; Accident vs. Ali University Ekpoma crisis of 1988 etc. To recast on the crises, riots and rampaging exercises by students in their various institutions in Nigeria cannot be expressed, not to talk of employee/employers clashes with strike action and demonstrations. The University of Lagos is one University that has had its own fair share of the crisis which is a compelling factor for attention. Garba (2001) presented that conflicts between students and authorities accounted for 75% of total conflicts University of Lagos (UNILAG).

Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU) accounted for 25% of conflicts in UNILAG. In May1997, UNILAG had a crisis that resulted from Increase in school fees, resulting in violent demonstrations (Alabi, 2002). Also in Oct 2000, UNILAG recorded another crisis due to Police Seizure of coca-cola truck due to the banning of coke products on all campuses resulting in the killing of four students (Alabi, 2002). In Sept 2000, UNILAG witnessed a crisis due to Federal Government Purported removal of Vice- Chancellor (Prof. Jelili Omotola). These and many other are conflicts the University had witnessed from time to time.

The success of any organization, especially the institutions of higher learning, depends on how information is handled in that organization. The efficiency and effectiveness with which information is managed determines to a large extent whether the institution will consistently be crisis-ridden or not. This is why no institution of higher learning can survive without the activities of the public relations department. Yet, many institutions in Nigeria including Universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education among others have failed to appreciate public relations and its potency for the sustenance and growth of their establishment.

In the words of Enwonode (2004:47) 'researches have shown all over the years that University administrations in Nigeria have not fully appreciated public relations potentials in tackling numerous crisis that has bedevilled academic excellence in our ivory tower'. That some institutions of higher learning in Nigeria have crisis from time to time simply reveals the truth that they have either neglected this all-important unit or relegated to the background by not giving it a free hand to operate. These conflicts, if it was properly handled and prevented through the use of Public Relations principles of pro-active approach, it wouldn't have escalated into crises.

Statement of the Problem

The degree of conflict in work-relations in the Nation's ivory tower has become endemic. On several occasions, institutions of higher learning have been ridden with crises either caused by the protest of internal and external publics. Lecturers have often grumbled at one time or the other over bad condition of learning environment or condition of service.

Nwosu (2004) maintained that issues and crises such as demonstrations, Students unrest, strike,

cult activities etc have reduced our higher institutions to a mere shadow of itself and battered the highly respected image of the "Ivory Tower" this apart; they have made other countries not to value our University education. They look down on our certificates, and tag our graduates, 'graduate of crises'. Ekpu (2008) assert that strike actions have been one of the problems facing Nigerian workers especially the Universities and institutions of higher learning. It has been a serious concern to many people because University is a powerhouse so to speak of any nation where the future hopes are brought up. The need for a new approach to workplace dispute resolution has become the central focus of public employment policy (Gibbons, 2007). In particular, it has been argued that more emphasis needs to be placed on early responses to individual employment disputes and the increased use of Public Relation as a vital tool. Recent attention has centred on the promotion and use of public relation. While there has been limited academic research into public relation in Nigerian University, there is a growing evidence base that points to its potential benefits (Asemah, 2009).

Research Questions

(i) What are the Public Relations Strategies for managing conflict at the University of Lagos?

(ii) What is the effect of Public Relations Strategies on conflict management in the Universities of Lagos?

Objectives of the Study

(i) identify the Public Relations Strategies in managing conflict in the University of Lagos; and

(ii) access the effect of Public Relations Strategies on conflict management in the Universities of Lagos.

2. Literature Review

The concept of Public Relations

Public relations according to Hanson (2005:330), "is defined in modem times as the management functions that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the public on whom its success or failure depends". Baran (1999) also sees public relations as a management that uses two-way communication to mesh the needs and interests of an institution or

person with needs and interests of the various publics with which that institution or person must communicate. Public Relations Strategies such as news/information management, publicity, crisis management and others can go a long way to encourage Universities in Nigeria to handle strike actions effectively.

Public Relations (PR) practice is deliberate, planned and sustained the effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its public (Chartered Institute of Public Relations, CIPR). PR consists of all forms of planned communication, outwards and inwards, between an organisation and its public for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understanding (Jefkins, 2006). The literature presents public relations as a management function, which uses the attributes of management (e.g., planning, collaborative decision making, and research) to foster the organization's ability to build mutually beneficial relationships on which the corporate vision and mission depend (Grunig, 2001).The second stream in the literature presents public relations as communication management, which focuses on the flow of communication between an organization and its publics to achieve effective relationships (Grunig, 2001). The third stream of literature presents public relations as relationship management so that communication is a property of those relationships rather than the conduit between organizations and publics (Broom, Casey, and Ritchey, 1997). Black (1989:5) in his definition of Public Relations puts it, "Public Relations practice is the art and science of achieving harmony with the environment through mutual understanding based on truth and full information". Offonri, (1985: 1) defines Public Relations as "the business of creating and maintaining public understanding and support through effective communications". This definition is premised on the fact that lack of understanding and information can bring about the downfall of governments, organizations, business and individuals while essential information and proper interpretation of plans and programmes can result in Public acceptance and goodwill.

Harlow, (Black 1989: 4) defined Public Relations as a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues, helps management to keep informed on and responsive to opinions, defines and emphasizes the

responsibility of management to serve the Public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound ethical communication techniques as its principal tools. The Public Relations News of New York quoted in (Okafor, 2002) conceptualized public Relations as the management function that evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a programme of action to earn public understanding and acceptance. Flippo (1983) also defined public relations; as the management functions primarily responsible for shaping and implementing policies of mediation among social, political and economic interest capable of influencing the growth and for the survival of an organization's basic franchise. Basically, the above definitions and descriptions of public relations are concerned with the communication function of an organization's management towards making the organization effective. Hence, effective organizational communication has a lot to do with effective public relations communication.

Public relations can be defined in terms of what practitioners do as opposed to what it is. For a clear definition, the field of public relations can be delineated as "the management function that identifies, establishes, and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends" (Cutlip *et al.,* 2006). Public relations play a crucial role in organizations. An organization's profitability, appearance to the public, and its reputation is the remit of public relations.

Okafor (2002) in their work highlight the different definitions of Public relations from scholars of differing orientations and professional bodies which stem from the dynamic nature and function of Public relations. However, no matter how Public Relations are perceived and defined, certain features remain outstanding and tend to run through the different conceptions of the subject matter of Public Relations. Some of these outstanding features include, Public Relations are a management function, and Public Relations are deliberate.

Public Relations in Nigeria
The history of public relations in Nigeria is linked with the colonial government. Ogunbiyi (2002: 156) confirms this by saying that Public Relations found its way into Nigeria through colonialists

and imperialists. That is why it is often said that public relations in Nigeria are our colonial heritage. It was established as a result of the British government's desire to disseminate information about their effort in the Second World War. Although, non-formal public relations existed in Nigeria before the advent of the formalized one. Formal Public Relations was established in Nigeria during World War II in the 1940's. A lot of things happened to bring public relations to the standard it is today in Nigeria especially the passing of the decree of 1990 on June 1. Before this decree that solidified public Relations in Nigeria, Dr Sam Epelle founded the Public Relations Association of Nigeria (PRAN) in 1963 which later metamorphosed to Nigerian Institute of the Public Relations (NIPR) 1972. His effort in making people recognize public relations in Nigeria could be the reason why people regard him as the father of public relations in Nigeria. Dr Sam Epelle did for Nigerians what Ivy led Better Lee did for America or what Sir Stephen Talent did for Great Britain. Dr Sam Epelle was at the forefront of those that brought public relations to the level it is today in Nigeria. Today public relations practitioners can boast of Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) founded since 1972 and which now has Decree 16 of 1990 backing it.

Public Relations Practice in Institutions of Higher Learning in Nigeria

The recognition of public relations as a management function in institutions of higher learning to manage issues and crises. Public Relation keeps them informed on public opinion and the best to create a harmonious environment for academic work in this changing world. Public relations activities are necessary for these institutions so that the future can be predicted (Nwosu, 2004). He stated the fact that every organisation needs to work hard to maintain the policies goodwill that points to the need for institutions of higher learning to work much harder because of the declining image Institutions of higher learning caused by problems ranging from the terror unleashed on innocent citizens by secret cults, to industrial action by the academic and non- academic staff. But instead of having a viable public relations outfit to achieve the above objective, what we have in our institutions in the place of PR department is confusion. Salau (2001:57) discovers that in some situations what is expected to be the public relations units are labelled information unit, some institutions call their PR department information and protocol unit while others label theirs PR unit. He also observed that in some institutions the PR unit is located in the office of the Chief Executive of such institution who may be the vice-chancellor, rector or provost, and. in some other institutions;

PR unit is attached to the Registrar who is the administrative head of that institution. The consequences of the above arrangement are grave as the PR unit is not given a free hand to work since the PR Executive might be expected to perform the duties of a public officer or worst still act as an errand boy under such an arrangement. Yet this is the arrangement we have in most of our institutions of higher learning. Formally, institutions of higher learning used publicity in place of public relations but today, many of them have resorted to public relations to educate and inform their relevant publics about building a good public image for their institutions.

Despite these recognition public relations has received, PR experts believe that PR is not yet taken seriously in educational institutions. However, there would not have been any need for public relations in schools had it been that government monopoly of tertiary educational institutions is still as strong as it used to be in the past. But now, the growing competition between government and institutions of higher learning for autonomy has led to the demand for public relations in institutions of higher learning.

Conflict Management in Nigerian Universities
Conflicts in Nigerian Universities date back to the 1960s with the unsuccessful attempt of the first republic politicians to change the pre-independence statutory image of the University system by bringing Universities under undue government control. The University lecturers embarked on series of strike dating back from 1973. In the regime of General Yakubu Gowan, University staff embarked on a strike for improvement in their conditions of service due to the deplorable condition left behind by the Nigeria civil war. The spate of strikes continued under Alhaji Shehu Shagari in 1980. When President Obasanjo was elected in 1999, ASUU further demanded the adoption of the the1992 agreement. Pressure from the University staff led to FGN and ASUU agreement of 200 1.
After a series of appeal by ASUU to FGN for the implementation of the 2001 Agreement, ASUU called its members on 29th December 2002 to embark on a total and indefinite nationwide strike. FGN failure at fulfilling its own part of the agreement by using avoidance strategy led to another three-day warning strike on April 24, 2006. The election of President Yar' Adua into power in 2007 brought some hope to the academia, but this was proved to be a false hope as nothing was done to implement the agreement. After several failed negotiations, the staff went on an indefinite strike in

2009. The 2009 strike can be termed the highest over time as it further involved all the facets of the University including NASU. The suspended 2009 strike could be termed only as a repetition of the usual past, for the technical committee/inter-ministerial committee undermined the agreement already reached. Failure of state to honour the agreement reached in 2009. The national body of ASUU joined the strike in June 2010 when all attempts to make the five South-East State Governors budge failed. This according to Ubabukoh (2011) is called the University staff union strike as it affects all the University Unions.

The issue of the strike is a perennial problem and seemed not to abate. The Universities continuous press for the full implementation of the agreement reached in 2010 met deaf ears by the federal government. As usual in the circle of the Universities conflicts, ASUU decided to drive home their demands in a one-week warning strike on September 26th, 2011. NASU also followed with their warning strike effective from 3rd October. The song of victory is yet to be sung as the Universities launched a full-blown nationwide indefinite strike from December 5th, 2011 to February 2nd, 2012. Conflicts in the Nigerian federal Universities continue due to most unfulfilled agreements.

Strategies to Deal with Conflict in Nigeria Public Sectors

Arnold (1983) summarized the strategies that can be employed to reduce conflict into four major types below. Our observation of the type of problems which each type could unfold is included.

Avoidance: This type of strategy attempts to keep the conflict from surfacing at all. Examples would be to simply ignore the conflict or impose a solution. This may be appropriate if the conflict is trivial or if quick action is needed to prevent the conflict from occurring. The major problem with this technique is that the problem which has been avoided can still surface again. If a similar situation occurs what happens? Certainly, it is likely to be avoided. We end up avoiding issues until everything explodes.

Diffusion: Under this strategy, an attempt is made to deactivate the conflict and cool off the emotions and hostilities of the groups involved. Examples would include trying to "Smooth things over" by playing down the importance and magnitude of the conflict or of established super-ordinate goals that need the cooperation of the conflicting groups in order to be accomplished. This strategy

is appropriate where a stop-gap measure is needed or when the groups have a mutually important goal. The major problem with this technique is that when a problem is defused (passed under the carpet), it could gather steam and escalates into a major crisis.

Containment: Under this strategy, some conflict is allowed to surface, but it is carefully contained by spelling out which issues are to be discussed and how they are to be resolved. To carry out this strategy, the problems and procedure may be structured, and a representative of the conflicting parties may be allowed to negotiate and bargain with the structure established. This is appropriate where open discussions have failed and the conflicting groups are of equal power. The problem with containment is that one group may still end up being the underdog ever when a problem has been seen to have been solved; and

Confrontation: Under this strategy, which is at the other of the continuum from avoidance, all the issues are brought into the open and the conflicting groups directly confront the issues are each other in an attempt to reach a mutually satisfactory solution. This may involve mutual problem solving or even formally redesigning jobs or responsibilities in order to resolve the conflict. This is most appropriate when there is a minimum level of trust, when the time is not critical, and when the groups need to cooperate to get the job done effectively.

Minimize Affective Conflicts at Various Levels: Affective conflict refers to inconsistency in interpersonal relationships, which occurs when organizational members become aware that their feelings and emotions regarding some of the issues are incompatible. "Summarily stated, relationship conflicts interfere with task-related effort because members focus on reducing threats, increasing power, and attempting to build cohesion rather than working on the task. The conflict caused members to be negative, irritable, suspicious, and resentful" John, (1999). A. Evidence indicates that effective conflict impedes group performance. It affects group performance by limiting information processing ability and cognitive functioning of group members and antagonistic attributions of the group member's behaviour (Amason, 1996). Affective conflict diminishes group loyalty, workshop commitment, intent to stay in the present organization, and ob satisfaction Amason, (1996); John et al., (1999). These result from higher levels of stress and

anxiety and conflict escalation.

Attain and Maintain a Moderate Amount of Substantive Conflict: Substantive conflict occurs when two or more organizational members disagree on their task or content issues. Substantive conflict is very similar to issues conflict, which occurs when two or more social entities disagree on the recognition and solution to a task problem. A study by Jehn (1995) suggests that a moderate level of substantive conflict is beneficial as it stimulates discussion and debate, which conflict may miss new ways to enhance their performance. "Groups with an absence of task conflict may miss new ways to enhance their performance, while very high levels of task conflict may interfere with task completion" (Jehn, 1997).

3. Methodology

This study utilised both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected through the administration of questionnaires. The set of questionnaires were administered to academic and non-academic staffs and final year students of the University of Lagos to gather information in order to identify Public Relations Strategies in managing conflict and the effect of Public Relations Strategies on conflict management in the University of Lagos. For the purpose of questionnaire administration, purposively sampling technique was used to select two hundred and fifty (250) staff respondents drawn from different departments and three hundred and fifty (350) students were also purposively selected across the faculties and departments in University of Lagos. The secondary sources of information that were employed included relevant official publications and records from the University of Lagos bulletin, journal articles, periodicals and internet sources. Data collected through the use of the questionnaires from the staffs and students of the University of Lagos are analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, tables and frequency distribution as well as regression.

4. Result of Findings

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Staff and Students Respondents on the Identification of Public Relations Strategies in Managing Conflict

VARIABLE	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Management adopts compromise / dialogue in solving conflicts	71	37.0	107	55.7	14	7.3				
Management adopts problem solving as PR strategy	30	15.6	137	71.4	23	12.0	2	1.0	2	1.8
Management use avoidance or preventive strategy in managing conflict			56	29.2	104	54.2	32	16.7		
Management adopts delay negligence in managing conflict	7	3.6	39	20.3	19	9.9	97	50.5	30	15.6
Management use autocratic/force managing conflict			14	7.3	53	27.6	91	47.4	34	17.7
Managing adopts collective bargaining in managing conflict	7	3.6	90	46.9	42	21.9	53	27.6		
Management make use of confrontational strategy in managing conflict		.	100	52.1	42	21.9	16	8.3	34	17.7

Source: Authors' Survey Result

Table 1 presents the respondent's opinion on public relations strategy in managing conflict. The result reveals that 37% and 55.7% of the staff are of the opinion that compromise or dialogue is adopted by the University of Lagos as in managing conflict, while only a few are neutral about whether compromise or dialogue is a Public Relations Strategies in managing conflict. It follows from the analysis that compromise or dialogue is adopted as a means of managing conflict.

Table 1 also, on problem-solving the result showed that 15.6% strongly agreed that problem-solving is a public relation strategy. In the same vein, 71.4% agreed with problem-solving as a public relations strategy. However, a negligible fee of 1.0% and 1.8% disagreed and strongly disagreed with problem-solving as a public relations strategy. The analysis showed that problem-solving is adopted as a public relations strategy adopted by the University of Lagos.

It is also interesting to note that only about 7.3 % of the staff agreed that autocracy or the use of force is a public relations strategy, while 27.6% remain neutral about the effectiveness of the use of autocracy or force in conflict management. Majority of the staff are of the opinion that force is not a Public Relations Strategies for managing conflict adopted by the University Of Lagos. This is because 47.4% and 17.7% of the staff disagreed and strongly disagreed with the use of force or autocracy as a means of conflict management.

Furthermore, 3.6% and 46.9% of the staff are of the opinion that collective bargaining is a Public Relations Strategies while 47.4% and 17.7% of the staff also disagreed with collective bargaining. This implies that collective bargaining is not a Public Relations Strategies adopted by the University of Lagos.

Majority of the staff are of the opinion that confrontational strategy is a Public Relations Strategies (52%). On the other hand, 17.7% and 8.3% of the staff disagreed and strongly disagreed with the confrontational approach of public relation strategy. The result implies that the confrontational strategy is adopted by the University Of Lagos.

Table 2 Percentage Distribution of Staff and Students Respondents on the effect of Public Relations Strategy on Conflict Management

VARIABLE	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Management has failed in the way conflict has been managed	48	24.0			51	26.6	95	7.3		
Management allowed conflict to degenerate into crises in the way they have managed it	9	4.7	86	44.8	51	26.6	14	7.3	32	16.7
Management has been estranged after each conflict	19	9.9	77	40.1	87	45.3	9	4.7		
One conflict has always led to another	43	22.4	27	14.1	18	9.4	53	27.6		7.3
Better alternative strategy could have been used	23	12.0	119	62.0	25	13.0	25	13.0		

Source: Authors' Survey Result

The result showed that 24% of the staff agreed that past conflict had been poorly managed. 26.6% of the respondents remained neutral about this, while 7.3% of the respondents disagreed about it. This implies that past conflict had not been properly managed. The result also showed that management had allowed conflict to degenerate into crises. This is supported by the 44.8% of the respondents, while 26.6% of the respondents are indifferent about this, while 7.3% disagreed with it. The result revealed that majority of the staff believed that management has been estranged after each conflict. This is supported by 50% of the staff. About 26.6% of the staffs were neutral about this, while 7.3% and 16.7% of the respondents disagreed with the

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statement. The result also showed that 14.1 % and 224% of the staff were of the opinion that conflict had led to another. On the .other hand, over 30% of the respondents opposed the foregoing. It is interesting to note that 62.0% of the respondents believed that better alternative strategy could have been adopted to resolve the conflict. On the other hand, 13% of the staff disagreed with this, while 13% were neutral about it.

Table 3 Regression Analysis of the effect of Public Relations strategies on Conflict Management

Conflict Management	Coeff.	t	p-value
Compromise/ dialogue	-1.018	-4.650	0.000
Problem solving	-0.036	-9.1785	0.000
Collective bargaining	.467	-1.780	0.077
Confrontational strategy	.873	-6.701	0.000

Source: Authors' Survey Result

Regression Analysis of the effect of Public Relations strategies on Conflict Management

Table 3 presents the analyses of the effect of public relations strategy on conflict management. From the table, the result showed that there is a negative relationship between compromise or dialogue and conflict management (-1.018). That is if compromise as a public relation is adopted, it can negatively affect conflict management. Since the p-value (0.000) is less than (0.05), it shows that there is a negative relationship. In problem-solving, the result showed that there is no relationship between problem-solving approach and conflict management since the p-value (0.077) is greater than (0.05). There is also a positive relationship between collective bargaining and conflict management (0.467) this is evidenced by the p-value (.000) which is less than (0.05). Lastly, there exists a positive relationship between confrontation as a public relations strategy and conflict management (0.873). The p-value further revealed this, since the p-value

(.000) is less than 0.05.

5. Recommendations

Public Relations activities should be encouraged in the Universities and Institutions of higher learning. Public Relations are not just about communication but communication for an effective purpose. Conflict of interest and opinion is bound to exist in every group or gathering of humans especially in a higher institution of learning with people from various cultural and religious backgrounds, therefore instituting conflict control measures is very important to avoid a crisis.

Public Relations expert should be given free hand in dispute mediation, with adequate resources to carry out the function. Their findings should be well documented for referral and preventive measures. Publicists should also educate the University community on strategies best to handle conflict for the desired result.

University and students' leaders should be swift in requesting the services of Public Relations Officer whenever an issue is about to develop into a conflict. Their expertise is quite resourceful to the institution especially in areas of objective dialogue with the conflicted party, enabling the university to address the issue before its made public and out of control.

Dialogue is one of the most important Public Relations strategies in conflict management. At the initial stage of dialogue, liaison officers or representatives of conflicting parties should come together to state their grievances while an objective jury of PR and expert in a related field construct a comprise favourable to both parties.

6. Conclusion

The study concluded that Public Relations Strategies such as collective bargaining and effective communication are effective in managing conflict. On the other hand, problem-solving and avoidance and preventive, are less effective in managing conflict.

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