

Collaborative Conflict Management Strategies on Teaching and Learning Effectiveness in Tertiary Institutions in Kwara State, Nigeria

By

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Abstract

Conflict is an unavoidable feature of tertiary institutions because management, academic staff, non-academic staff and students interact within structures characterised by different interests, expectations and responsibilities. When managed constructively, conflict can create opportunities for dialogue, joint problem-solving, and improved institutional relationships; when poorly managed, it can disrupt academic activities. This study examined stakeholders' perceptions of how collaborative conflict management contributes to teaching and learning effectiveness in tertiary institutions in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population comprised 127,902 staff and students in four selected public tertiary institutions in Kwara State, while a sample of 384 respondents was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample-size table. Of the questionnaires administered, 368 were valid for analysis, comprising 231 students, 82 academic staff and 55 non-academic staff. Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The findings showed strong agreement that collaborative dialogue, joint problem-solving, and teamwork contribute to effective teaching and learning. Overall mean ratings were 3.38 for students, 3.58 for academic staff, and 3.50 for non-academic staff. The one-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference in the composite mean ratings across the three respondent categories, $F(2, 365) = 4.824$, $p = .008$. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The study concludes that collaborative conflict management is positively perceived as an important contributor to effective teaching and learning, although perceptions differ significantly across stakeholder groups. The study recommends participatory decision-making, structured dialogue, representative conflict-resolution mechanisms and regular conflict-management training in tertiary institutions.

Keywords: collaborative conflict management, teaching effectiveness, learning effectiveness, stakeholder perceptions, tertiary institutions

Introduction

Conflict is an inevitable feature of organisational life because people and groups differ in interests, values, expectations, responsibilities and perceptions. Tertiary institutions are particularly susceptible to conflict because universities, polytechnics and colleges of education bring together management, academic staff, non-academic staff and students within complex systems of authority and interdependence. Conflict itself is not necessarily dysfunctional; its consequences depend substantially on how it is handled. Rahim's conflict-management framework identifies integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising styles, with integrating closely corresponding to a collaborative approach characterised by high concern for both parties and joint problem-solving (Rahim, 2022).

Within Nigerian tertiary institutions, conflict may arise from communication gaps, differences over institutional policies, staff welfare, resource allocation, leadership practices, student concerns and

competing expectations. Osakede et al. (2018), in their study of selected universities in South-West Nigeria, found that conflict-management mechanisms could strengthen stakeholder participation in decision-making and conflict resolution. Similarly, Ogunode et al. (2024) identified collaboration, accommodation, avoidance, competition and compromise as strategies available to managers and staff of Nigerian tertiary institutions. These findings suggest that how institutional conflicts are handled affects the effectiveness of academic organisations.

Recent empirical evidence also indicates that conflict-management strategies are associated with important organisational and academic outcomes. Akanbi et al. (2024), in a study of selected tertiary institutions in Kwara State, reported significant relationships between accommodation, collaboration, compromising and competing strategies and employee performance. Abiona and Mesewaku (2024) reported a significant relationship between conflict-management strategies and academic-goal achievement in Lagos State tertiary institutions. In Anambra State, Mikella and Ify (2024) found that conflict-management strategies were evident in public universities and associated with aspects of organisational functioning. However, their overall influence on organisational performance was not statistically significant. These mixed findings reinforce the need for context-specific investigation.

Teaching and learning effectiveness depends not only on instructional competence and physical resources but also on the quality of relationships within an institution. A conflict environment characterised by mistrust, poor communication, and unresolved grievances can disrupt cooperation and academic routines. Conversely, collaborative conflict management creates opportunities for stakeholders to exchange information, clarify expectations and develop mutually acceptable solutions. Kanyip and Ezech (2023) found that collaboration and other conflict-management strategies were perceived as significant in relation to effective teaching in secondary schools in Enugu State, while Kolawole (2025) reported that university administrators in South-West Nigeria used several conflict-management strategies and recommended participatory decision-making and stronger interpersonal relationships.

Despite these studies, evidence from tertiary institutions in Kwara State that specifically considers teaching and learning effectiveness and incorporates the perceptions of students, academic staff, and non-academic staff remains needed. The present study therefore examines collaborative conflict management within four selected public tertiary institutions in Kwara State, with particular attention to collaborative dialogue, joint problem-solving, teamwork and perceived learning outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Conflict remains a recurring challenge in tertiary institutions. Disagreements among management, academic staff, non-academic staff, and students can arise from communication breakdowns, differing interests, institutional policies, welfare concerns, resource allocation, and decision-making processes. Where such disagreements are poorly managed, they may weaken trust, reduce cooperation and create an environment that is less supportive of effective teaching and learning.

Although collaborative conflict management emphasises dialogue, shared problem-solving and mutually acceptable outcomes, the existence of collaborative mechanisms does not automatically mean that all stakeholders experience or evaluate them in the same way. Students may perceive conflict-management practices differently from academic staff and non-academic staff because these groups occupy different institutional roles and have different experiences of decision-making and conflict resolution.

Recent evidence from Kwara State indicates that conflict-management styles are significantly related to employee performance (Akanbi et al., 2024). However, that study focused on staff and employee performance rather than the combined perceptions of students, academic staff and non-academic staff regarding the contribution of collaborative conflict management to teaching and learning effectiveness.

This study therefore addresses the limited context-specific evidence on how collaborative conflict management is perceived to contribute to teaching and learning effectiveness across major stakeholder categories in public tertiary institutions in Kwara State. Establishing the level of agreement among these groups and determining whether their perceptions differ significantly can provide useful evidence for institutional administrators seeking to strengthen participatory conflict-management practices.

Purpose of the Study

The study examined stakeholders' perceptions of how collaborative conflict management contributes to teaching and learning effectiveness in tertiary institutions in Kwara State, Nigeria, and whether these perceptions differ significantly among students, academic staff, and non-academic staff.

Research Question

To what extent do students, academic staff and non-academic staff perceive collaborative conflict management as contributing to teaching and learning effectiveness in tertiary institutions in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant difference among students, academic staff and non-academic staff in their perceptions of the contribution of collaborative conflict management to teaching and learning effectiveness in tertiary institutions in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Rahim's Conflict Management Styles Theory

The study is anchored on Rahim's Conflict Management Styles Theory, originally propounded by M. Afzalur Rahim. The theory is based on two fundamental dimensions of conflict-handling behaviour: concern for self and concern for others. The interaction of these dimensions produces five major conflict-management styles: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising (Rahim, 1983).

The integrating style, commonly associated with collaboration, reflects great concern for both self and others and involves openness, information exchange, examination of differences, and joint problem-solving to arrive at solutions that satisfy the interests of the parties involved. This orientation makes the theory particularly relevant to institutional environments in which multiple stakeholder groups interact and depend on one another.

The theory is relevant to the present study because teaching and learning in tertiary institutions depend on continuing interaction among institutional administrators, academic staff, non-academic staff and students. A collaborative approach provides a mechanism through which conflicting parties can communicate their concerns, examine differences, share responsibility and search for mutually acceptable solutions. Collaboration is therefore particularly appropriate for complex institutional conflicts where the knowledge, cooperation and commitment of different stakeholders are required to achieve sustainable solutions.

Rahim (2002) further argued that effective conflict management involves diagnosing the nature of conflict and selecting appropriate strategies for dealing with it. The theory does not suggest eliminating every conflict. Rather, it recognises that some substantive conflict can be managed constructively to support organisational learning and effectiveness, while dysfunctional affective conflict should generally be reduced. Within tertiary institutions, collaborative conflict management may therefore encourage constructive dialogue, strengthen interpersonal relationships, facilitate joint decision-making and contribute to an institutional climate supportive of effective teaching and learning.

Empirical Review

Osakede et al. (2018) examined conflict management in selected tertiary institutions in South-West Nigeria using questionnaires, interviews and secondary sources. The study involved 500 respondents from Lagos State University and Adekunle Ajasin University. Percentage analysis and chi-square were used. The study found that conflict-management mechanisms promoted stakeholder participation in decision-making and conflict resolution. The study is relevant because it demonstrates the importance of participation and institutional conflict-resolution mechanisms, although it did not focus specifically on teaching and learning effectiveness in Kwara State.

Kanyip and Ezeh (2023) investigated principals' and teachers' perceptions of how conflict-management strategies affect effective teaching in secondary schools in Enugu State. The study used a survey design and a sample of 669 respondents. The findings indicated significant perceptions regarding negotiation and collaboration as conflict-management strategies associated with effective teaching. The study supports the expectation that collaborative conflict management may contribute to instructional effectiveness, although it extends the context to tertiary institutions and includes students and non-academic staff.

Akanbi et al. (2024) examined conflict-management styles and employee performance in selected tertiary institutions in Kwara State. The study covered 1,784 staff, with 317 respondents selected and 255 questionnaires analysed. The study used partial least squares structural equation modelling to test the hypothesised relationships. The study reported significant relationships between accommodation, collaboration, compromising and competing strategies and employee performance. Its geographical and institutional context makes the study particularly relevant to the present investigation. However, the present study focuses on teaching and learning effectiveness and includes students as a respondent category.

Abiona and Mesewaku (2024) investigated conflict-management strategies and academic-goal achievement in Lagos State tertiary institutions. The study involved 330 participants, including academic and non-teaching staff, and used Pearson product-moment correlation to test the hypotheses. The authors reported a significant relationship between conflict-management strategies and academic-goal achievement. The finding suggests that constructive management of institutional conflict may be associated with academic outcomes while also highlighting the importance of examining different institutional contexts.

Mikella and Ify (2024) investigated conflict-management strategies and organisational performance in public universities in Anambra State using 94 academic staff. The researchers used descriptive and inferential statistics, including ANOVA. They found that negotiation, training workshops, and avoidance were among the most commonly adopted strategies, but the overall influence of these strategies on organisational performance was not statistically significant. This finding shows that the association between conflict-management strategies and organisational outcomes may vary by context and the outcome examined.

Ogunode et al. (2024), through documentary research, reviewed conflict-management strategies in Nigerian tertiary institutions and identified accommodation, avoidance, collaboration, competition and compromise as available approaches. The authors recommended regular conflict-management workshops for management and staff. Their study provides a broader Nigerian context for the present research but did not provide primary quantitative evidence on teaching and learning effectiveness.

Kolawole (2025) examined conflict-management strategies among university administrators in the South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria using a sample of 900 administrators. The study used means,

standard deviations, ANOVA, and Sidak post-hoc comparisons. The study found that accommodating and avoiding strategies were prominent among administrators and recommended democratic management and participatory decision-making. The study supports the present emphasis on stakeholder participation while demonstrating that conflict-management practices may vary across institutional and administrative contexts.

The reviewed studies collectively indicate that conflict-management practices are associated with institutional participation, employee performance, academic goal achievement, and teaching effectiveness. However, relatively limited evidence simultaneously captures the perceptions of students, academic staff and non-academic staff regarding collaborative conflict management and teaching and learning effectiveness in public tertiary institutions in Kwara State. The present study addresses this contextual and stakeholder gap.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was appropriate because the study sought respondents' perceptions of collaborative conflict management and its contribution to teaching and learning effectiveness without manipulating the study variables.

Population of the Study

The population comprised staff and students in four selected public tertiary institutions in Kwara State: University of Ilorin; Kwara State University, Malete; Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin; and Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin. The staff population was 10,764, comprising 6,459 academic staff and 4,305 non-academic staff. The student population was 117,138. The total study population was therefore 127,902.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

A sample size of 384 respondents was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample-size table. A multistage sampling technique was adopted. In the first stage, the four public tertiary institutions were purposively selected. In the second stage, respondents in each institution were stratified into three categories: academic staff, non-academic staff and students. In the third stage, disproportionate stratified sampling was used to increase the representation of academic and non-academic staff sufficiently for comparative analysis despite the numerical dominance of the student population. In the fourth stage, systematic random sampling was applied within each stratum to select respondents. The sampling intervals were calculated for each category. A total of 384 questionnaires were administered, of which 368 were valid for analysis, representing a usable response rate of 95.8%. The valid respondents comprised 231 students, 82 academic staff and 55 non-academic staff.

Instrument for Data Collection

The researcher collected data using a researcher-developed questionnaire. The items examined collaborative dialogue, joint problem-solving, teamwork and respondents' perceptions of their contribution to teaching and learning. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Agree (4) Strongly.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To establish validity, the researchers submitted the instrument to two lecturers from the African Institute for Peace Studies and Social Rehabilitation, Central Area, Abuja. The validators examined the instrument for relevance, clarity and suitability and provided feedback that informed its refinement.

Reliability was established through a pilot test involving 50 staff members from a tertiary institution outside the study area who possessed characteristics similar to those of the study population but did not

participate in the main study. Using Cronbach's alpha, the instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of .845, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

Method of Data Analysis

The mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question. A mean score of 2.50 was adopted as the decision benchmark; mean scores of 2.50 and above indicated agreement, while scores below 2.50 indicated disagreement.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether the composite mean ratings differed significantly among students, academic staff and non-academic staff. The level of significance was set at .05. The inferential interpretation is restricted to differences among the three stakeholder groups. It should not be interpreted as establishing a causal relationship between collaborative conflict management and teaching or learning outcomes.

Results

Research Question: To what extent do students, academic staff and non-academic staff perceive collaborative conflict management as contributing to teaching and learning effectiveness in tertiary institutions in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 1

Stakeholders' Perceptions of the Contribution of Collaborative Conflict Management to Teaching and Learning Effectiveness (N = 368)

S/N	Item	Students M	Students SD	Academic Staff M	Academic Staff SD	Non-Academic Staff M	Non-Academic Staff SD
1	Collaborative dialogue is encouraged when conflicts arise.	3.35	.588	3.50	.552	3.40	.574
2	Joint problem-solving improves staff/student morale and quality of education.	3.45	.521	3.65	.488	3.60	.502
3	Collaboration strengthens teamwork across all respondent categories.	3.40	.554	3.60	.525	3.55	.538
4	Collaborative conflict management enhances students' learning outcomes.	3.30	.595	3.55	.564	3.45	.582
	Average mean score and standard deviation	3.38	.565	3.58	.532	3.50	.549

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 1 shows high levels of agreement across all respondent categories. The average mean scores were 3.38 for students, 3.58 for academic staff and 3.50 for non-academic staff, all above the decision benchmark of 2.50. The highest individual rating was recorded for joint problem-solving among academic staff ($M = 3.65$), while the lowest rating was recorded among students for the statement that collaborative conflict management enhances students' learning outcomes ($M = 3.30$). Overall, the results indicate that students, academic staff and non-academic staff perceive collaborative dialogue, joint problem-solving and teamwork as important contributors to teaching and learning effectiveness.

Test of Hypothesis

H_0 : There is no significant difference among students, academic staff and non-academic staff in their perceptions of the contribution of collaborative conflict management to teaching and learning effectiveness in tertiary institutions in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 2

One-Way ANOVA of Stakeholder Perceptions of Collaborative Conflict Management and Teaching and Learning Effectiveness

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Decision
Between Groups	2.915	2	1.457	4.824	.008	Reject H_0
Within Groups	110.23	365	.302			
Total	113.14	367				

Note. $p = .008 < .05$.

Table 2 shows a statistically significant difference among the composite mean ratings of the three respondent categories, $F(2, 365) = 4.824$, $p = .008$. Since $p < .05$, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The finding therefore indicates that students, academic staff and non-academic staff differ significantly in their perceptions of the contribution of collaborative conflict management to teaching and learning effectiveness. Although the descriptive findings show that all three groups agreed that collaborative conflict management contributes positively to teaching and learning, their levels of agreement were not statistically identical.

The ANOVA establishes that a statistically significant difference exists somewhere among the three respondent groups; it does not establish which specific pairs of groups differ significantly. Identifying specific group differences would require an appropriate post-hoc analysis based on the respondent-level dataset. Consequently, the present study does not claim any pairwise differences.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that respondents generally perceived collaborative conflict management as contributing positively to teaching and learning effectiveness. Collaborative dialogue, joint problem-solving and teamwork recorded mean scores above the 2.50 benchmark across all three stakeholder categories. This finding is consistent with Osakede et al. (2018), who found that conflict-management mechanisms in selected Nigerian universities promoted stakeholder participation in decision-making and conflict resolution. It also agrees with Kanyip and Ezech (2023), whose study identified positive perceptions regarding collaboration and effective teaching.

The finding is particularly consistent with Akanbi et al. (2024), who investigated selected tertiary institutions in Kwara State and reported significant relationships between collaboration and employee

performance, among other conflict-management styles. The convergence of findings suggests that collaboration may help not only resolve disputes but also sustain institutional relationships and organisational processes that support educational activities. Abiona and Mesewaku (2024) similarly reported a significant relationship between conflict-management strategies and academic-goal achievement in tertiary institutions in Lagos State.

The present study also found a statistically significant difference among students, academic staff, and non-academic staff in their composite ratings. This difference may be linked to the distinct positions these groups occupy within institutional structures. Academic staff participate directly in teaching, assessment, and departmental decision-making, while students experience institutional policies primarily as learners. Non-academic staff perform administrative and operational functions. These different roles and institutional experiences may shape stakeholders' perceptions of dialogue, participation and joint problem-solving.

This finding broadly aligns with Kolawole (2025), whose study showed that conflict-management practices and preferences can vary across institutional contexts and administrative groups. It reinforces the importance of ensuring that conflict-management structures within tertiary institutions accommodate the experiences and perspectives of different stakeholder categories rather than assuming uniform perceptions.

The findings should nevertheless be interpreted as evidence of perceived contribution rather than proof of causal influence. The descriptive survey design captures respondents' perceptions, while the one-way ANOVA determines whether the reported group means differ significantly. Neither establishes that collaborative conflict management independently causes improvements in teaching or learning outcomes. Establishing predictive or causal effects would require respondent-level data and an appropriate analytical design employing techniques such as regression analysis or structural equation modelling.

Conclusion

The study concludes that collaborative conflict management is positively perceived as an important contributor to teaching and learning effectiveness in selected public tertiary institutions in Kwara State, Nigeria. Students, academic staff and non-academic staff agreed that collaborative dialogue, joint problem-solving and teamwork can strengthen institutional relationships and create conditions supportive of teaching and learning.

Academic staff recorded the highest overall mean rating, followed by non-academic staff and students. The significant ANOVA result further demonstrates that stakeholder perceptions differ across the three respondent categories. This variation underscores the importance of recognising the distinct experiences and institutional positions of different stakeholder groups when designing conflict-management mechanisms.

The findings support the need for tertiary institutions to move beyond predominantly adversarial approaches to conflict and strengthen participatory mechanisms that enable stakeholders to communicate, deliberate and jointly address institutional problems. However, the findings represent stakeholder perceptions and should not be interpreted as establishing a causal effect of collaborative conflict management on teaching and learning outcomes.

Recommendations

Tertiary institutions should strengthen participatory decision-making structures that give students, academic staff, and non-academic staff meaningful opportunities to contribute to decisions affecting institutional life.

Institutions should establish regular consultative forums and structured dialogue mechanisms to identify and discuss emerging disagreements before they escalate into disruptive conflicts.

Institutions should provide regular capacity-building programmes for administrators, academic staff, non-academic staff, and student leaders in collaborative conflict management, negotiation, communication, mediation, and joint problem-solving.

Conflict-resolution committees should include appropriate representation from relevant stakeholder groups so institutional responses to conflict reflect diverse experiences, interests, and perspectives.

Institutional administrators should periodically assess stakeholder perceptions of conflict-management practices because differences among stakeholder categories may reveal areas requiring targeted intervention.

Future studies should collect respondent-level data and use regression analysis, structural equation modelling, or other appropriate analytical techniques when the research objective is to determine the predictive relationship between collaborative conflict-management strategies and specific teaching and learning outcomes.

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