RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TOWARDS ENHANCING PEACE IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN BAUCHI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between communication and conflict management towards enhancing peace in tertiary institution in Bauchi state. A correlational survey method was adopted for the study. A sample of five hundred (500) participants was purposefully drawn from five (5) tertiary institutions in the state. A self designed instrument titled Students' Communication and Conflict Management Inventory (SCCMI) was used in collecting data from the participants. The instrument was pilot tested using the test-re-test reliability method on a different group and it yielded a coefficient index of 0.90. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used in analyzing the data obtained. The findings revealed that; there is significant relationship between communication and conflict management in enhancement of peace in tertiary institution in Bauchi state. Recommendations forwarded include; tertiary institutions should incorporate communication skills into their curriculum and engage in awareness campaign in the campus.

Key: communication, conflict management and enhancing peace.

Introduction

Conflict is an inevitable part of any healthy relationship. It is a fact no two people ever agree on the same thing at all times. Therefore is paramount to know how to deal with conflict rather than avoiding it. Segal & Smith (2015) posited that, when conflict is mismanaged, it can cause great harm to a relationship, but when handled in respectful, positive way, it provides opportunity to strengthen the bond between two people. Conflict usually occurs when people disagree over their values, motivations, ideas, perceptions or desires. According to Amusan (1996), conflict is a situation of disagreement between two parties. It should be noted that, when two or more social entities come together with the motive of attaining their objectives and a friction exerted the two parties apart, it could lead them into having conflict. Wikipedia (2005) added that conflict is the process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party. In essence labeling or slandering on a person character can bring about a negative change in the relationship between the two parties. This is in line with Kertzner (1998) who sees conflict as part of a change and therefore inevitable. Management Study Guide (MSG) (2013) defined conflict as the dissimilarities in the ideas and opinions of individuals. Therefore one needs to adjust with each other to some extent to avoid conflict and develop better relationship. Obviously, Ballfiore (2013) believed that a relationship with frequent conflict may be healthier than one with no observable conflict. This is when the conflict is handled well.

It should be noted that conflict among students in the tertiary institutions never occur without negative consequences which constituted a serious threats to humanity and undermine the educational objectives. Some of these consequences may be due to lack of proper funding leading to inadequate teaching materials, lack of infrastructural facilities, over-crowded lecture halls, poor teaching and negative attitudes of students among others. Okoye, Imo & Igbo (2011) asserted that factors that create dissatisfaction can increase the chances of conflict among students. This could include struggling for few resources that cannot go round, egocentrism, ethnocentrism, bigotry, assertion, struggle for recognition, ignorance, pride and fear.

Consequently Sekuk (2004) opined that students' conflict is a situation in which students are angry and dissatisfied and are likely to protest. Students' conflict could also result from feud existing between two individuals or cult groups. Therefore, it is characterized as breach of peace or understanding among parties involved.

According to Agokei, Ugoji & Agokei (2014), conflict situation in Nigerian campuses is associated with new students. They usually come with high hopes regarding their independence and wrong perception of freedom of speech and actions. They hope to exercise this at any given time while on the campus. This feeling of freedom makes them react negatively to situation that leads to impede on their perceive freedom.

There are many causes of conflict among students in the tertiary institution, these could include lack of involving the students in decision making on things that concerns them such increase in school fees or planning the examination time table . Others could be requiring the student to read a course that is incongruent with his/her needs or interest. It could also be caused due lack water in the campus, failure in the supply of electricity, miscommunication between students themselves, students and lectures or students and school administration among other things.

Since conflict is part parcel of human social life and it is inevitable to the extent that one cannot run away from it. It will be better that students are equipped with strategies that will develop and enhance in them, ways of solving the conflicting situation they may find themselves. Therefore, thinking of a way to build a social cohesive, understanding and tolerable environment within the campus where both students and teachers will live in a free and safe learning atmosphere should be put in place.

Conflict could also arise from differences in communication. Communication is said to be an interaction between two or more people. According to Iliya, Rimfat, Sekuk & Adam (2009) communication is the act of sending and receiving messages by speaking, writing, telephone lines, computers or any type of medium. It is likely if communication in the campus are handled well it will promote peace among students but on the contrary if not handled way it may mar the relationship to the possibility of creating conflict. Skills You Need (SYN) (2015) categorized communication into verbal and non-verbal. The verbal communication include face to face talk, telephone, radio, television and other media while the non-verbal include body language, gesture, facial looks, dress, act or even ourscent.

Communication involves individuals negotiating their roles through communication channel that is appropriate to the communication. The sender is expected to encode the information into a form that is appropriate. The receiver of the message is expected decode the information by understanding its meaning and significance. According to skills You Need (2015)

Misunderstanding can occur at any stage of the communication processes. Therefore this calls for effective communication.

Effective communication involves minimizing potential misunderstanding and overcoming any form of barriers to communication. That is the parties should understand themselves, choose an appropriate communication channel, choose befitting language that will not hurt any of the party. According to Alexander (2015) there are four types of communication as thus; passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, and assertive communication. Of the four types, the students are expected to use communication effectively to ensure peace in the campus. They should therefore imbibe the culture of showing real honesty and sincerity in their communication. Both parties are expected to appear to be appropriate, open, confident and expressive. This type of communication could create flexibility, attractiveness and feelings of togetherness among students. Any type of communication that involved the parties in pseudo and insincere relationship, gossip, and intolerance, such communication could conflict   (Alexander, 2015).

It should be noted that, it is impossible to change the behaviour of others except where such individuals accept to make a change. In seeking to control or change others in conflict is conflict itself (Alexander, 2015). On the other hand seeking to control or change ourselves in a conflict situation leads to conflict resolution. This is more functionable and workable with the involvement of effective communication skills.

Communication has a big role to play in conflict management. It has been observed that poor communication to conflict (Alexander, 2015). Our communication has to be cleared and précised to avoid conflicts. The sender of the message should be very clear of what he/she intend to convey to the recipient.

Statement of the Problem

The University of Today is more challenging than in the past. Students are sometimes required to study a course that is incongruent with their area of needs and interest. The satisfaction of such study may appear to be incompatible with his/her preferences. This can create dissatisfaction in students and is likely lead to conflict. Unmanaged conflict has the potential to cause several negative consequences in the campus. Among many unresolved conflicts in Nigerian higher education is the crisis of unsettled industrial agreement between the Federal Government and the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU), this crisis

lingers till date (Fatile & Aejuwon, 2011). An increase in school fees, transportation, lack of electricity or water, changes of policies by the university management which they felt it is not done on their favour and religious intolerance, all these are likely to ginger the students into rioting.

Consequently, students who engage in aggressive communication such as behaving rude, thoughtless, inconsiderable and bullies to others or who are hostile, invaders, belittle and threaten others in the campus. This type of behaviour may likely lead them into conflict with other students. Some of the students always communicate indirectly, they are cynical and two faced. Most of these individuals are manipulative, gossipy, and devious who speak with double messages. They hide their intention and mislead others in order to have control (Alexander, 2015). All these variables are likely to lead students to conflict. To this end, the main trust of this study is to explore communication and conflict management as correlates enhancement to peace in tertiary institutions in Bauchi state.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study are to find out:

1 - To determine the extent to which effective communication enhances peace in tertiary institutions in Bauchi state.
2 - To determine the extent to which conflict management enhances peace in tertiary institutions in Bauchi state.

Research Questions

The following research questions were postulated to guide this study:

1 - Is there any relationship between effective communication and enhancement of peace in tertiary institutions in Bauchi state?
2 - Is there any relationship between conflict management and enhancement of peace in tertiary institution in Bauchi state.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide this study:

1 - There is no significant relationship between effective communication and enhancement of peace in tertiary institutions in Bauchi state.

2 -   There is no significant relationship between conflict management and enhancement of
        Peace in tertiary institutions in Bauchi state.

Research Design

The study adopted the correlational survey design. The correlational survey design was used in this study to figure out the connection between effective communication and conflict management towards enhancing peace in tertiary institutions. It is therefore expected to express the strength and relationship between the variables.

Population and Sample Size

The population of the study consisted of all the tertiary institution s of Bauchi state. It includes all the male and female students in these institutions. Five hundred (500) students were purposefully sample from five (5) of tertiary institutions as thus; Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Bauchi, Bauchi state University Gado, Federal Polytechnic Bauchi, Tatari Ali Polytechnic Bauchi and State College of Education Azare. A sample of one hundred (100) participants was drawn from each of the institutions summing up to five hundred (500) participants.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study was self designed instrument titled Students' Communication and Conflict Management Inventory (SCCMI). The instrument was meant to test the two hypotheses postulated in the study. It was validated by three experts in the area of Guidance and Counseling and Measurement and Evaluation for both content and constructs validity before they were administered. Test-re-test reliability method was used to establish the reliability after a two week interval. Reliability coefficient of 0.90 was obtained using the pearson correlation coefficient technique.

Procedure for Data Collection

The instrument was distributed to five hundred (500) participants selected from the five (5) tertiary institutions in Bauchi state. Research assistants were employed to help in administering the instruments and data collection. Participants were required to read the statements and answer the questions. Out of which 485 (97%) of the questionnaires were retrieved and 15 (3%) of the

questionnaires were missing. The returned questionnaires were marked and scored in order to determine the relationship between effective communication and conflict management towards enhancing peace in tertiary institutions.

Procedure for Data Analysis

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was employed to analyze the two hypotheses. The justification for the use of this statistics is that, PPMCC is used to establish a relationship between the agreed and the disagree responses of students as regard effective communication and conflict management towards enhancing peace in tertiary institutions in Bauchi state. Adamu & Johnson (2007) asserted that PPMCC expressed the degree of relationship between two or more variables. Again correlation coefficient (r) takes range between -1.000 to +1.000 that describe the relationship between the variables and Guildford Rules of Thumb (Horn, 2011) was used as reference in interpreting the strength.

Data Presentation and Hypotheses Testing

Two hypotheses were formulated; they were tested using the PPMCC statistical method at the probability level of 0.05 respectively.

HO1 : There is no significant relationship between effective communication and enhancement of peace in tertiary institution in Bauchi state.

The hypothesis was tested using pearson product moment correlation coefficient. The result for the descriptive information analysis is presented as one (N=485 (97%) M=20.16, SD=2.70) and two (N=485 (97%) M=11.89, SD=1.95).

The result presented in the analysis of the PPMCC on table 1.

Table 1: PPMCC analysis of relationship between agreed and disagreed responses on communication and enhancement of peace.

Variables		Agree	Disagree
Agree	pearson correlation	1	.334**
	Sig (2-tailed)		.000
	N	485	485
Disagree	pearson correlation	.334**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	485	485

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The result in table one above indicated that there was a moderate relationship between the

two variables (r=.334, n=485, p=<0.05) with a moderate level of effective communication associated with level of enhancement of peace. This means that changes in the in one variable is moderately correlated with changes in the second variable, for this reason we can conclude that there is a significant positive moderate relationship between effective communication and enhancement of peace among students of tertiary institutions in Bauchi state.

HO2 :   There is no significant relationship between conflict management and enhancement of Peace in tertiary institutions in Bauchi state.

The hypothesis was tested using pearson product moment correlation coefficient. The result of the descriptive information analysis is presented as one (N=485, (97%) M=20.16, SD=2.70). two (N=485(97%) M=13.14, SD=1.14).

The result presented the analysis of the PPMCC on table 2.

Table 2 : PPMCC analysis of agreed and disagreed responses on relationship between conflict management and enhancement of peace.

Variables		Agree	Disagree
Agree	pearson correlation	1	.334**
	Sig (2-tailed)		.000
	N	485	485
Disagree	pearson correlation	.334**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	485	485

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The result in table two indicated that there was a moderate positive relationship between the two variables (r=.349, n=485, p=<0.05) with moderate level of conflict management associated with level enhancement of peace. This means that changes in one variable is moderately correlated to changes in the second variable. For this reason we can conclude that there is a significant positive moderate relationship between conflict management and enhancement of peace.

Summary of the Finding

Based on the hypotheses tested, the following are the major findings of this study.

1 . The study has found out that most of the students in trying to get some mutually desirable resources that is in short supply, such that desirability cannot be satisfied fully, it create conflict among them. They also suffer from communication barriers that can address the issue of this nature amicably.

2.   The study also found out that lack of knowledge on conflict management strategies among students who found themselves in conflicting situations would find impossible to manage the conflict. Such students appeared to be more egocentric, bigotry and are ever ready to increase the level of the conflict to its highest peak. They also constitute threat to humanity and undermine any possibility of settlement.

Discussion

The result were quite revealing as they showed that variables such as effective communication and conflict management leads to enhancement of peace among students in the tertiary institutions in Bauchi state. The result of the PPMCC analysis was used to test all the two hypotheses.

In hypothesis one, the study discovered that there was a significant moderate relationship between effective communication and enhancement of peace in tertiary institutions in Bauchi state. However, in trying to exercise all the autonomy and freedom gained in the tertiary institutions, the students become involved in infringing on the rights of other individuals and the school authority, thereby, creating a situation that lead may to conflict. The students also confirmed that, they are challenge by preaching from religious fundamentalists, bullying by some students, gossiping and rudeness that are unbearable among students. This in turn leads to hostility that breaks peace in the campus. The students are threatening by cult groups or experienced labeling and slandering that are intolerable.

The result in hypothesis two showed a significant positive moderate relationship between conflict management and the enhancement of peace among students of tertiary institutions in Bauchi state. It buttresses that lack of knowledge of conflict management is an antecedent to destruction of lives and properties. This finding is supported by Tambawal & Suleiman (2014) who found out that incompatibility between students, teachers and school authorities can lead to destruction of lives and properties if conflict are not resolved. The study also found out that conflict lowered motivation, decreased morale, poor decision making, increase costs devoted to dealing with conflict and blaming one another at the end among other things.

Counseling Implication

   The finding of this study points out to the fact that, conflict is natural among human beings, it affect both human lives and properties. It also disrupt academic calendar and affect the physiological psychological chemistry of the students.

   Counseling is a significant psychological instrument that manages conflict. It therefore, assist to ensure the client maintain a sustainable, good and healthy learning atmosphere through dialoguing with the parties involved in the conflict for a better solution.

   School counselors are good human resources and psychological engineers who must be involved in assisting the students maintain a balance between conflicting situations and managing the conflict to avoid escalating to a situation beyond control. This could be done through individual and group counseling.

Conclusion

   Conflict is natural part of human life and therefore a natural part of school life. Learning deals constructively with conflict. If students learnt to resolved their conflict the atmosphere in the school is more pleasant for teaching and learning. One of the greatest goals to achieving this, is through effective communication, which the thoughts are carefully put into sensible and relevant words for others to understand well.

Recommendations

   Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are put forward:

1 . Tertiary institutions should incorporate communication skills into their curriculum. This should be made compulsory for every student to take as criteria for graduation.

2 . Schools should engage on awareness campaign on conflict management through organizing seminars, symposiums, workshop, and lectures that would sensitize them on conflict management. Students should be encouraged to participate.

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