

THE PREFERRED CRISIS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AMONG LECTURERS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA AND THE NEED FOR GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING INTERVENTION

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ABSTRACT: *The aim of this study was to investigate the preferred crises management strategies among lecturers in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria. The population of the study was one thousand two hundred and forty-two (1,242) lecturers. The total sample used for the study was five hundred respondents who were drawn through stratified random sampling from four institutions of higher learning in Cross River State. The instrument used for the data collection was the researcher's developed Preferred Crisis Management Strategies Questionnaire (P.C.M.S.Q). It has two sections, A and B. Section A contained the personal data while B contained four point Likert scale type, made up of sixteen (16) items. The data collected from the samples were subjected to statistical analysis using the population and independent t-test. To accomplish the study objective, two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The following findings emerged; the preference for force crisis management strategy by lecturers was significantly low in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. Sex does not influence lecturers' preference for dialogue as a crisis management strategy. Based on these findings, the following recommendations were made. The government should adequately fund education, and the schools should devise local sources of generating funds while well-meaning individuals and companies should assist, dialogue should be adopted as evidenced in the study.*

KEYWORDS: Tertiary Institutions, Preferred, Crises, Management, Strategies, Lecturer.

INTRODUCTION

Unexpected experiences abound in almost all institutions of higher learning throughout Nigeria (Coombs, 1988). Tertiary institutions in developing countries are facing unprecedented crises. The escalation of these crises is one of the greatest problems currently facing higher educational institutions in Nigeria. The philosophy of higher education in developing countries as Nigeria rests on the facilitation of manpower development, socio-economic progress, political sanity and technological advancement.

According to Odewumi (2013), from this aspect, the preponderance of crises in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria has not only become an upset but a negation of the ideas for which the institutions stand for. This is because our tertiary institutions are gradually sliding in value and academic standards. With time, these institutions may be unable to perform their roles and responsibilities as citadels of learning if the persistence of crises are not checked and effectively managed to yield the needed ends.

In Nigeria, Igwe (2002) stated that the crises in virtually all tertiary institutions, have made the citizenry to think that crisis is an inevitable factor in higher institution in contemporary society.

But its unending occurrences in our higher institutions tend not only to halt learning but also threaten the entire system. Now and then, one reads some new crises in institutions which are inherent among its various segments, ranging from groups struggling for power, certain necessary facilities, to other social privileges. They struggle either for the improvement of their welfare or maintenance of the status quo. The situation seems the same everywhere, students demonstrate and the staff threaten to go on strike or are actually on strike. Indeed, the dimension of crises at the tertiary level is growing fearful and demanding more attention than ever before.

This has become a common feature of the educational system in Nigeria nowadays. Nwadiani (2001) observed that the reoccurrence does not allow any school calendar year passes without one form of crises or another. If the students are not protesting or rioting for a perceived bad academic policy, lack of water/electricity or inadequate provision of certain basic infrastructural facilities, then, staff of these institutions are striking over conditions of service. Consequently, contemporary administrators of higher institution have become crises managers instead of being administrators of enabling environment for research and scholarship. This ugly trend leads to disruption of academic programmes and activities and the subsequent effect on the students, staff and the society. This causes great concern to educationists, school administrators, the government and the society at large.

As observed by Denga (2008), in Nigeria and Cross River State in particular, there are evidences that our tertiary institutions are presently groaning in crises situations which manifest themselves in various aspects of higher institutions services and in their general management. Learning atmosphere is unfavourable while conditions of service are generally intolerable. Part of the reason for these rather persistent crises situations are sometimes attributed to poor management. All these and many more, speak of the unhealthy state of affairs that these institutions have experienced at one time or another. The lecture halls are not any better and this is applicable to virtually all tertiary institutions. In most institutions every lecture period is a veritable time of unprovoked wrestling, students push and shove their ways to the hall and exert their muscles to get seated. For the students, their ordeal is the price to pay for government's poor funding of education and for the lecturers;

According to Ojo (1994), one thing the society needs to realize is that one of the psycho-pedagogic strategies to be developed and the key element to achieving success in learning is the teacher. The teacher factor is critical for any qualitative and successful learning. Thus, lecturing is essential for realizing the goals of education by training and developing the individual. The lecturers are thus responsible for the moulding of students' personalities. They used the logic of their ideas, their enthusiasm, humour, gestures and the intensity of their presentation to drive the points of their lecture home and perhaps make the students learn.

Okoi (1995) pointed out that lecturers have been complaining of poor working conditions, lack of necessary facilities, heavy workloads (many teaching hours) and high students/lecturer ratio, the situation is so pathetic that lecturers do not even know the number of students offering their courses. And large students/lecturer ratio and too many teaching hours reduces output as lecturers may lose consciousness of their teaching ability and objectives owing to fatigue arising from prolonged teaching.

These claims are supported by documents issued by Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) and Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU) to the Federal Government on various occasion. All these made the lecturers lack a life job commitment and it is only the unions that have been speaking

relentlessly through strikes and threats to the government and institutional administrators to address these problems as it was obvious that these problems are taking a toll on the quality of delivery and output of the higher education system.

As observed by Tamuno and Mandah (2002), crisis is a basic social process and occurs in every human endeavour including our educational system. The chief executive of tertiary institutions (VCs, Rectors, Provosts) are left with the task of containing these crises for effective teaching and learning process. Its reoccurrence in institutions depicts that the solution strategies adopted are not preferred therefore, they are not effective or the crises themselves have taken on new dimensions. Therefore, an understanding of the nature of these crises and the adoption of preferred strategies by lecturers becomes imperative and hence, the objective of this article.

To this end, the researcher intends to investigate preferred crises management strategies among lecturers in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

Statement of the problem

Higher institutions are established for the purpose of achieving certain objectives such as the training and production of the manpower needed for the development of the society. The personnel within the school system interact for the purpose of achieving academic excellence in the course of carrying out their duties and responsibilities, the interactive process engenders misunderstanding and conflicts which culminate into crisis as a result of the inability of the school authorities and government to adequately fund education and provide necessary facilities that would aid teaching and learning.

The recurring disturbances despite government and institutions threats are enough impetus for us to look elsewhere for desirable solution to curtail crises in our higher institutions. In Cross River State, the frequent crises in tertiary institutions may be either because the strategies for their resolution are not encompassing and therefore not preferred or the problems have taken on new and complex dimensions requiring practical desirable solutions or both. Hence, this might have been a reflection of the type of strategies adopted by the institutional administrators, in their various attempts to manage crises.

The problem of this study therefore, focuses on the method to which crisis management strategies adopted where preferred by the lecturers. Attempt will thus be made to provide answers to this problem posed as a question in line with the causes of crises and the strategies as they are preferred by lecturers in tertiary institution in Cross River State.

Purpose of the study

The study intended to find out if lecturers preference had any influence on crisis management strategies in tertiary institution in Cross River State. Specifically, the study was designed to:

1. Identify crises resolution and containment strategies preferred by lecturers that were usually employed by administrators of tertiary institutions in Cross River State.
2. Investigate what causes crises in Cross River State higher institutions and evaluate whether the strategies adopted for solving the problem (crises) were desirable to prevent their future occurrence.

Significance of the study

The findings of this study may be of benefit to the government in that it exposes them to what are required to make tertiary institutions more result oriented. And the roles that are expected of them to revitalize these institutions to live up to expectations, to justify their ivory tower status.

The study then serves as a boost to institutional administrators (vice-chancellors, rectors and provosts) on the preferred strategies that are desirable to lecturers during crisis. This understanding will further give them an insight into effective management of academic staff.

The study serves as a knowledge bank to educationists, especially administrators, planners and policy makers. It will help them to identify preferred crisis management strategies by lecturers with a view to formulate policies that may address this constraint positively and thus make tertiary institutions vibrant for effective teaching and learning.

Thus, this study may reveal to all stakeholders in the education industry the preferred crisis management strategies that are predisposing to lecturers in tertiary institutions that would create an enabling environment for effective teaching, learning and research.

Scope of the study

This study was based on four institutions of higher learning in Cross River State. These are the University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River University of Technology, Calabar, Federal College of Education, Obudu and Cross River State College of Education, Akamkpa.

In addition, this study was limited to two crises management strategies namely: force strategy and dialogue strategy.

Research hypotheses

The hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

1. The preference for force crisis management strategy by lecturers was not significantly high.
2. Sex does not significantly influence preference for dialogue as a crisis management strategy.

Research design

The design used in this study was the Ex-post facto, which Kerlinger (1973) defines as a systematic empirical inquiring in which the researcher does not have direct control of the independent variables because their manipulations have already occurred or because they are inherently not manipulable. Inferences among variables are made without direct intervention from concomitant variations of independent and dependent variables.

Research area

This study is on preferred crisis management strategies among lecturers in tertiary institutions in Cross River State – Nigeria. It will be confined to lecturers in Colleges of Education, and Universities in Cross River State of Nigeria; Cross River State is one of the thirty-six (36) states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. From a publication of Ministry of Education, Youth and

Sport, Cross River State (2006), Cross River State occupies a total landmass of 23,074,425 square kilometres of south-south zone of the Niger Delta regions. Calabar is the State capital. The state emerged as it is on September 23rd, 1987, when the then Armed Forces Ruling Council restructured the nineteen states in the country into twenty-one (21) states with Abuja remaining as the Federal Capital Territory and the seat of government. Cross River State is situated within the tropics. The state shares common boundary with Cameroon Republic in the East, Benue State in the North, Enugu and Abia State in the West and Akwa Ibom State in the South.

There are three major language groups in Cross River State namely; Efik, Bekwarra and Ejagham, other groups North of Calabar are the Ekois, Mbembe, Yakurr, Boki, Yala/Yache, Ukele, Mbube, Bete and Utugwang. The workforce of the people is largely small scale farmers, government workers and private entrepreneurs. According to Ministry of Information, Youth and Sports publication (2006), the state has more than 240 pre-primary schools, 648 primary schools, 150 post-primary schools and Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH), and Federal institutions namely: University of Calabar and Federal College of Education, Obudu.

Population of the study

The population for this study included all the academic staff of the four higher education establishments in Cross River State. There were one thousand, two hundred and forty-two (1,242) lecturers which constitute the population of the study. The breakdown indicated that from senior staff establishment list University of Calabar June 28, 2015 there was academic staff strength of six hundred and forty-eight (648) lecturers. Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH) Calabar Staff Nominal Roll September 2015 puts it at four hundred and eleven (411) teaching staff. The Federal College of Education, Obudu, Cross River State teaching staff Nominal Roll was one hundred and eleven (111) May 31, 2015. While that of Cross River State College of Education, Akamkpa, statistics on teaching staff strength June 2015 was seventy-two (72) respectively.

Sampling techniques

The sampling technique adopted for this study was stratified random sampling technique. The basis for stratification where type of schools. That is the respondents were grouped according to University and Colleges of Education respectively.

The subjects were randomly drawn using ballot method, that is, numbers ranging from one to five hundred were assigned to lecturers based on the number of subjects to be selected from each school. Then balloting was conducted where each number was picked, opened, recorded, folded back and dropped into the container where the numbers were arranged. The essence of dropping back a picked number was to ensure that at each point of selection equal number were in the container. This therefore meant that at each point of selection, the subjects were given equal chance to be selected into the sample.

The sample

The sample for this study comprised five hundred (500) respondents, out of this number, two hundred and thirty (230) were selected from the University of Calabar, Calabar representing 46.0%, two hundred and fifteen were drawn from Cross River University of Technology, Calabar representing 43.0% and also thirty respondents were drawn from the Federal College

of Education, Obudu representing 6%, while in Cross River State College of Education, Akamkpa, twenty five (25) respondents were drawn which stood at 5%. Thus, this gave the sample size for the study.

Instrumentation

In order to achieve the objective of this study, the instrument used for data collection was the researcher-developed questionnaire called Preferred Crisis Management Strategies Questionnaire (P.C.M.S.Q). It has two sections A and B. Section A contained the personal data, the included name of the institution, sex, marital status, teaching qualification and teaching experience. Section B contained four point Likert type, made up of sixteen (16) items measuring the variables which this section was divided into. The items in this section measure the two crises management strategies namely: force and dialogue crises management strategies.

Validity of the instrument

Experts in Guidance and Counselling as well as measurement and evaluation were used to establish the face validity of the instrument. These experts were drawn from the University of Calabar and Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH) Calabar. The essence of the face validity was to ensure clarity of instrument to the respondents, proper wording of items, appropriateness and adequacy of the items in addressing the objectives of the study. The corrections and suggestions made by the experts were incorporated in the final version of the instrument.

Reliability of the instrument

To determine the reliability of the instrument Cronbach Co-efficient Alpha reliability was used. This method of reliability measure was preferred to others because it lends itself to the measure of reliability when the items in the questionnaire are not measured dichotomously and when the trial testing is administered once. The reliability estimate for the instrument was 0.7343. This value was considered high to justify the use of the instrument for the study. As stated by Ogbazi and Okpala (1994), if the correlation coefficient obtained in the instrument is up to 0.60 and above, the instrument should be considered good enough to be used for a study.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher provided basic guide and instructions on the methods of distribution and collection of the questionnaire to three research assistants who assisted in the data collection. In order to gain access to the academic staff, a letter of introduction from the Head of Department (HOD) was raised in the institutions selected for the study. Subsequently, each HOD introduced the researcher and the researcher's assistants to the academic staff. Thereafter, the researcher and the research assistant administered the 500 copies of the questionnaire on the respondent in their offices. The respondents were requested to complete the questionnaire and return same to the research assistants on the spot. This method was adopted to enhance a high rate of return of the instrument and reduce distortion of information.

Data preparation/scoring

The data obtained from the instrument were prepared based on how the variables were measured. The scoring was done in this wise; 1-3 to demographic variables. Section B which

was a four point Likert format was scored in this way. 4-1 for positively worded items and 1-4 for negatively worded items.

This information was presented in table 1.

Table 1: Coding schedule for the research variables in the study

S/N	Variables	Column	Code
1	Serial number	1-3	1 – 500
2	Name of School	4	1 – 4
3	Sex	5	Male = 1 Female = 2
4	Marital status	6	Married = 1 Single = 2
5	Type of school	7	Universities = 1 College of Education = 2
6	Teaching qualification	8	First degree = 1 Master degree = 2 Doctorate degree = 3
7	Teaching experience	9	1 – 10 year = 1 11 – 20 year = 2 21 years and above = 3
8.	Force crisis management strategy	10 – 11	Add scores on items number 1-8 of part 1 in section B
9	Dialogue crisis management strategy	12 – 13	Add scores on items number 9-16 of part II in section B

Table 2: Distribution of demographic variables by frequencies and percentages

S/N	Variables	Categories	N	Percentages
1	Sex	Male	312	62.40
		Female	188	37.60
2	Marital status	Married	273	54.60
		Single	227	45.40
3	Type of school	University	364	72.80
		College of Education	136	27.20
4	Teaching qualification	First degree	146	29.20
		Master degree	163	32.60
		Doctorate degree	191	38.20
5	Teaching experience	1 – 10 years	188	37.60
		11 – 20 years	167	33.40
		21 years and above	145	29.00

Hypothesis 1

The preference for force crisis management strategy by lecturers in tertiary institutions in Cross River State is not significantly high.

Population t-test statistical technique was used to test the hypothesis. A summary of the result was presented in table 3.

Table 3: Population t-test analysis of the preference for force crisis management strategy by lecturers

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-value
Preference for force crisis management strategy	(Observed)	18.40		
	500		6.50	-5.52*
	(Assumed)	20.00		

*significant at 0.05; df = 498; critical t-value = 1.960

The result in table 3 above showed that the calculated value was -5.52 while the critical t-value was 1.960 at 0.05 level of significance and 498 degrees of freedom. Since the calculated t-value was higher than the critical value, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternate hypothesis retained. Thus, the preference for force crisis management strategy by lecturers is significantly low.

Hypothesis 2

Sex does not significantly influence preference for dialogue as a crisis management strategy by lecturers in tertiary institutions in Cross River State. Independent t-test statistical technique was used to compare the mean scores of male and female lecturers. A summary of the result was presented in table 4.

Table 4: Independent t-test analysis of the influence of sex on preference for dialogue as a crisis management strategy

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-value
Male	312	22.90	2.17	1.23
Female	188	22.63	2.57	

significant at 0.05; df = 498; critical t-value = 1.960

The result in table 4 above showed that the calculated t-value was 1.23 while the critical t-value was 1.960 at 0.05 level of significance and 498 degrees of freedom. Since the calculated t-value was less than the critical t-value, the null hypothesis was retained, while the alternate hypothesis was rejected. Thus, sex does not significantly influence preference for dialogue as a crisis management strategy in higher institutions in Cross River State.

CONCLUSION

Within the limits of this study, it was reasonably concluded that;

Lecturers in tertiary institutions in Cross River State were favourably disposed to force crisis management strategy. And that this presupposes why they always threw their weights behind strikes and counter-strikes in their institutions when certain fundamental objectives are threatened.

Also, that irrespective of sex whether male or female, all lecturers preferred the use of dialogue in the management of crisis in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, based on the fact that dialogue is one of the best approaches and still remain the only feasible means that is constitutionally and otherwise recognised as legitimate in the resolution of crises.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings of this study the following recommendations were made.

1. In order to restore tertiary institutions to its past glory status both the federal and state governments should adequately fund education by increasing their quarterly subventions and allocations to the sector. The both governments should equally provide stabilisation fund to make up for the shortfalls in the budgetary allocation to education in the past few years. Tertiary institutions too have to explore and exploit more aggressive ways of sourcing for fund locally in order to augment government efforts. As government alone cannot do the funding, well-meaning individuals and companies should assist.
2. Within the limited resources provided, equipment and infrastructural facilities in their required number and quantity should be made available in tertiary institutions and care should be taken to ensure their efficient and effective usage to forestall deterioration and dilapidation and consequent decay of higher education system.
3. In order to ensure industrial peace and harmony that facilitates increased productivity of lecturers in our campuses, there is need for improve condition of service. These should come in various forms: adequate remuneration, recognition, reward for excellent task performance, promotion, good prospect of self development and on the job advancement, and integration of lecturers into decision making processes in the school system.

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