INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
ISSN: 2277-7881; IMPACT FACTOR – 4.527; IC VALUE:5.16; ISI VALUE:2.286
VOLUME 6, ISSUE 1(1), JANUARY 2017

CONFLICT RESOLUTION USING INFORMATION SHARING STRATEGIES: A CASE STUDY OF AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA NIGERIA.

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Jan. 2017

Abstract

The paper attempt to discuss conflict resolution using information sharing strategies in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria. Conflict resolution is seen as the activity of third party who wishes to intervene, and as such need nothing as an instrument for peace and conflict resolution than information and this information need to be communicated effectively for an impact to be felt. The paper also tries to identify information sharing techniques used for Conflict resolution in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Survey method of research is used while questionnaire was adopted as the instrument for data collection. Sample population was randomly picked from staff and students of the University while data presentation and analysis was done using simple frequency and percentages. The paper revealed that negotiation, brainstorming, storytelling, and guidance and counseling are not frequently use as information sharing techniques for conflict resolution in academic areas. The paper recommended that training and retraining of bodies involved in conflict resolution on the use of information sharing techniques should be organized time to time to enable them acquire and develop skill that will end conflict not only create peace in the University as a whole.

Keywords: Dialogue, Brainstorming, Information, Sharing, Technique, Negotiation, Storytelling, Guidance, Counselling,

1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict is part of our daily reality because it dominated the space for peace and development, it cut across all spheres in the society. So far there is no historical narrative about a society that is devoid of conflict. Conflict in human community or society may be blame on different values, needs, interest and the scarcity of available resources which access to them must be controlled and fought for.

The nature of conflict comprises inter-communal type; intra-communal type and natural conflict. Inter-communal conflict arises when two or more communities disagree on ethnic issues, boundary disputes, farmland occupation and other forms of disputes. Intra-communal conflict occurs within a community that may be as a result of chieftaincy crisis, political representations and land issues. The national conflict is a globalize inter and intra-communal conflict.

Understanding the consequences of conflict to academic progress and development means possessing the capabilities to set boundaries against it occurrence and/or control when it eventually happened. Therefore, this article is focusing on reporting ways by which conflict can be resolved using information sharing platforms to achieve peaceful coexistence.

Conflict resolution is seen as the activity in the part of one or more third parties wishing to affect some ongoing manifest conflict and bring it to some conclusion by changing the behaviour, attitude or goals of the adversaries. Conflict resolution is an acceptable process whereby individuals resolve issues in an informal or formal atmosphere, or where issues are resolved as part of the ongoing interaction between individuals Mitchell (1981).

Primarily, conflict can be resolved using two basic approaches namely, peaceful negotiation or arbitration and force. Resolving a conflict by force is generally inadequate and can make the

conflict protracted and difficult to manage: This is why Oyeshola (2005) reported that; most societies therefore preferred peaceful resolution to open combat. Other techniques of conflict resolution include: surrendering, running away, over-powering the opponent with violence, filing a lawsuit and so on.

2. AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA

Ahmadu Bello University is one of Nigeria's premier University establish in 1962, today it has 12 Faculties and over 83 Departments and Units. This academic community has always been referred to as the largest in sub-Saharan Africa this implies contesting for space, recognition, gratification and attention. By so doing, there is no doubt that conflict will evolve. However, as a system, each organ must work harmoniously to achieve the objective of the University. Apart from the academic settings, the University has directories, institutes and research centres.

3. INFORMATION SHARING FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Information sharing describes the exchange of data, facts, opinion, understanding, knowledge etc between various organizations, people and technologies. Information sharing is a central process through which team members collectively utilize their available informational resources Jessica and Leslie (2009). Information is an indispensable and essential ingredient in today's social, economic, industrial, educational, political, religious, cultural and technological development. It is very apparent today that without information no meaningful developmental activity or operation will be achieved.

In sharing information, people are able to express their views, articulate common grounds, and agreed on necessary adjustments that could foster understanding and harmonious peaceful coexistence. Thus, conflict resolution provides an opportunity to interact with parties concerned

with the hope of at least reducing the scope, intensity and effects of conflict. Interaction with parties in conflict is aimed at gathering information for what happen, how it happens, when it happens, where it happens, who are involved and what majors to be taken to end the conflict. In conflict resolution, the best solution is the solution that is best for both sides.

4. INFORMATION SHARING STRATEGIES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Mediators or conflict managers use different techniques in gathering, educating and communicating information for parties in conflict to reduce tension, create peace or resolve conflict, the techniques are: brainstorming, negotiating, dialogue etc.

1) BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming is the processing of developing large number of ideas in a short amount of time that can later be evaluated and applied to a task, it is one of the problem solving approach, Payne (2001). However, this plays a greater role in putting an end to conflict because information is gathered, sorted, discussed, and disseminated to the parties in conflict; also, issues in conflict are discussed extensively to the understanding of the parties in conflict APO (2010).

Following are examples of possible steps to be taken during brainstorming:

1. Set a time limit, 10 to 20 minutes, depending upon the size of your group and the complexity of the issue.
2. The best group size is 3-15 people. If you have more, break into two or more groups and brainstorm simultaneously.
3. Focus on one issue at a time. The question or issue must be one about which all participants can speak.

4. Record all responses on a blackboard or big sheets of newsprint so everyone can see them; don't record the name of the person suggesting. Record only key words and phrases, not word for word.

Brainstorming Techniques for Conflict Resolution: Step 1: Prepare the Group; Step 2: Present the Problem; Step 3: Guide the Discussion (http://www.mindtools.com/brainstm.html)

2) NEGOTIATION

Another technique for communicating or sharing information is negotiation, which is a voluntary attempt to resolve conflicts that arise from competing needs, interest and goals. It is a problem solving approach in which parties in conflict seek agreement rather than resort to violence and force. Roger and William theory of cooperative conflict behavior stated four (4) principles for effective negotiation. They are:

I. Separate people from their problem. This principle helps parties to get a clearer picture of the substantive problem.
II. Focus on interest rather than position.
III. Generate a variety of options before settling on an agreement.
IV. Insist that the agreement be based on objective criteria.

3) DIALOGUE

Another technique use for resolving conflict which has to do with information sharing is dialogue. Dialogue is defined as discussion between people in which opinions are exchanged Mohammed (2008). The importance of dialogue is: an inclusive process; entails learning, not just talking; recognizes one another's humanity; stresses a long-term perspective.

However, dialogue is nothing if not backed by concrete actions. And concrete actions mean understanding the nature of the problems and trading off. Therefore, this is to emphasize and show

the important of information sharing through dialogue in creating peace and conflict resolution in human society where conflict is seen as part of the norms.

5. OBJECTIVES

The study is set to achieve the following:

1. To ascertain the types of conflict resolved by some individuals involved in conflict resolution in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria
2. To determine the information sharing techniques used for conflict resolution by some individuals involved in conflict resolution in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria

6. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the survey method of research. Mohammed (2001) opined that a research is said to be survey when it focuses on a given population where data is collected and analysed and the information gathered can be generalized. Therefore, survey is appropriate because it has advantages of wider application as it allows data to be collected on a large population.

The population of the study is made up of 116 respondents. They comprise six organs recognized by the University to influence conflict resolution, these are: Dean of students Affairs, Deans of Faculties, Head of Departments, Security Officers and religious leaders. "Nwanna, cited in Agbonmiewalen (2007) that 'when a population runs into few hundred use forty 40% or more, when several hundred use 20%, when thousands use 10%, and when several thousand use 5% or less. From these, a sample of 50% of the population were randomly selected to represent the sample size this is because Random sampling eliminates bias by giving all individuals an equal chance to

be chosen Moore and McCabe (2006). Questionnaire was the instrument used for gathering data for convenience and effective data collection.

Table 1: Population of the Study

Individuals involve in conflict resolution	Population	%
Dean of Student Affairs	1	1
Deans of the Faculties	12	10
Head of the Departments	65	56
Security Officers	32	28
Religious Leaders	6	5
Total	**116**	**100**

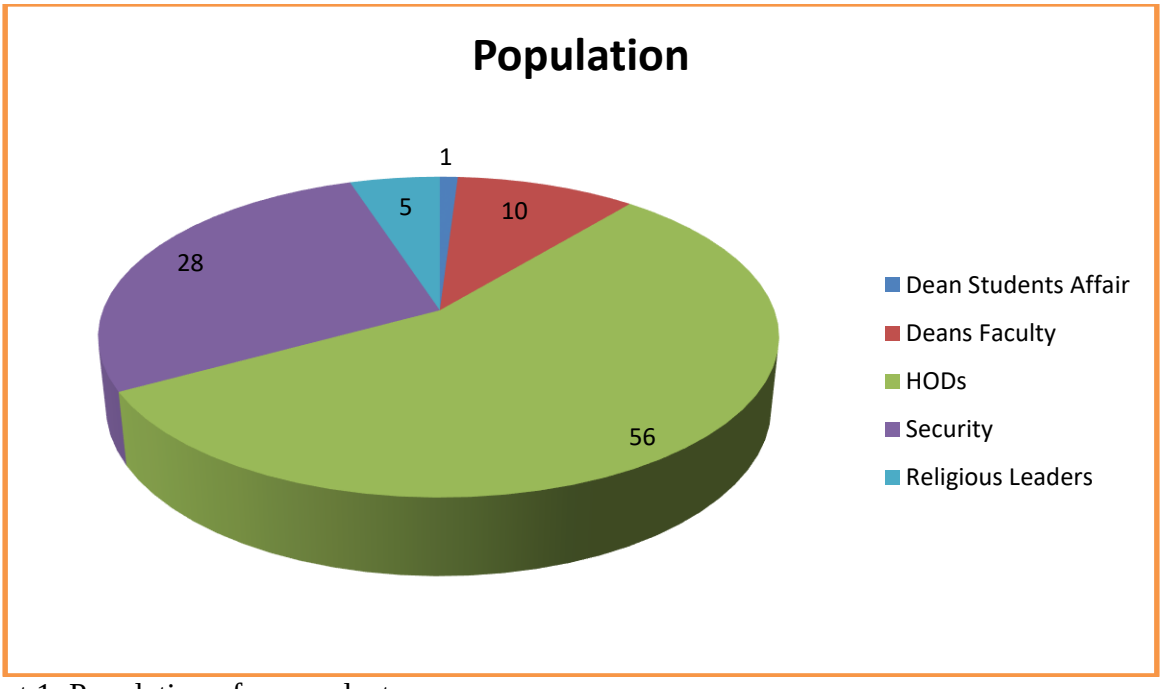


Chart 1: Population of respondents

Table 2: Sample population

Individuals involve in conflict resolution	**Sample**	**%**
Dean of Student Affairs	1	2
Deans of the Faculties	6	10
Head of the Departments	33	56
Security Officers	16	27
Religious Leaders	3	5
Total	**59**	**100**

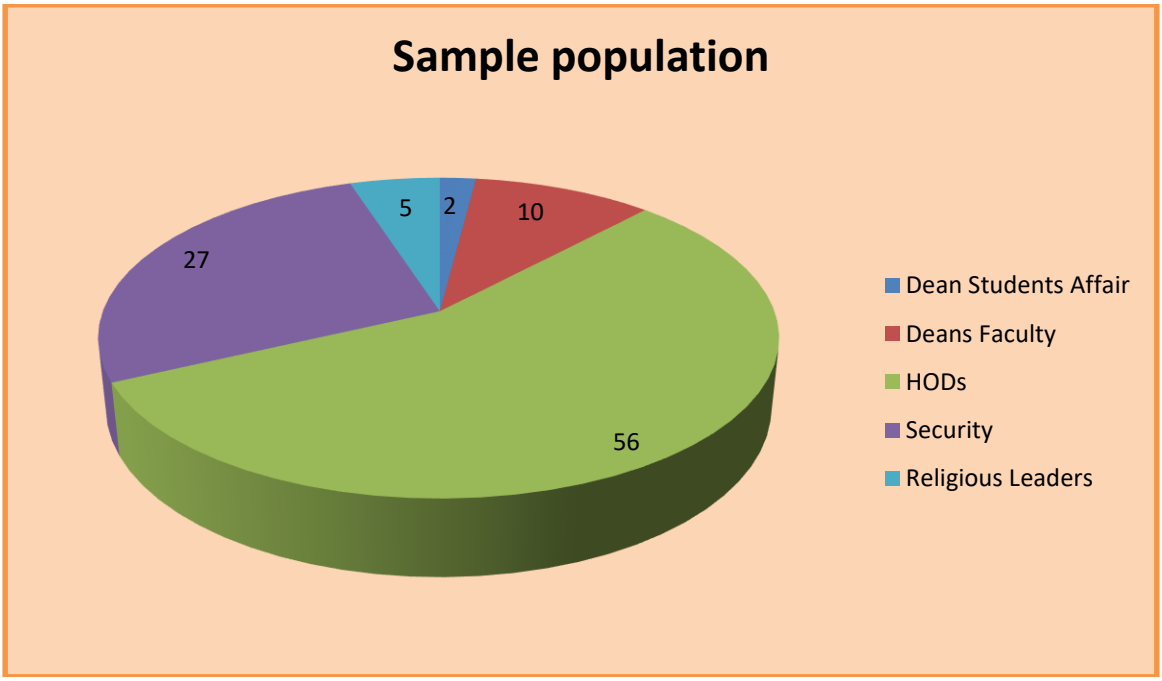


Chart2: Sample population

7. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The data collected using questionnaires from the respondents were analyzed quantitatively using simple frequency and percentages.

A total of 59 questionnaires were distributed to various respondents but 55 were filled and returned.

Table 3: Bodies involved and Techniques use in conflict resolution in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Types of conflicts in ABU	**Bodies involved and Techniques use in conflict resolution in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria**																								
	Dean Student Affairs					**Deans of Faculties**					**HODs**					**Security**					**Religious Leaders**				
	D	N	B	S	G/C	D	N	B	S	G/C	D	N	B	S	G/C	D	N	B	S	G/C	D	N	B	S	G/C
Inter-religious sect	√					√											√								√
Leadership	√						√				√														√
Venue allocation		√					√				√						√					√			
Union leaders election					√			√				√													
HOD & Deans election							√					√													
Class Reps election			√								√						√								
Staff ranking										√			√												
Seating position							√					√													
Property sharing							√					√									√				
Students bed space		√															√								
Examination result							√					√													
Sexual harassment					√															√				√	
Parking space			√								√					√									
Queuing system																√									
Overstay student										√					√										
Examination malpractice						√					√														
Security check point					√										√					√					
Dress code					√					√					√					√					√
Supervisor/supervisee						√				√				√											
Academic discuss						√						√													
Staff training		√					√					√					√								
Staff transfer					√															√					
Sharing of honorarium		√															√								
Responsibility	√				√					√		√													

KEYS: D = Dialogue; N = Negotiation; B =Brainstorming; S = Story telling; G/C = Guidance & Counselling

It is vividly clear from table 3 above that negotiation, brainstorming, storytelling and guidance and counselling are not frequently used as information sharing technique for resolving conflict in the area of academic studies. The fact is that the bodies involved in conflict resolution of academic matters were not well trained and experienced in using the techniques in conflict resolution as such they may not have interest in using the technique. The implication of this may be that, the bodies involved in managing conflict may be successful in creating peace but not removing the issue in conflict. Thus, the conflict will be taking dimension.

Table 4: Information Sharing Techniques for Conflict Resolution and Mitigation

Individuals involved in conflict resolution	**Information Sharing Techniques for Conflict Resolution**									
	Dialogue		**Negotiation**		**Brainstorming**		**Story telling**		**Guidance & Counselling**	
	Freg.	**%**	**Freg.**	**%**	**Freg.**	**%**	**Freg.**	**%**	**Freg.**	**%**
Dean of Student Affaire	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	13
Deans of the Faculties	2	6	2	13	-	-	-	-	2	29
Head of the Department	19	59	8	53	2	40	-	-	-	-
Security Officers	8	25	4	27	1	20	1	33	2	29
Religious Leaders	2	6	1	7	2	40	2	67	2	29
Total	32	100	15	100	5	100	3	100	7	100

KEY: Freg. = Frequency

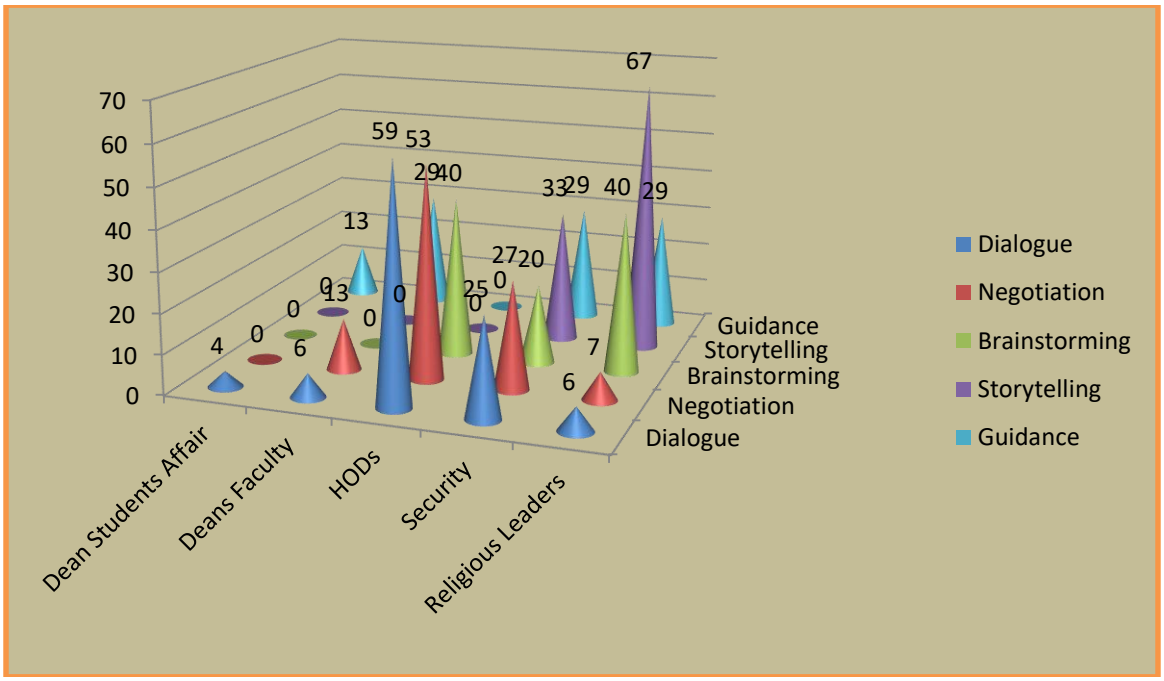


Chart3: information sharing techniques

From table 4 above, Dialogue and guidance and counselling are mostly used by Dean of Student Affairs for conflict resolution, Deans of Faculty mostly used negotiation, dialogue and guidance and counselling in conflict resolution while Heads of Department use dialogue, negotiation, and brainstorming more often in resolving conflicts. Further more, Security Officers regularly use dialogue, negotiation, storytelling, brainstorming and guidance and counselling in conflict resolution and finally, brainstorming, guidance and counselling, storytelling, negotiation and dialogue are frequently used by Religious Leaders. The analysis above revealed that its only Religious Leaders and Security Officers that used all the information sharing techniques in conflict resolution amongst erring members of the university.

It also shows that dialogue is the most information sharing technique use for conflict resolution in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The reason is because of the nature of conflict within the institution and the categories of people that are involve in conflict resolution in the University. Another reason is because dialogue allows opinion to be shared that is issue(s) in conflict to be

shared. This goes with the opinion of Mohammed (2008) that dialogue is discussion between people in which opinions are exchanged. Most conflicts in our institutions or communities today are resolved by dialogue, because it helps the mediator to know the issue behind the conflict so that best solution can be proffer for all to live in peace and harmony.

Surprisingly, brainstorming score very low in the table, this is because the bodies involve in conflict resolution are highly committed in one or two thing as such they don't have much time for brainstorming in conflict resolution. If issue in conflict and the solution are not brainstormed very well, the bodies involved in conflict management will end up creating peace but not resolving the conflict which will keep on changing dimensions that may worsen the situation.

8. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study revealed the following:

1. It was discovered that Dialogue is fairly use by many institutions involved in conflict resolution for resolving conflict
2. It was found out that Negotiation, Brainstorming, Storytelling and Guidance/Counseling were not use as tool for conflict resolution in academic areas.
3. The finding pointed out that Dean of Student Affairs and Head of the Departments do not frequently use Negotiation, Brainstorming, Story telling and Guidance/Counseling as method of conflict resolution in the University.

9. CONCLUSION

Information is an essential commodity that is required in all spheres of human endeavors. Wars are won and lost due to availability or non-availability of the right information, at the right time, in the right place, for the right person. Moreover, conflicts areas so consoled by building the bridge of information to close up the communication gap. Therefore, information today is considered an

important factor in conflict management and constitutes one of the more important factors that bring about changes in community if effectively utilized.

Information sharing is considered to be essential for development and progress of all the social structures in the community ranging from family, religious, educational institution, political institution and the rest. The development may be attributed in part to the intensive use of information. It has been asserted that for peaceful coexistence of any institution largely depends on the nature, quality, relevance, accuracy and accessibility of information.

10. RECOMMENDATION

The paper recommended that dialogue, negotiation, storytelling, guidance and counseling should be strongly used as information sharing technique for conflict resolution in the institution.

Training and retraining of bodies involved in conflict resolution on the use of information sharing techniques should be organize time to time to be able to develop skill that will end conflict not create peace.

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