

WORKPLACE CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AND MANAGERIAL SUCCESS IN STATE-OWNED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between workplace conflict resolution strategies, specifically confrontation, compromise, and avoidance and Managerial success in state-owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The research investigated how these strategies relate to, target accomplishment, and overall institutional performance. A descriptive survey design was adopted, with a stratified random sample of 212 respondents drawn from a population of 450 academic staff across six institutions. Data were collected using a validated and reliable questionnaire and analyzed with Pearson Product Moment Correlation at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that confrontation positively affected target accomplishment. Compromise significantly enhanced target accomplishment, while avoidance also target accomplishment when used strategically. The study concluded that appropriate application of conflict resolution strategies fosters Managerial efficiency, and organizational success. The study recommended that state-owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State should limit excessive confrontation, encouraging collaborative compromise, and applying selective avoidance to maintain harmony and focus on institutional goals.

Keywords: *Workplace conflict resolution strategies, Confrontation, Compromise, Avoidance Managerial success, Target accomplishment,*

Introduction

Conflict is a natural and unavoidable component of organizational life, often emerging from divergent goals, interests, and perceptions among individuals and groups (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008; Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009). In higher education institutions, administrative challenges such as resource scarcity, role overlaps, and competing priorities frequently trigger tensions that, if unmanaged, can undermine institutional performance (Thomas, 2002; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). Effective conflict resolution strategies—such as constructive confrontation, mutual compromise, and strategic avoidance—play a vital role in enhancing collaboration, fostering trust, and ensuring the smooth functioning of administrative processes (Robbins & Judge, 2019; Rahim, 2011). Empirical studies in developed contexts indicate that structured conflict management systems contribute significantly to workflow balance, goal attainment, and optimal resource utilization within organizations (Bollen & Euwema, 2013; Tjosvold et al., 2014). However, while many Western universities have formalized conflict resolution mechanisms that integrate both preventive and remedial approaches (Mayer, 2012; Wall & Callister, 1995), there is still limited evidence on how such strategies can be adapted to administrative systems with distinct governance complexities, making this an important area for further inquiry.

Statement of the Problem

In many state-owned tertiary institutions, administrative success .which involves achieving organizational goals, optimizing resources, and fostering a productive environment—has been hampered by persistent challenges in management effectiveness. Studies have shown that poor communication structures, bureaucratic delays, and inadequate leadership responsiveness often contribute to reduced efficiency in public-sector organizations (Boyne, 2002; Andrews & Boyne, 2010). In these institutions, such inefficiencies can lead to missed targets, poor staff morale, and

an inability to meet the expectations of stakeholders, including students, faculty, and government agencies. This situation undermines institutional performance and can erode public trust.

Furthermore, conflict within administrative units remains a recurring issue, often resulting from unclear job roles, competition for limited resources, and misaligned priorities among staff. Research indicates that unresolved or poorly managed conflicts tend to reduce cooperation, impair decision-making, and increase turnover intention among employees (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). In the context of state-owned tertiary institutions, such conflicts not only affect staff relationships but also slow down the implementation of policies and academic programs. Over time, this erodes operational efficiency, thereby affecting overall institutional reputation and sustainability.

The persistence of low administrative success also reflects broader structural and policy weaknesses. Without effective conflict resolution strategies, resource optimization, and leadership commitment, these institutions struggle to adapt to changing educational demands and regulatory requirements. As highlighted by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011), public organizations that fail to modernize their administrative processes risk lagging behind in service delivery and stakeholder satisfaction. In the competitive higher education landscape, such administrative weaknesses can limit the ability of state-owned tertiary institutions to attract and retain quality staff, secure funding, and deliver high-quality educational outcomes.

The persistent problem of low administrative success in state-owned tertiary institutions can be traced, in part, to the lack of developing and applying effective office conflict resolution strategies such as confrontation, compromise, and avoidance. Confrontation, when used constructively, involves directly addressing the root causes of disputes through open dialogue and fact-based discussions, fostering mutual understanding and alignment of goals (Rahim, 2002). However, in many institutions, administrators either shy away from confrontation due to fear of escalating tensions or approach it in an adversarial manner, leading to further misunderstandings and entrenched divisions. Similarly, compromise—where both parties make concessions to reach a mutually acceptable solution—is often underutilized or poorly managed, resulting in partial agreements that fail to address the underlying structural or interpersonal issues (Thomas, 1992).

Avoidance, which can be useful for de-escalating tensions temporarily, is frequently misapplied as a long-term strategy, allowing conflicts to fester and resurface with greater intensity (DeChurch & Marks, 2001). The absence of deliberate training and institutional frameworks to guide the appropriate use of these strategies means that conflicts remain unresolved, hampering teamwork, delaying decision-making, and weakening staff commitment. When effectively developed and implemented, these conflict resolution strategies can significantly improve administrative success in state-owned tertiary institutions. Constructive confrontation ensures that issues are addressed early and transparently, minimizing disruptions to workflow and fostering a culture of accountability. Compromise enables balanced solutions that consider the needs of all parties, thereby improving cooperation and reducing resistance to policy implementation. Selective and strategic avoidance can prevent unnecessary escalation in situations where emotions run high, allowing time for reflection and the identification of win-win solutions. Together, these approaches can enhance communication, streamline decision-making, and promote resource optimization, which are crucial for meeting institutional targets and maintaining stakeholder satisfaction. Ultimately, the deliberate cultivation of these strategies can transform conflict from a barrier into an opportunity for organizational learning and improvement, thereby strengthening the overall administrative capacity and sustainability of state-owned tertiary institutions (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Rahim, 2002).

Conceptual Framework

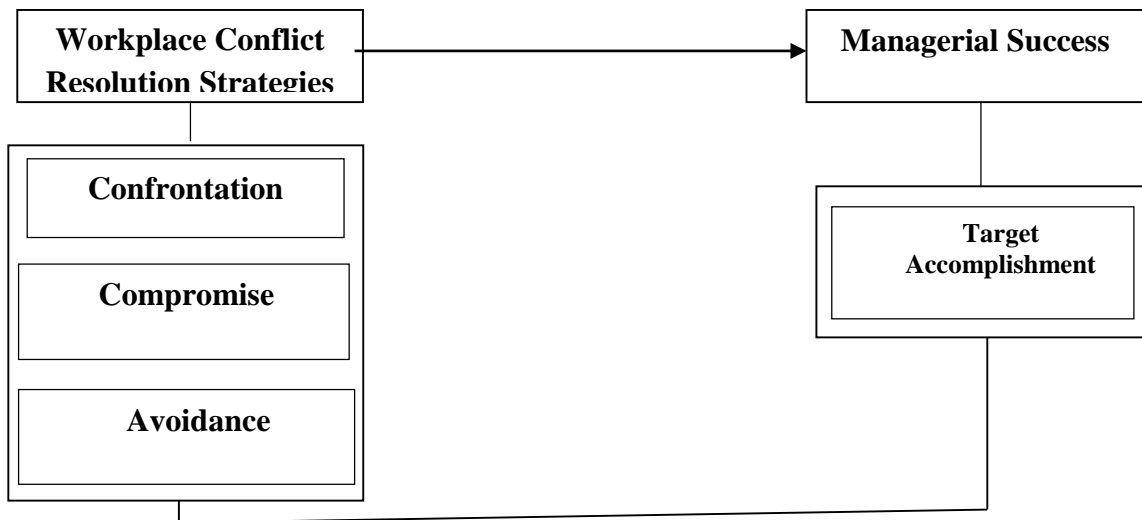


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of Workplace Conflict Resolution Strategies and managerial Success in State-Owned Tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Source: Researcher's Conceptualization (2025)

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Source: Researcher's Conceptualization (2025)

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between Office conflict resolution strategies and administrative success in State Owned Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Assess the relationship between confrontation and target accomplishment in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.
2. investigate the relationship between compromise and target accomplishment in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State
3. determine the relationship between avoidance and target accomplishment in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to guide the study

1. What is the relationship between confrontation and target accomplishment in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State?
2. How does compromise relate to target accomplishment in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State?
3. What is the relationship between avoidance and target accomplishment in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guide the study

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between confrontation and target accomplishment in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between compromise and target accomplishment in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between avoidance and target accomplishment in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it provides valuable insights into how conflict resolution strategies—specifically confrontation, compromise, and avoidance—contribute to administrative success in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions. The findings will serve as a practical resource for designing training programs and policy frameworks that equip administrators and staff with effective conflict management skills, thereby enhancing productivity, reducing workplace tension, and promoting sustainable growth in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions. Furthermore, this study adds to the existing body of knowledge on organizational behavior in the education sector.

Compromising

The middle ground is a compromising method of resolving conflicts where both partners compromise by surrendering some of their requirements to settle on an agreement that is satisfactory (Thomas and 2008, Kilmann). It is a moderate assertiveness and cooperativeness thus making it a middle ground work place conflict tactic. Farnsworth et al. (2019) mention compromise as one of the conflict-resolution styles that are necessary and help to keep the momentum moving in case complete agreement is not feasible. In this way, parties can work on priorities that they share, as well as reduce the number of less significant disagreements. Compromise when used properly saves relationships and fosters goodwill and keeps the workflow flowing. It might not however deal in detail with underlying problems, in that it tends to fix superficial problems, but not underlying causes (EBSCO Research Starters, n.d.). Therefore, the compromise has to be incorporated into a larger framework of conflict-management system to guarantee a permanent solution. Compromise is a contextual and effective tool of considering justice, swiftness, and cooperation in an organisation to the utmost.

Avoidance

The avoidance is a conflict-management approach involving avoidance or postponement in confronting conflicts which is low in assertiveness, cooperativeness (Thomas and 2008, Kilmann). It is frequently used to defuse the immediate tension, perspective or defuse emotionally charged situations. Avoidance can provide a temporary relief measure in the short run especially in cases where the conflicts are not intense or where one is in poor time to discuss. Nonetheless, studies have shown that overdependence on avoidance is likely to reduce team satisfaction and team performance (Jehn and Mannix, 2001). In an extended amount of time, unresolved problems build up, which creates resentment and communication failures (Team Research, 2020). In other workplaces like in the health sector, habitual avoidance has been associated with ineffective teamwork and results of service delivery (Kaitelidou et al., 2012). In spite of its disadvantages, avoidance can be a tactical break and then engage in an effective dialogue. Therefore, it is potentially helpful in certain situations; however, it is necessary to be prudent in its use to avoid the dysfunction of an organisation in the long term.

Managerial Success

Administrative success refers to the extent to which administrative functions and managerial activities achieve organizational goals efficiently, effectively, and sustainably. It involves the capacity of administrators to plan, organize, lead, and control resources in ways that deliver desired outcomes within established time frames and budgets (Griffin & Van Fleet, 2014). This definition extends beyond mere task completion to include the quality and relevance of outcomes in advancing the organization's mission. In contemporary settings, administrative success also encompasses employee satisfaction and alignment with broader strategic objectives (Daft, 2015). Administrators serve as the operational backbone, ensuring smooth workflow across departments and functions.

They facilitate effective communication channels that prevent misunderstandings and foster collaborative work environments. Optimal resource allocation—whether human, financial, or technological—is another core responsibility that directly influences performance outcomes. In organizations where administrative systems are efficient, operational bottlenecks are minimized and productivity is enhanced. This capacity to balance efficiency with strategic vision marks a key distinction between average and exemplary administration. Consequently, administrative success is both a managerial responsibility and a strategic necessity for sustained growth.

Target Accomplishment

Target accomplishment refers to the ability of an organization or department to achieve predetermined objectives within specified timelines and allocated resources. It is a key indicator of both operational efficiency and strategic effectiveness, as it reflects how well plans are translated into results. According to Locke and Latham (2013), clearly defined goals enhance focus, motivation, and performance by providing employees with measurable outcomes to work toward. This clarity ensures that individuals and teams align their efforts with the organization's broader mission and vision. Managerial success is closely tied to the consistency with which targets are met, as it reflects competence, coordination, and optimal resource utilization (Shantz & Latham, 2011). Meeting targets also helps in establishing performance benchmarks that guide future planning and decision-making. When goals are not achieved, it signals potential gaps in strategy, execution, or resource allocation that must be addressed. For organizations operating in competitive environments, consistent target accomplishment strengthens credibility and market positioning. Furthermore, achieving set targets boosts employee morale by demonstrating that collective efforts lead to tangible results. Overall, target accomplishment is both a measurement of past performance and a predictor of future success.

Confrontation and Managerial Success

In a positive manner, confrontation can lead to the success of managers, and it can create transparency, accountability, and problem-solving (Rahim, 2011; Robbins and Judge, 2019). It allows the managers operating in the State-Owned Tertiary Institutions to resolve conflicts on their own, explain misunderstanding efforts, and facilitate the smooth running of the operations. Ojo and Abolade (2018) noted that open communication and timely confrontation improved coordination and minimised bureaucratic delays in the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. According to Thomas (2008), administrative efficiency in the long term is supported by direct involvement in conflicts and trust. Timely challenge by leaders will foster team unity and reduce the reoccurrence of issues that compromised the institutional objectives (DeDreu and Gelfand, 2012). Positive confrontation also allows detection of the inefficiencies early hence making corrective action easy to take. On the other hand, inadequately handled confrontation can only increase tensions and destroy professional relationships (Jehn and Bendersky, 2003). Directed by emotional intelligence and institutionalised as a core part of organisational policy, confrontation is a strategic tool of addressing managerial bottlenecks and increasing the institutional excellence (Omisore and Abiodun, 2014).

Compromise and Managers Success

Compromise leads to the success of managers as it ensures cooperation, maintenance of relations and timely decision making in complicated management situations (Lewicki et al., 2016). In State-Owned Tertiary Institutions, it assists in balancing departmental interests at the expense and in the maintenance of institutional development. In a research, Mugo and Gichuhi (2019) found that harmony between administrative employees enhanced coordination and time wastage when it came to service delivery. According to De 3 and Gelfand, moderate assertiveness and cooperativeness improve performance and efficiency of managers (2012). A compromise also fosters the trust and team spirit as it is a guarantee that everyone is heard and treated justly (Robbins and Judge, 2019).

The authors discovered that mutual concessions enhanced employee satisfaction and resource utilisation in the institutions of the state (Igbokwe Ibeto et al., 2015). Nevertheless, excessive use of compromise can result in a superficial kind of agreement that does not consider underlying causes, thus resulting to repeated conflicts (Thomas, 2008; Jehn and Bendersky, 2003). In this regard, compromise must be associated with organised follow-up and free communication, which will achieve sustainable managerial enhancement (Omisore and Abiodun, 2014).

Avoidance and Managerial Success

The conflict strategy of avoidance has the potential to either favour or hinder managerial success, which is based on the timing and execution (Rahim, 2011; Robbins and Judge, 2019). In the State-Owned Tertiary Institutions, it can pause the process provisionally by having time to think or cool off emotionally. Tjosvold and Sun (2002) discovered that strategic avoidance maintained continuity in the workflow at a critical time when operations were taking place by putting non urgent conflicts on hold. However, overly avoiding will only compound the unsolved problems hence making efficiency and trust less effective (De Dreu and Gelfand, 2012). According to Kaitelidou et al. (2012), constant avoidance resulted in breakdowns in communications and low delivery of services in health institutions. In a similar manner, Jehn and Mannix (2001) attributed conflict avoidance to poor team satisfaction and performance. As an intentional strategy, avoidance can serve as a provisional measure, which will be topped with the help of well-organised resolution conferences (The Workplace Mediator, 2024; Omisore and Abiodun, 2014). Therefore, it is best used as a short-term plan which is followed up by positive engagement, thus resulting in workflow stability and the health of an organisation in the long-term.

Interest-Based Relational (IBR) model emphasises resolution of conflicts and preservation of the relationships by focusing on the mutual interests as opposed to fixed position (Fisher, Ury and Patton, 2011). This framework is useful in preventing the development of staff and departmental conflicts into personal animosities in the State-Owned Tertiary Institutions. Administrators are able to tackle the problems in an objective and cooperative manner by untangling people out of the problem. Positive conflict according to the IBR model helps to clear up misunderstandings but does not jeopardise trust (Rahim, 2017). Similarly, compromise as an element of the IBR is aimed at meeting the fundamental needs of all the participants, as opposed to splitting differences (Deutsch, Coleman and Marcus, 2014). The use of IBR principles encourages morale, teamwork, and mutual respect which are some of the items needed in the administration efficiency. It also enhances communication thus making sure that even in the state of conflict, productivity and service delivery does not diminish. Finally, IBR methodology fosters the spirit of teamwork and common cause, which makes organisations successful over the long term.

Theoretical Framework

Interest-Based Relational Approach (IBR Theory) – Fisher and Ury (1981)

The Human Relations Theory developed by Elton Mayo assumes that employee relations, their morale and well-being play a significant role in productivity and organisational harmony (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 2000). When relating the theory to conflict resolution, communication, recognition, and participation are emphasised as significant in lessening conflicts and success of the administration. In State-Owned Tertiary Institutions, where there is a lot of intricate academic and administrative interactions, there is no way that effective coordination can take place in the absence of strong interpersonal relationships. Positive conflict and equal compromise can be used in line with this theory as they encourage inclusiveness, respect, and joint accountability (Robbins and Judge, 2019). When the employees feel appreciated and listened to, then they will tend to solve the disagreements in a collaborative rather than avoidant manner. Mullins (2016) and Armstrong (2020) found that the inclusion of managerial practises enhances the attainment of goals and use of resources. Organisations that focus on employee involvement have a smooth running and better

service delivery. In turn the Human Relations Theory proves that trust, respect and communication are not only the moral requirements but the strategic facilitators of the long-term managerial success.

Empirical Review

Adebayo and Omisore (2019) investigated the influence of conflict resolution strategies on organizational effectiveness in selected Nigerian universities. The study focused on how confrontation, compromise, and avoidance techniques affect administrative success, measured in terms of target accomplishment, smooth work-life, and resource maximization. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, and the population comprised 1,215 senior administrative staff across five state-owned universities in South-West Nigeria. A sample size of 312 was selected using stratified random sampling. The researchers used a structured questionnaire titled "Conflict Resolution Strategies and Administrative Effectiveness Scale (CRSAES)" with a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.86. Data were analyzed using mean scores and multiple regression analysis at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that constructive confrontation and compromise significantly enhance administrative efficiency and employee cooperation, while avoidance had a minimal but sometimes necessary role in preventing escalation of disputes. The authors concluded that conflict resolution strategies directly influence administrative harmony and recommended continuous training in interest-based conflict management.

Rahim and Bonoma (2002) examined the relationship between conflict management styles and organizational effectiveness among academic administrators in U.S. higher education institutions. The study adopted a quantitative survey approach involving 428 administrators from 20 state-owned universities across different U.S. states. Data were collected using the "Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II" (ROCI-II), which measures integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising styles. The reliability coefficients ranged from 0.77 to 0.89 across dimensions. Regression analysis indicated that integrating (constructive confrontation) and compromising styles were the most effective predictors of administrative success, as they promoted collaborative problem-solving and reduced interpersonal tensions. Conversely, dominating styles were associated with lower employee morale and hindered resource maximization. The authors emphasized the importance of fostering open communication and aligning conflict resolution strategies with institutional goals.

Onwuka, Eze, and Ugwu (2021) studied conflict resolution strategies and administrative performance in state polytechnics in South-East Nigeria. The study population consisted of 984 administrative personnel from five state polytechnics, with a sample size of 278 determined through Taro Yamane's formula. Using a structured questionnaire with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.82, the researchers collected and analyzed data through descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation at a 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed that compromise strategies significantly contributed to resource maximization and smooth workflow balance, while avoidance strategies were counterproductive when overused. Confrontation, when applied constructively, improved target accomplishment by addressing root causes of disputes. The study recommended adopting a blended approach that balances assertiveness with empathy to maintain administrative stability.

Morris and Laipple (2015) explored how conflict resolution training impacts administrative success among faculty and staff in public universities in the United Kingdom. The study employed a quasi-experimental design, involving 243 participants from three state-owned universities who underwent an eight-week conflict management training program based on the Interest-Based Relational (IBR) approach. Pre- and post-intervention surveys measured administrative success indicators, including productivity, staff retention, and interdepartmental cooperation. Results indicated a significant improvement in conflict-handling competencies, with compromise and constructive confrontation strategies leading to better teamwork and faster decision-making. The authors concluded that structured conflict resolution training directly enhances administrative effectiveness and recommended its integration into higher education staff development programs.

Akinyemi and Abiodun (2019) investigated the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and administrative efficiency in public universities in South-West Nigeria. The study focused on how confrontation, compromise, and avoidance approaches influenced decision-making, staff harmony, and smooth workflow. The population consisted of 1,540 academic and non-academic staff across five public universities, with a sample size of 310 respondents selected using stratified random sampling. The researchers adopted a descriptive survey design and employed a self-structured questionnaire, "Conflict Resolution and Administrative Efficiency Scale (CRAES)," with a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.86. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation at a 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed that constructive confrontation and compromise positively enhanced administrative efficiency, while excessive avoidance strategies had a negative impact on decision-making speed. The authors concluded that adopting cooperative conflict resolution strategies is essential for sustaining administrative success in Nigerian universities.

Alzawahreh and Khasawneh (2011) studied the effects of conflict management styles on job satisfaction and administrative performance among academic staff in Jordanian public universities. The research targeted 780 academic and administrative staff, with a valid sample of 250 respondents selected through simple random sampling. The study employed Rahim's model of conflict management and used a structured questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.88. Data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The results revealed that integrating and compromising styles had the highest positive impact on job satisfaction and administrative performance, while avoiding and dominating styles were negatively correlated with performance outcomes. The study concluded that effective conflict resolution directly contributes to improved communication, higher morale, and smoother administrative processes in universities.

A review of existing literature reveals that while several studies have examined conflict resolution strategies in organizational contexts, there are notable gaps that require further investigation. First, much of the existing research has focused on corporate organizations and private institutions, with limited emphasis on state-owned tertiary institutions, particularly within the Nigerian context. This creates a gap in understanding how conflict resolution dynamics unfold in bureaucratic and politically influenced academic environments.

Second, many foreign studies have explored conflict resolution within higher education but often center on faculty–student disputes or collective bargaining, leaving managerial success indicators—such as smooth workflow balance, target accomplishment, and resource maximization—underexplored. In contrast, Nigerian studies tend to focus on general conflict types and their effects on productivity, without systematically linking specific strategies such as confrontation, compromise, and avoidance to measurable managerial success outcomes.

Third, while theoretical frameworks such as the Interest-Based Relational approach and Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode have been applied in organizational conflict research, there is limited empirical work integrating these frameworks with quantifiable performance metrics in academic administration. This lack of integration makes it difficult to establish evidence-based recommendations tailored to the unique structure and culture of state-owned tertiary institutions. Finally, there is a scarcity of comparative studies that juxtapose Nigerian experiences with international best practices, which could provide valuable insights for adapting globally tested strategies to the peculiar realities of Nigerian state-owned tertiary institutions.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect data from a representative sample and describe existing relationships between variables at a particular point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design was suitable for assessing how office conflict resolution strategies—specifically confrontation, compromise, and avoidance—relate to administrative success in state-owned tertiary institutions in

Rivers State. The design further allowed the collection of standardized responses from a large number of participants, facilitating generalization of the findings to similar institutions. The population of the study comprised 450 academic staff members drawn from six state-owned tertiary institutions, including Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic, Kenule Beeson Saro-Wiwa Polytechnic, Rivers State College of Health Science and Management Technology, and the Rivers State School of Nursing. These staff members—professors, deans, registrars, heads of departments, and lecturers—were selected because they are directly involved in administration, policy implementation, and conflict management. A stratified random sampling technique was adopted to ensure proportional representation of staff categories across the institutions, after which simple random sampling was used to select respondents within each stratum. Using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations, a sample size of 212 respondents was determined from the population of 450 at a 5% margin of error. The main instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Office Conflict Resolution Strategies and Administrative Success Questionnaire (OCRASQ). It consisted of three sections: Section A collected demographic information, Section B contained items measuring office conflict resolution strategies (confrontation, compromise, and avoidance) adapted from Rahim's Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (Rahim, 2002), and Section C measured administrative success in terms of smooth workflow, target accomplishment, resource maximization, and staff satisfaction. Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. To ensure validity, the draft questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation by three experts in Educational Management, including the researcher's supervisor, whose feedback was used to refine ambiguous or unclear items. The reliability of the instrument was tested through a pilot study conducted with 30 respondents from a state-owned tertiary institution outside the study area, and the internal consistency of the items was measured using Cronbach's Alpha. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above was deemed acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). For the data collection procedure, the researcher obtained an introduction letter from the department and presented it to the heads of the selected institutions to seek permission to administer the questionnaire. Questionnaires were distributed in person during work hours, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity to promote honest responses. Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately or within an agreed period. Finally, data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency counts were used to summarize demographic and response data, while inferential statistics, specifically Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), were applied to test the relationship between each conflict resolution strategy and administrative success. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.

Data Analysis

This section deals with how the results are presented and interpreted. This was accomplished in a variety of ways, including the use of charts and contingency tables to illustrate frequency and data distribution. The State-owned Tertiary institutions in Rivers State received 212 copies of the questionnaire. 198 questionnaires were filled out and returned since they were relevant for data analysis. The response rate of 198 out of 212 questionnaires, representing approximately 93.4%, has several important implications for the study. First, it indicates a high level of engagement and cooperation from the respondents, suggesting that the findings are likely to reflect the true perceptions and experiences of academic and administrative staff in the state-owned tertiary institutions. This high response rate enhances the reliability and validity of the data, reducing the likelihood of non-response bias that could otherwise distort the results (Fowler, 2014).

Test of Hypotheses Bivariate Analysis)

Test of Hypotheses 1

Ho₁ There is no significant relationship between confrontation and target accomplishment in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

Table 1: Relationship between Confrontation and Target Accomplishment
 Correlations

		Confrontation	Target Accomplishment
Confrontation	Pearson Correlation	1	.655**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	198	198
Target Accomplishment	Pearson Correlation	.655**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	198	198

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Research Study (2025)

The correlation analysis revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between confrontation and target accomplishment ($r = 0.655$, $p < 0.01$). This finding indicated that as the practice of constructive confrontation increased, so did the likelihood of achieving organizational and individual work targets. Employees who addressed conflicts directly and engaged in open, transparent communication were better positioned to clarify expectations, remove performance barriers, and align their efforts with institutional goals. In State-Owned Tertiary Institutions, where interdependence between academic and administrative functions is high, the ability to resolve misunderstandings promptly ensured that projects progressed without unnecessary delays, thereby facilitating the timely accomplishment of targets.

The strength of this correlation suggested that confrontation, when approached constructively, functioned as a catalyst for enhanced accountability and operational focus. By bringing issues to light rather than allowing them to fester, employees and managers could identify the root causes of performance gaps and implement corrective measures. This aligns with empirical studies by De Dreu and Gelfand (2012) and Thomas (2008), which highlight that direct, problem-solving-oriented confrontation fosters greater productivity and goal alignment in complex work settings. The statistical significance ($p < 0.01$) confirmed that the relationship was not due to random chance, adding weight to the assertion that confrontation is an effective driver of target accomplishment. Furthermore, the findings implied that the absence of constructive confrontation might hinder goal attainment by allowing unresolved disputes, resource misallocations, or procedural inefficiencies to persist. When confrontation was applied respectfully and collaboratively, it not only resolved immediate conflicts but also reinforced a culture of mutual accountability and commitment to results. This proactive approach encouraged continuous feedback, fostered team cohesion, and motivated employees to stay focused on achieving set objectives. Therefore, the correlation results strongly advocate for the integration of structured confrontation training and communication skill development into institutional policies to enhance target accomplishment and overall organizational performance.

Ho₂: Compromise has no significant relationship with target accomplishment in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

Table 2: Relationship between compromise and target accomplishment

		Compromise	Target Accomplishment
Compromise	Pearson Correlation	1	.601**

	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	198	198
Target Accomplishment	Pearson Correlation	.601**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	198	198

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Research Study (2025)

The correlation analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between compromise and target accomplishment ($r = 0.601$, $p < 0.01$). This finding implied that employees who demonstrated a willingness to adjust their positions and work toward mutually beneficial solutions were more likely to achieve the targets set for them. In the context of State-Owned Tertiary Institutions, where diverse academic, managerial, and operational goals often require input from multiple stakeholders, compromise provided a practical pathway to reconciling differing priorities without stalling progress. By focusing on shared objectives rather than rigidly defending personal or departmental interests, employees were able to maintain forward momentum and ensure that deadlines, performance benchmarks, and strategic milestones were met.

The strength of the correlation suggested that compromise was not merely a soft skill but a measurable contributor to institutional productivity and performance. By fostering cooperation, compromise minimized delays caused by prolonged disagreements and reduced the likelihood of projects falling behind schedule. These findings align with the work of Lewicki et al. (2016) and De Dreu & Gelfand (2012), who observed that compromise promotes constructive dialogue, adaptability, and coordinated action factors essential for effective goal attainment. Furthermore, the statistical significance of the relationship ($p < 0.01$) indicated that the link between compromise and target accomplishment was consistent and reliable, reinforcing its value as a conflict resolution strategy in academic environments.

Additionally, the data suggested that cultivating a culture of compromise could strengthen organizational capacity to meet both short-term and long-term objectives. While compromise might occasionally involve sacrificing certain individual preferences, it ensured that collective goals were prioritized, thereby safeguarding institutional credibility and stakeholder trust. In settings where interdepartmental collaboration is crucial, compromise enabled smoother resource sharing, clearer communication, and a stronger commitment to shared outcomes. Therefore, embedding compromise into institutional policies, staff training, and leadership practices could significantly enhance the likelihood of consistent target accomplishment while preserving harmony and mutual respect within the workplace.

H₀₂: Avoidance has no significant relationship with target accomplishment in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

Table 3: Relationship between Avoidance and Target Accomplishment Correlations

	Avoidance	Target Accomplishment
Avoidance	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.611**
	N	198
Smooth workflow	Pearson Correlation	.611**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	198

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Research Study (2025)

The correlation analysis in Table 3 indicated a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between avoidance and target accomplishment ($r = 0.611$, $p < 0.01$). This finding implied that when employees tactfully steered clear of unnecessary disputes, they were better positioned to focus their time, energy, and attention on completing assigned tasks and meeting institutional goals. In the context of State-Owned Tertiary Institutions, where academic, administrative, and operational targets are often interdependent, minimizing engagement in conflicts that do not directly contribute to problem-solving allowed staff to maintain momentum toward goal achievement. Avoidance, when used strategically, served as a mechanism for preserving mental clarity, reducing workplace distractions, and ensuring that individuals remained focused on their core responsibilities, thereby facilitating consistent progress toward performance benchmarks. The strength and statistical significance of the relationship suggested that selective avoidance could be a practical conflict management tool for enhancing productivity and target realization. This supports the observations of Rahim (2011) and De Dreu & Gelfand (2012), who noted that avoiding low-priority disputes can safeguard organizational efficiency and enable employees to channel their efforts into more impactful activities. In State-Owned Tertiary Institutions, where deadlines for academic calendars, program implementation, and administrative reporting are critical, strategically bypassing non-essential disagreements helped reduce delays and maintain workflow continuity. Moreover, by avoiding emotionally charged but minor conflicts, staff could prevent unnecessary strain on interpersonal relationships, thereby promoting smoother collaboration on target-oriented projects.

However, the results also pointed to the need for balance in the application of avoidance as a conflict resolution strategy. While the data demonstrated that avoidance could positively influence target accomplishment, habitual evasion of critical issues could hinder accountability, mask underlying problems, and jeopardize long-term performance outcomes. As highlighted by Robbins & Judge (2019), avoidance should complement, rather than replace, more direct forms of conflict engagement, especially when disputes involve essential resources, deadlines, or policy compliance. To maximize the constructive potential of avoidance, institutions could integrate it into a broader conflict resolution framework that includes confrontation and compromise, ensuring that critical issues are addressed in a timely manner while unnecessary disputes are minimized. In this way, avoidance can serve as a deliberate, goal-oriented choice that supports both immediate task completion and sustainable institutional success.

Discussion of Findings

Relationship between Confrontation and Target Accomplishment

Confrontation, when applied as a proactive and constructive conflict resolution method, can directly support the accomplishment of institutional targets by eliminating performance barriers and ensuring role clarity. In State-Owned Tertiary Institutions, where academic, managerial, and operational goals are interdependent, timely confrontation enables the identification of root causes behind underperformance before they escalate. This process fosters a shared understanding of expectations, ensuring that individual contributions are aligned with broader organizational objectives. Research by Thomas (2008) emphasizes that direct engagement with issues improves decision-making efficiency and strengthens accountability structures. Similarly, De Dreu and Gelfand (2012) found that constructive conflict handling positively correlates with productivity and team cohesion. Additional studies, such as Rahim and Bonoma (1979), demonstrate that open confrontation encourages innovation by prompting deeper problem analysis. Moreover, Tjosvold (2006) highlights that confronting disagreements can enhance mutual respect and trust, both of which are essential for sustained goal attainment. When staff and managers engage in structured confrontation, they are better positioned to coordinate resources, streamline workflows, and avoid duplicated efforts. This alignment between people and processes creates operational momentum, increasing the likelihood of meeting institutional deadlines and performance benchmarks. In

essence, healthy confrontation transforms conflict into a tool for driving collective progress toward defined targets.

The relationship between confrontation and target accomplishment is reinforced by evidence showing that unresolved conflicts often lead to inefficiencies and missed objectives. Jehn and Mannix (2001) observed that teams addressing disagreements constructively achieved higher performance outcomes than those that avoided conflict altogether. In the higher education sector, timely confrontation ensures that teaching schedules, research activities, and administrative functions proceed without unnecessary disruption. By tackling issues early, institutions can prevent small operational setbacks from becoming significant obstacles to target achievement. Furthermore, constructive confrontation promotes a culture of continuous improvement, where challenges are seen as opportunities for refinement rather than threats. This proactive stance increases adaptability, enabling institutions to adjust quickly to policy changes, budget constraints, or shifting academic priorities. Studies by Amason (1996) also confirm that task-related confrontation leads to more effective strategic decisions, which in turn enhance goal attainment. Leaders who model this behavior encourage staff to raise concerns promptly, fostering an environment where solutions are developed collaboratively. Over time, this approach reduces resistance to change, as employees view confrontation not as a personal attack but as a shared problem-solving process. Ultimately, when embedded in institutional culture, confrontation becomes a catalyst for consistently achieving and often exceeding—organizational targets.

Relationship between Compromise and Target Accomplishment

Compromise can play a crucial role in supporting target accomplishment in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions by enabling timely decision-making and preserving team unity in the face of differing opinions. In these institutions, where academic, managerial, and developmental objectives must often be met within strict timelines, compromise allows for swift resolution of disputes that might otherwise delay progress. By encouraging each party to yield partially, it creates a balance between individual preferences and collective goals. Lewicki et al. (2016) note that compromise promotes cooperation by ensuring that no stakeholder feels entirely excluded from the decision-making process. Similarly, De Dreu and Gelfand (2012) found that compromise helps organizations maintain focus on shared strategic priorities, even in diverse teams. Research by Rahim (2011) further supports the notion that compromise can prevent long-term conflicts by diffusing tensions early. This approach also contributes to the efficient allocation of resources, as it reduces the time and energy spent on prolonged disagreements. In academic contexts, compromise ensures that teaching schedules, research initiatives, and student services proceed without disruption. It also helps maintain morale, as staff feel their perspectives have been acknowledged, even if not fully adopted. Ultimately, compromise becomes a practical tool for aligning diverse interests with institutional targets.

The influence of compromise on target accomplishment is particularly evident when dealing with multi-stakeholder projects in tertiary institutions. In situations where consensus is unattainable, compromise ensures that minimum requirements for success are agreed upon, allowing work to progress without deadlock. Tjosvold (2006) emphasizes that this strategy maintains a cooperative climate, which is essential for sustaining productivity and achieving deadlines. In addition, Amason (1996) observed that balanced conflict resolution approaches, such as compromise, contribute to more informed and pragmatic decision-making. By fostering an environment where concessions are viewed as mutual investments in collective success, institutions can meet both short-term and long-term objectives. Compromise also reduces the risk of missed opportunities by ensuring that key initiatives are implemented on schedule. In managerial operations, this means budget cycles are completed on time, policy changes are enacted smoothly, and accreditation requirements are met. Moreover, compromise can act as a bridge toward more collaborative strategies, serving as a stepping stone for deeper problem-solving in the future. This adaptability enhances the institution's

resilience in the face of challenges. In the end, compromise not only supports the completion of immediate goals but also strengthens the organization's capacity for sustained success.

Relationship between Avoidance and Target Accomplishment

Avoidance can hinder target accomplishment in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions when it prevents timely action on critical performance-related issues. By sidestepping difficult discussions, managers and staff risk allowing problems to persist, thereby reducing efficiency and delaying the completion of essential tasks. De Dreu and Gelfand (2012) note that while avoidance may be useful for minor or non-essential matters, applying it to goal-critical challenges can weaken accountability. In academic contexts, this could result in missed accreditation deadlines, ineffective policy implementation, and disruptions to program delivery. Kaitelidou et al. (2012) observed in healthcare environments that avoidance in task-related conflicts often impairs coordination, a finding that parallels challenges faced in educational institutions. Prolonged avoidance can also reduce clarity on responsibilities, making it harder for teams to align their efforts toward shared objectives. Robbins and Judge (2019) emphasize that unresolved disputes can create bottlenecks that slow down decision-making, especially in complex organizations. Without intervention, these delays can cascade, affecting broader institutional timelines. The absence of timely confrontation may also erode trust, reducing motivation to meet agreed-upon targets. As such, excessive reliance on avoidance in goal-related contexts can undermine both operational performance and strategic success.

However, when used selectively, avoidance can serve as a short-term tactic that indirectly supports target accomplishment by preserving focus on urgent priorities. In situations where immediate engagement would cause unnecessary distraction, temporary avoidance allows teams to maintain momentum on time-sensitive projects (Rahim, 2011). Jehn and Mannix (2001) found that avoiding certain interpersonal disputes during critical project phases helped some teams protect their deadlines. In State-Owned Tertiary Institutions, this could mean postponing less urgent conflicts during peak academic seasons, such as examinations or registration periods. Tjosvold and Sun (2002) argue that strategic avoidance can be functional when it enables parties to gather information or prepare more effective solutions before addressing the conflict. Nevertheless, this benefit is contingent upon revisiting the issue once the critical period has passed. Without structured follow-up, unresolved problems may resurface at pivotal moments, jeopardizing future targets. Verywell Mind (2017) warns that habitual avoidance fosters stress and reduces long-term productivity, even if it appears to preserve short-term efficiency. To balance these outcomes, institutions should integrate avoidance into a wider conflict resolution framework that includes scheduled problem-solving sessions. This approach ensures that temporary calm does not come at the expense of sustained goal achievement.

Summary of Findings

The following findings were obtained from the hypotheses tested in this Study

H_{A2}: There is a significant relationship between confrontation and target accomplishment in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

H_{A3}: Compromise has a significant relationship with target accomplishment in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

H_{A4}: Avoidance has a significant relationship with target accomplishment in State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State.

Conclusion

The conclusions of the study indicated that conflict resolution strategies—specifically confrontation, compromise, and avoidance—played a significant role in shaping administrative outcomes in state-owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Confrontation was found to significantly enhance target accomplishment suggesting that direct engagement with issues can drive the achievement of

institutional goals. Compromise demonstrated a significant positive relationship with target accomplishment, highlighting its value in fostering cooperation, reducing tension, and promoting a harmonious work environment that supports goal achievement. Similarly, avoidance, when applied strategically, was also positively related to target accomplishment, implying that deferring or sidestepping non-critical disputes can help maintain stability and focus on priority objectives. Overall, the findings underscored the importance of applying these strategies thoughtfully to balance harmony, efficiency, and performance in tertiary institutions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, and the conclusions deduced in this study, it therefore became very necessary to put forward the following recommendations;

1. Use structured confrontation methods, such as formal meetings, to identify and address inefficiencies to improve target accomplishment.
2. Leverage compromise during decision-making to ensure goals are met without unnecessary conflict.
3. Apply avoidance selectively to defuse minor disputes and maintain workplace harmony.

Contributions to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge by demonstrating how different conflict resolution strategies confrontation, compromise, and avoidance impact managerial success in state-owned tertiary institutions. It provides empirical evidence linking conflict management approaches to smooth workflow and target accomplishment. The findings offer practical insights for institutional leaders on selecting appropriate strategies to enhance organizational efficiency. Additionally, the study enriches the literature on managerial performance by contextualizing these strategies within the Nigerian tertiary education sector.

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