

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS PREDICTOR OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AMONG STUDENTS IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES OF NORTH CENTRAL, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management among learners in Federal universities of North Central, Nigeria. The study used a correlational research design. The general population for The research covered 146,252 undergraduate pupils in 7 Federal universities in North Central, Nigeria. A sample of 754 students was drawn from four Federal universities in North central Nigeria using proportionate, stratified sampling technique. Data was collected using an adapted version of the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale and the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. Simple regression analysis was used to examine the data collected. The results of According to the report, self-awareness is an important predictor of conflict management among Federal university students in North Central, Nigeria and that empathy is a significant predictor of conflict management among Federal university students in North Central, Nigeria. Considering these conclusions, it was suggested that Federal universities ought to host workshops, seminars, and short courses aimed at improving students' self-awareness and empathy skills in order to help manage cases of conflict that may arise in various universities. It was also recommended that Emotional intelligence skills such as empathy be incorporated into general studies or entrepreneurship education courses of universities to ensure that all students acquire vital interpersonal skills.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Self-Awareness, Empathy, conflict management.

Introduction

Universities are environments characterized by diversity, where Students come together from a variety of sociocultural, economic, and religious backgrounds. to pursue academic goals.

This convergence often results in varied opinions, interests, and expectations which, while enriching, can also give rise to interpersonal conflicts. Conflict among students is not uncommon and may stem from differences in personality, misunderstandings during group projects, peer competition, or even clashes in values and beliefs. Over the past few years, there has been a rise in concern over the prevalence of the student conflicts within Nigerian universities. Reports of disagreements escalating into physical confrontations, damaging social relationships, and negatively impacting academic focus are not uncommon. Despite the presence of counseling units and institutional policies designed to promote harmony, the challenge persists, suggesting that underlying individual competencies necessary for managing conflicts may be lacking. Conflict is an inevitable phenomenon due to people's complexity and diversity. Especially within the university system. Differences in views, ideologies, emotions, thoughts, attitudes, personalities, cultures, and environmental elements all contribute to human complexity and diversity. The types of disputes that arise within the management process of Federal Universities inside North Central, Nigeria differs from one institution to another. Conflicts between students, between students and teachers, and between teachers and the school administration are all possible within the educational system. Interactions between members of a certain group give rise to conflict within the institution. The rate with which disputes arise in Federal universities in the Federal universities of Nigeria may hinder the efficient instruction and learning required to meet educational objectives, necessitating the right management of conflict (Rotimi, 2020).

In 2020, students' conflict in North Central Nigerian universities were driven by poor funding, inadequate facilities and increased school fees. This often resulted in violent confrontations, closures and disruptions to academic calendar. Therefore, Ineffectively managed conflicts can turn into dangerous circumstances by causing tension that lowers instructors' morale in carrying out their duties, which hinders effective teaching and learning. (Ndum & Maris, 2013). Emotional intelligence has become a psychological concept of interest in recognizing how people navigate social complexities. It describes the capacity to see, comprehend, regulate, and efficiently manage emotions in self and in relating with others. Emotional intelligence encompasses key domains such as self-awareness, control over emotions, empathy, drive, and social abilities all of which are relevant in managing interpersonal disputes. Studies have indicated that people with higher The ability to feel emotions tend to be better at resolving conflicts amicably, maintaining healthier relationships, and fostering collaborative environments (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011). In general and in the context of education, emotions are the main forces behind attitudes and behaviours that impact both mental and physical health. Emotional intelligence comprises of various components or aspects among which comprises of self-awareness and empathy.

Kendra (2024) defined self-awareness as the capacity to concentrate on oneself as well as how One's ideas, feelings, and behaviours all conform to internal norms. Self-knowledge describes how A single person consciously understands his/her character, feeling and desires. It is

the condition or capacity for seeing, feeling, or being aware of things, events, or sensory patterns. An observer at this level of consciousness can validate sensory information without necessarily comprehending it. self-The experience of a common social identity and collective self-consciousness are related to awareness. From this perspective self-awareness indicates a conscious understanding of one's place in a larger, interconnected group. People from different cultures and social groupings may have the "we feeling" or the "sense of us." Social unity can be experienced by individuals through the experience of a collectively shared social identity. Social awareness may also stimulate working towards a common goal. Ayesa and Huma (2025)), stressed that self-awareness tend to have a high impact on academic achievement which will subsequently reveal the leadership qualities in the students.

Self-empathy on the other hand, is the capacity to understand or feel what others are experiencing. From within their frame of experience, that is, the capacity to place Oneself in another's position. It encompasses understanding the emotions of others or how they feel. Types of empathy include cognitive empathy, somatic empathy and spiritual empathy (Read, 2019). Apart from self-empathy, another essential component of emotional intelligence is self-awareness. Self-awareness refers to the act of extending empathy to one's self in instances of perceived inadequacy, failure, or general suffering. A student who exhibits a self-empathy feelings will put other classmates into considerations, when solving problem and share the solution with them. He will be ready to share the solutions with them. He will be ready to share ideas with others and likewise learn from them as they cooperatively solve problems together.

Another vital component of emotional skills is self-awareness. Given the critical nature of peer interactions in university life, understanding how emotional intelligence predicts students' approach to conflict management is essential. It holds implications not only for students' personal development but also for creating peaceful academic communities that support learning and holistic well-being.

Statement of the Problem

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interactions, especially in diverse social settings like universities. However, the inability of students in Federal universities (especially within North Central, Nigeria) to handle conflicts constructively has led to strained peer relationships, disruptions in academic work, psychological distress, and in extreme cases, violence. Various researchers and stakeholders have attributed this ugly trend to the poor climate inherent in most of the universities while others have blamed it on poor management strategies adopted by managers of higher institutions of learning in managing conflict within the school system. There is however a growing concern that other factors may be responsible for this ugly trend in student achievement and prominent among such factors is the unbalanced state of the learners in terms of self-awareness-getting to know who really, they are as individuals and empathy-understanding and

sharing the feelings of others. The emotional state of students in the university system has been worrisome as most of them have not been able to exhibit a considerable level of emotional intelligence in the course of managing conflicts within the university system. As a result, the rate of conflict within the universities of North Central, Nigeria been alarming and most times, escalates into acts of violence. Despite these growing concerns, there has been limited research on the specific influence on how emotional intelligence of students predicts conflict management among students in Federal Universities of North Central, Nigeria. The aim of learning in any higher institution of learning is to attain improved learning outcomes, but this may never become a reality if learners are not guided towards enhancing their emotional intelligence skills. It is based on this realization that the current study is set to investigate emotional intelligence of students as a predictor of conflict management examine among students in federal universities of North Central, Nigeria

Aim/Objective of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate emotional intelligence as predictor of conflict management among students in federal universities of north central, Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. examine the extent to which self-awareness predicts conflict management among federal university students in North Central, Nigeria.
2. determine the extent to which empathy predicts conflict management among federal university students in North Central, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions will be answered in the course of this study

1. To what extent does self-awareness predict conflict management among Federal University students?
2. To what extent does empathy predict conflict management among Nigerian university students?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Self-awareness does not significantly predict conflict management among Federal university students in North Central Nigeria.
2. empathy does not significantly predict conflict management among Federal university students in North Central, Nigeria.

Theoretical Review

Peter Salovey and John Mayer ability model as well as The mixed model of emotional intelligence developed by The mixed model of emotional intelligence developed by Daniel

Goleman was adopted for the study. Mayer defined Four separate yet connected cognitive skills make up emotional intelligence. emotional skills: seeing, utilising, understanding, and managing feelings. Unlike mixed models, this framework considers emotional intelligence to be true intelligence that is measurable through performance tests (MSCEIT). It is highly relevant to conflict management as it provides the mental tools required to de-escalate tensions, empathize with others and reach collaborative solutions. The Mayer and Salovey model moves beyond logical, rational approaches to address the emotional “hot” intelligence during conflicts in higher institutions of learning.

Daniel Goleman’s mixed According to the emotional intelligence concept, emotional intelligence is a set of competencies-comprising of abilities, behaviours and personality traits which determine How effectively individual s manage themselves and their relationships. Unlike models focusing strictly on cognitive ability, Goleman’s model, popularized in the 1990s, highlights five core components that can be learned and developed. Among them are self-awareness, self-regulation. social abilities, empathy, and drive In relevance to handling disputes, Daniel Goleman’s model offers a structure for Dealing with the sentimental, rather than just the logical, underpinnings of interpersonal disagreements, fostering collaboration over confrontation. Goleman’s model shifts conflict management from a purely rational negotiation process to one that includes emotional intelligence.

Literature Review

Umar (2016) investigated emotional intelligence in terms of empathy and dispute resolution in a few Federal colleges in Nigeria's South East Zone. Personality trait theory served as the foundation for this investigation. The research employed survey research design, The study's 2271 participants were drawn from the corresponding federal universities in Nigeria's South East Zone. Two institutions were chosen among a total of six (6) universities in the zone using the purposeful or judgemental sampling technique. A sample size of 340 was determined using Taro Yamane's formula, and copies of the questionnaire were distributed to each university using Bowley's proportionate allocation formula. The results showed a strong positive relationship between empathy (emotional awareness self-evaluation). And obliging style of handling conflict resolution in the southeast region of Nigeria. The previous study discussed Federal universities in South East Zone of Nigeria While the Present study covered Federal Universities in North Central, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the previous study while the current study adopted correlation research design Iyala and Agbudu. (2023) examined the connection between principals' emotional intelligence in the aspect of self-awareness and handling conflict in Nigeria's Niger State secondary schools. The correlational survey research design was used in the study. 3895 employees made up the study's population. 520 respondents made up the study's sample size. The data was collected using two instruments. Data analysis was conducted

using Pearson's product moment correlation. The study's conclusions demonstrated a weak positive significant correlation between conflict management and the self-awareness of Niger State secondary school principals, as well as a weak positive significant correlation between conflict management and the social awareness of Niger State secondary school principals. The previous study covered secondary schools in Niger state, Nigeria while the current study covered Federal universities in North Central, Nigeria. Pearson's product moment correlation was utilized for data analysis in the previous examination while simple regression analysis was adopted for the current study.

Manal et al (2023) examined the link between conflict resolution techniques and emotional intelligence from the Nurse Managers' position. A cross-sectional, quantitative correlation design was used in the investigation. This study involved 21 facilities in the Aseer region that are linked to the Saudi Ministry of Health. Twenty-one head nurses with at least a year of experience as head nurses or managers made up the non-probability sample. Three parts of an online survey were used: socio demographic, trait emotional intelligence, and conflict management. Findings showed that There was a statistically significant correlation between emotional intelligence and gender identity. Similarly, there is a substantial correlation between conflict management tactics and nationality, marital status, and monthly income. The previous study covered a nursing school in Aseer region of Saudi Arabia while the current study covered Federal universities in North Central, Nigeria. Cross-sectional research design was adopted for the previous research while correlation research design was used for the current study.

Ufomba et al (2025) investigated the interaction between interpersonal conflict resolution practices at higher education institutions and emotional intelligence abilities in Nigeria. A The survey approach used was descriptive. A sample size of 400 was chosen from the 13,570 work forces in the population using the Yamane formula. A carefully designed questionnaire was used to gather data. utilizing the five-point Likert scale method. The data was analysed using regression analysis. Results indicated that emotional intelligence skills such as self-awareness was strongly and significantly correlated with conflict management. The previous study covered higher education institutions in Nigeria. while the current inquiry was carried out in Federal universities of North Central, Nigeria. The study design used was a descriptive survey. previous study while correlation research design was employed for the current study.

Uwaleke (2024) investigated the connection between conflict resolution and the emotional intelligence of secondary school administrators in Benue State, Nigeria's Benue South Senatorial District. To direct the investigation, three research questions and their corresponding three hypotheses were developed. For this study, a correlational survey research design was used. 2140 people in total—97 principals and 2043 teachers—were drawn from all 97 senior secondary schools for this study. 322 respondents (19 principals and 303 teachers) made up the study's sample size, which was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's table of requirements for calculating sample size from a given population. The Principal Emotional Intelligence and

Conflict Management Questionnaire (PEICMQ) was the tool utilised to collect the data. The research issues were addressed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation, and the hypotheses were analysed at a 0.05 level of significance using Pearson's product-moment correlation. According to the study's findings, conflict management and principals' self-awareness are positively and significantly correlated in secondary schools in the Benue South Senatorial District, Nigeria..

The previous study covered secondary schools in Benue State's Benue South Senatorial District Nigeria. while the current investigation covered Federal universities in North Central, Nigeria. Pearson's correlation of product moments was used for data analysis in the previous research while simple Regression was employed to examine information for the current study.

Amedome et al (2025) conducted a study to examine the association between part-time executive students in the Business Management Department's Conflict Management Styles (CMS) and Emotional Intelligence (EI). The study demonstrated the importance of each EI sub-competence in conflict management. To evaluate the suggested theories, 200 individuals' responses were examined. The study added to and expanded the body of previous literature by focusing on the cultural dimensions between Asia and Africa. The link between the EI and CMS sub-competencies was determined using hierarchical multiple regression analysis. The results showed that, with the exception of social skills, EI competences significantly improved CMS.

The previous study covered communities with Asia-Africa cultural dimensions. while the current study covered Federal universities in North Central, Nigeria. Multiple Regression analysis was used to examine the data. in the previous study while simple regression was employed to analyze data for the current inquiry. Prital (2022) examined the connection between conflict resolution and self-awareness Quantitative The study's research design was chosen. An example of 400 participants was picked for the research utilizing snowball Taking samples method. The Schutte Self-Report Scale Measuring Emotion Intelligence Scale was developed to gather information for the research. Information was gathered and Pearson's product moment correlation analysis was used. statistics, outcomes showed positive correlation between conflict resolution and self-awareness.

The previous investigation make use of the quantitative research design while correlation research design was applied in the current study. Pearson's product moment correlation statistics was employed to analyze data in the previous study while the current study used simple regression analysis.

Saudi and Hinacay (2025) evaluated teachers' conflict resolution preferences and emotional intelligence using causal and correlational research methodologies. 152 secondary school teachers from 3 sampling schools took part in it. It used a modified questionnaire to achieve the study's goals. The questionnaire's first section evaluated teachers' emotional intelligence, while its second

section addressed their preference for conflict resolution. The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis, Pearson product-moment correlation, mean, and standard deviation.

According to the study, teachers exhibited a high degree of Conflict avoidance and emotional intelligence resolution. The previous study covered teachers in secondary schools whereas the current investigation concentrated on university pupils. The previous examination employed the used a combination of correlation and design of causal research meanwhile a correlational study approach was used in the ongoing research. Pearson's product moment correlation statistics was employed to analyze data in the previous study while the current study used simple regression analysis.

Methodology

This research used a correlational survey design. The design was considered appropriate because the primary aim to determine The link between conflict resolution and emotional intelligence When it comes to university students, without manipulating any of the variables. According to Nworgu (2015), a correlational design is suitable for examining the degree of association between two or more variables as they naturally occur. In this research, emotional intelligence serves as the predictor variable while conflict management is the criterion variable. The population of this study comprised 146,252 full-time undergraduate students of 7 Federal universities in North Central, Nigeria. An entire sample of 754 undergraduate students in 4 randomly selected universities was taken from the Federal universities utilizing stratified random sampling. with a structured instrument tagged Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Management Scale (EICOMAS) was created by the investigator for the purpose of gathering data.

The instrument contained 20 items that assess how two key components relevant to this study: self-awareness and empathy predict conflict management. Responses were evaluated using a four-point The Likert scaled format based on the of Strongly Agree (SA)-4, Agree (A)-3, Strongly Disagree (SD)-2, and Disagree (D)-1. The instruments were subjected to content and face validation by three specialists in counseling psychology and assessment and measurement from Nigerian universities. They reviewed the instruments for clarity, cultural relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. Recommendations were used to modify ambiguous items and ensure suitability for the Nigerian undergraduate context. In the process a validity index of 0.74 was obtained. Furthermore, a pilot test was conducted involving 50 undergraduate students from a university outside the main study locations. Data collected from the pilot test were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha to establish internal consistency. This yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.79, indicating acceptable reliability (Nunnally, 1978). Data was analyzed using simple regression analysis. The R-values of regression analysis was used to answer the research questions while the p-values obtained from the ANOVA summary table of regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Simple regression was deemed

appropriate for analyzing the data because it involved the testing of two variables unlike multiple regression which is employed when there exist more than two variables to be tested.

Results

Research Question 1: To what degree is self-awareness a predictor of conflict management among university students in North Central Nigeria?

Table 1: *Model Summary of Regression Showing Self-Awareness as Predictor of Conflict Management among Nigerian University Students*

Variables	N	R	R ²	Beta	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
Self-Awareness	754	0.68	0.46	.824	0.45	4.35
Conflict Management	754					

Table 1 indicates the regression analysis summary table indicating the extent to which self-awareness is predictor of conflict management of conflict management among university students in North Central Nigeria. results indicate that given a sample size of 754, the calculated value of regression (R) was given as 0.68. this value is high. Furthermore, the beta value is given as 0.824. This value is sufficiently high. Hence Being self-aware is a strong predictor of conflict management among federal university students in North Central Nigeria.

Research Question 2: To what degree is empathy a predictor of conflict management among Nigerian university students?

Table 2: *Model Summary of Regression Showing Empathy as Predictor of Conflict Management among Nigerian University Students*

Variables	N	R	R ²	Beta	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
Empathy	754	0.72	0.52	.707	0.51	4.37
Conflict Management	754					

Table 2 indicates the regression analysis summary table indicating the extent to which empathy is An indication of conflict resolution among university students in North Central Nigeria. results indicate that with a sample size of 754, the calculated value of regression (R) was given as 0.72. this value is high. Furthermore, the beta value is given as 0.707. This value is sufficiently high. Hence empathy is strong a predictor of conflict management among federal university students in North Central Nigeria

Hypothesis 1: Self-awareness is not a significant predictor of conflict management among Nigerian university students.

Table 3: *ANOVA Summary of Regression Analysis on Self-awareness as a predictor of conflict*

management

Source	SS	df	R ²	MS	F Value	Beta	p-value
Regression	1904.62	1	0.46	1904.62	58.37	.823	0.000
Residual	2250.13	752		5.89			
Total	4164.75	753					

Table 3 indicates the ANOVA summary regression table indicating the extent to which self-awareness is a predictor of conflict management of conflict management among university students in North Central Nigeria. Results indicate that $F(1, 752) = 58.37, p < .001$, with self-awareness accounting for 46% of the variance in conflict management scores ($R^2 = .46$). Furthermore, the beta value at 0.823 indicates that self-awareness is strongly predictive of conflict management. Hence, self-awareness is a significant predictor of conflict management among federal university students in North Central Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: Empathy is not a significant predictor of conflict management among Nigerian university students.

Table 4: ANOVA Summary of Regression Analysis on Empathy as a Predictor of Conflict Management

Source	SS	df	R ²	MS	F value	Beta	p-value
Regression	1922.64	1	0.52	1922.64	45.12	.675	0.000
Residual	2104.16	752		5.51			
Total	3936.80	753					

Table 4 indicates the ANOVA summary regression table indicating the extent to which empathy is a predictor of conflict management of conflict management among university students in North Central Nigeria. Results indicate that $F(1, 382) = 45.12, p < .001$, with empathy accounting for 52% of the variance in conflict management scores ($R^2 = .52$). Furthermore, the beta value at 0.657 indicates that self-awareness is strongly predictive of conflict management. Hence, empathy is a significant predictor of conflict management among federal university students in North Central Nigeria

Discussion

Findings on hypothesis 1 indicated that self-awareness is a significant predictor of conflict management among federal university students in North Central Nigeria. Findings on the study agree or is similar to those of findings of the findings of this study revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between principals' self-awareness and conflict management in secondary schools in Benue South Senatorial District, Nigeria. The implications of the findings

therefore implies that when students are fully conscious of their personality, it guides them in

managing conflicts that may arise around them. It also helps in taking rational decisions that can help in resolving conflicts that may arise in their universities. Students with high self-awareness can observe their effectiveness, and adjust them accordingly. Furthermore, they can better manage their emotions, leading to more constructive conflict management approaches. When related to Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) suggests that people learn behaviours including conflict management styles. Self-awareness, a key component of SLT, enables individuals to reflect on their thoughts, feelings, and actions, influencing their conflict management approach.

Findings on hypothesis 2 indicated that empathy is a significant predictor of conflict management among federal university students in North Central Nigeria. findings on the study agree or is similar to those of Umar (2016) which indicated there is a significant relationship between empathy and conflict management in selected Federal universities in South East Zone of Nigeria. The implications of the findings therefore implies that when students develop a considerable level of empathy in the course of relating with others, they tend to be considerate and compassionate when managing conflicts that may arise in the course of their academic endeavors in schools.

Conclusion

The study reveals that self-awareness and empathy are crucial predictors of conflict management among university students in North Central, Nigeria. These findings underscore the importance of socio-emotional skills in navigating conflicts effectively. By integrating self-awareness and empathy training into university programmes, educators can empower students to manage conflicts constructively, fostering healthier relationships among students in universities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made for the study:

1. It is recommended the management of Federal universities should organize workshops, seminars, and short courses aimed at improving students' self-awareness skills in order to help manage cases of conflict that may arise in various universities.
2. It is also recommended that Emotional intelligence skills such as empathy be incorporated into general studies or entrepreneurship education courses of universities to ensure that all students acquire vital interpersonal skills.

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