

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AND STAFF EFFECTIVENESS IN SELECTED FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

*Conflict is inevitable in all organizations, and the university being a center of learning, with diverse needs is not left out. The study examined the different conflicts occurring in the Nigerian South-West federal universities and their impact on staff effectiveness. The academic and the non-academic staff of the three South-West federal universities in Nigeria constituted the population for the study from which 1385 participants were selected as samples. The survey research design was adopted for the study. The stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the sample from the three unions in the selected universities. Two sets of research instrument namely: Conflict and Staff Effectiveness Questionnaire (CSEQ) and an interview schedule were used for data collection. Three research questions and two research hypotheses were answered and tested in the study. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistics of percentages, frequencies, and means while the hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics of T-Test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings of the study are that conflicts were significantly related to staff effectiveness and that the effectiveness of the academic staff was affected more than that of the non-academic staff during conflicts. The study recommended the need for the Nigerian South-West federal universities and the federal government to embark on morale booster programs for the university staff.*

## INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a struggle over claims, values and scarce resources. It is inevitable among individuals and in organizations because of the nature of human beings who differ in value orientation, attitudes and levels of understanding. Conflicts have become part of human organizations the world over. There are two major types of conflicts, internal and external. Internal conflict occurs between employees and their employers while external conflict occurs between employees and other bodies outside the organization such as the government. Examples of internal conflicts abound between management and their employees in the universities while external conflicts occur between the university unions and the federal government. External conflicts seem to be the crux of the crises in the universities and they occur at alarming rates due to the diverse nature of the parties involved. The political nature of man, together with the fact that conflict is a global phenomenon in organizations, has made its occurrence in the universities an inevitable situation. But what seemed an aberration is the constant return to the resolution table with seemingly unending resolutions. The various unions in the federal universities are always in constant conflict with either the management or the federal government. These unions are the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities (NASU) and the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU).

Since the 1990s, it has become nearly impossible for universities to run an entire session without academic activities being disrupted by government–universities face off. In the South-West, the federal universities have had to be closed for several months due to the staff demands. From 2009 to 2011, there was hardly any semester that could boast of a conflict free calendar. The aftermath of these conflicts seemed to have a major impact on the university staff effectiveness. Staff effectiveness is the commitment of workers in their duties leading to high productivity. Also staff effectiveness is the ability of staff to put in maximum performance at work in order to realize the desired goals and objectives of the universities. The staffs of Nigerian federal universities are always battling with being engaged in their assigned duties and staying idle due to incessant conflicts (Albert, 2005).

As rampant as the conflicts in the South-West federal universities, so also are the various effects on the effectiveness of their jobs. This is evident on the quality of work put in by the university staff especially lecturers in trying to catch up with the loss time during conflicts. Conflicts in the universities result in low or no form of work. This tends to weaken staff satisfaction and morale as their needs are left unmet. Assessing the engagement level of staff during and after conflicts in the South-West federal universities is of paramount importance considering the huge number of students whose performance could be affected.

There have been a replay of one conflict or the other with attempts at resolving them, using strategies that seem to suggest inadequacy due to their reoccurrence since the 1990s. These conflicts are so rampant that students and lecturers have advocated for a third session named *strike session* in the universities calendars. The university staffs are demanding better university infrastructures, funding systems and working conditions of staff.

Conflict results in strained relationship. In resolving the conflicts, the South-West federal universities and government are yet to arrive at a compromise. Relationships have been strained and affected as conflicts are not effectively resolved. This also has affected staff morale, mostly evident in low productivities. The immediate effect of conflict is the distortion of academic calendar in most universities. Thus, the overall impact of conflict on staff effectiveness relates to value distortion and system dissonance. When the system and values are distorted, then the effect is enormous and frightening to staff morale and productivity.

The more employee's perceived organizational injustice and unfairness as arising from the poor management of conflict in the work place like the university, the more they reciprocate by exhibiting negative attitude to work. These negative attitudes are not without consequences on staff morale and productivity (effectiveness). Thus there is the need to examine the effects of the different conflicts on the effectiveness of the South-West federal university staffs because a worker who has experienced work frustration or suffered organizational injustice arising from poor management of conflicts, may become counterproductive. These can be expressed in form of character assassination, spreading negative rumors, sabotaging and low productivity.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Conflict is inevitable given the wide range of goals existing in organizations. Educational institutions such as the South-West federal universities in Nigeria have experienced different types of conflicts (internal and external). These conflicts may have had effects on the work effectiveness of university staff resulting in low morale, inaction, frustration, lack of commitment and low productivity. The incessant conflicts resulting in strikes and closure of universities revolve round the non-implementation of agreements between the university staff and the federal government. Most conflicts have had immediate effects of distortion of academic calendar in the university leading to fatigue and lowering of professional standard. The constant resort to conflict resulting in the closure of the universities can now be referred to as a vicious cycle of strike, negotiation, arriving at agreement, postponing strike, waiting, non-implementation of agreement, warning strike, and full blown strike.

Unresolved conflicts in the universities seemed to have resulted in serious consequences on staff effectiveness such as employee low turnover, low morale, reduced productivity, quality problems, reduced collaboration, passive/aggressive behavior, inefficient management credibility, negative upward attention and distrust (Cram & MacWilliams, 2011). The purpose of this study is to examine the conflicts in the South-West federal universities and how they impact on the work effectiveness of staff.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What are some of the causes of unresolved conflicts in the South-West federal universities?
2. How do conflicts in Nigerian South-West federal universities impact staff effectiveness?
3. How do the activities of unions (ASUU, NASU, SSANU) during conflicts impact staff effectiveness in the Nigerian South-West federal universities?

## HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant relationship between conflicts in Nigerian South-West federal universities and staff effectiveness.
2. There is no significant difference in staff effectiveness among workers unions (ASUU, NASU, SSANU) in the Nigerian South-West federal universities.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Meaning of Conflict

Conflict is a natural condition existing in any multiparty heterogeneous system. The university and government conflict in Nigeria is seen as means of cushioning tension. This according to Anih (2008) is the struggle in the higher education institutions. It is an inherent social condition derived from the fact that persons, parties, social groups and collectivities differ from one another on a variety of values, goals and material resources. Conflict is often defined as a form of behavior – mutual interference escalated hostilities. A conflict situation is therefore one that is characterized by the inability of those concerned to iron out their differences. It is the perceived incompatibility of goals, actions and outcomes between two or more people. Conflict means different things to different people. Dubrin 1978 (cited in Ejiogu, 2002) saw conflict as “opposition of persons or forces that gives rise to some tension”. As long as we have more than an individual in interaction, there is bound to be conflict. Thus conflict is an inevitable element in any labor management relationship.

Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing. According to Anih (2008), conflict is a part of life, but it becomes unhealthy when it is between people rather than about idea. Conflict is bound to occur as long as there are people dealing with fellow people, making decision or having meeting. Conflict, therefore is a direct opposition, a clash or disagreement between people. Ekpu (2008) opined that conflict is neither positive nor negative as it is the result of diverse characteristics of our thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, attitudes at social systems and structure. Thus, Ekpu explained that it is the way one handles, manages conflict that will determine its effects. Conflict could be seen as an energizer of development if properly managed by people and the conflicting parties involved. Conflicts have negative outcomes when the affected individual exhibits a feeling of defeat and demoralization; they also have positive outcomes when better ideas are produced, they force people to clarify views.

### Types of Conflict

Conflict is widespread in human societies. It occurs in profit and nonprofit organizations. In organizational life, different types of conflict can be identified. There are four categories of conflict according to Anderson (2006). These include: intrapersonal and interpersonal, intragroup and intergroup. The intrapersonal conflict has to do with incompatibilities within a person’s cognitive system. Interpersonal conflict is between people, intragroup is within a group while intergroup conflict is between groups. We have two sources of conflicts, the internal and the external source. The internal source according to Fajana (2000) deals with disagreement arising within the enterprise while the external are those cropping up outside the organization.

Differentiating conflict according to work types, Chukwumaeze (2008) classified it as substantive conflicts which are those rooted in the substance of the task. Affective conflict derived from the emotional affective aspect of the interpersonal relation; it deals with the individual’s emotions. Still on the types of conflict, Anih (2008) categorizes them into pre-existing ones which involve issues carried over from previous contents. The author also refers to spontaneous reaction which deals with reaction in a critical time in contest. Also included, are cumulative responses, which are series of calls or bad breaks that do not favor one team. Substantive conflict is associated with the job not individual while affective deals with emotion.

Asongo (2008) identified three types of conflicts:

Social conflict involves struggle over values or claims to status; power and scarce resources in which the main actors are out not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. The author further divided social conflict into realistic, non-realistic, ideological and anthropological conflicts.

Psychological conflict is a situation in which a person is motivated to engage in two or more mutually exclusive activities. It could occur at different levels – overt behavioral level, verbal level, symbolic level, and emotional level.

Political conflict results from closely related processes whereby two or more individuals are in contact and are carrying out incompatible functions at the same time. This can be likened to the type experienced in Nigerian higher education institutions.

### **Causes of Conflict**

William 1978 (cited in Ejiogu, 2002) made a summary of eight causes of conflict as follows:

Line-staff competition: It occurs when there are two different categories of staff struggling for power and trying to assume the authority of the other staff.

Functional interdependence is when conflict occurs as a result of two or more departments working to achieve a goal. The resulting conflicts are as a result of non-performance by a producer unit.

Labor-management polarization: This is when conflict occurs as a result of disagreement between top management and union leaders in terms of staff welfare, discipline and conditions of service.

Organization-Individual disagreement: This results when employees fail to meet the organizational demands and also when an organization fails to fulfill the employees' demands.

Disagreement over goals: It arises as a result of imbalance between the personal objectives of managers and employees with that of the organizational goals.

Overlapping or ambiguous responsibility: This arises when roles are not clearly defined for staff and also when the roles and expectations are too many for the staff to cope with.

Bottleneck in the flow of work: It occurs when an obstruction in a particular section of the work place affects another section leading to crisis.

Personality clash: These are differences in attitudes, ability, goals, values which can lead to conflict, such differences normally results in power tussle.

Fajana (2000) classified causes of conflicts into two major sources: Internal and external. The internal causes are disagreements arising within the enterprise while those cropping up outside it are referred to as external. Internal causes include employee grievances, individual workers grievances and collective grievances. External causes of conflict could be as a result of government's industrial and economic policies, the nature of labor legislation, and unpatriotic unethical behavior of the political and economic classes.

Classifying causes of conflict in relation to the antecedent conditions, Ojo (200) mentioned the following as some of the major causes of conflict:

Information: The parties have different information or no information;

Perceptual: The parties have the same information, but look at the issue differently;

Communication barriers: These include space, time and position;

Role of different organizations: These are the different roles of the parties, which make them to take different positions on the issues;

Goals: These are the different organizational or personal goals of the parties;

Values: These are the different values of the parties which lead them to choose different solutions to a situation;

Dependence on one party: This is a situation when conflict ensues as a result of the reliance of one party on another for resource;

Association of parties: The more the parties work together, the greater the chances of conflict;

Unresolved prior conflict: The aftermath of unresolved prior conflicts likely leads to further conflicts (p.2).

### **Cases of Conflicts in Nigerian Universities**

Conflicts in Nigerian universities date back to the 1960s with the unsuccessful attempt of the first republic politicians to change the pre-independence statutory image of the university system by bringing universities under undue government control. The university lecturers embarked on series of strike dating back from 1973. In the regime of General Yakubu Gowon, university staff embarked on strike for improvement in their conditions of service due to the deplorable condition left behind by the Nigeria civil war. The spate of strikes continued under Alhaji Shehu Shagari in 1980. When President Obasanjo was elected in 1999, ASUU further demanded for the adoption of the 1992 agreement. Pressure from the university staff led to FGN and ASUU agreement of 2001.

After series of appeal by ASUU to FGN for the implementation of the 2001 Agreement, ASUU called its members on 29th December 2002 to embark on a total and indefinite nationwide strike (Olatunji, 2003). FGN failure at fulfilling its own part of the agreement by using avoidance strategy led to another three day warning strike on April 24, 2006. The election of President Yar'Adua into power in 2007 brought some hope to the academia, but this was proved to be a false hope as nothing was done to implement the agreement. After several failed negotiations, the staff went on an indefinite strike in 2009. The 2009 strike can be termed the highest over time as it further involved all the facets of the university including NASU.

The suspended 2009 strike could be termed only as a repetition of the usual past, for the technical committee/inter-ministerial committee undermined the agreement already reached. Failure of state to honor the agreement reached in 2009. The national body of ASUU joined the strike in June 2010 when all attempts to make the five East-South State Governors to budge failed. This according to Ubabukoh (2011) is called the university staff union strike as it affects all the university unions.

The issue of strike being a perennial problem seemed not abated. The universities continuous press for the full implementation of the agreement reached in 2010 met deaf ears by the federal government. As usual in the circle of the universities conflicts, ASUU decided to drive home their demands in a one week warning strike in September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011. NASU also followed with their warning strike effective from 3<sup>rd</sup> October. The song of victory is yet to be sung as the universities launched a full blown nationwide indefinite strike from December 5<sup>th</sup> 2011 to February 2nd, 2012. Conflicts in the Nigerian federal universities continue due to most unfulfilled agreements.

### **Impact of Conflicts on Universities Staff Effectiveness**

Staff effectiveness according to Todd (2009) is the total input of workers in their duties. It involves the overall dexterity of staff in his duties to achieve the organizational goals. This includes the conduct of staff, their skills, expertise, morale, interpersonal relationships with colleagues and their ability to abide with management policies without stress. The work environment generally is a collectivity of various individuals and groups from different cultural, social, political and economic backgrounds. Given this scenario, the interests and expectations of employees in organizations is bound to differ (Igbaji, 2009). These variations in staff are expressed in their various responses to duties during conflicts. Workers' collective interest is represented through expressions by the workers' trade unions like ASUU and NASU in the universities.

Staff work effectiveness during or after conflicts is usually a reflection of the extent to which universities unions persuade workers to react to the issues yet to be resolved. This according to Ongori (2009) would manifest in various work attitudes such as low or high morale and inaction or lack of zeal for duties. As most conflicts are as a result of clamoring for better welfare, continuation of conflicts influences workers' productivity and ultimately hinders the achievement of goals in the organization. Most employers' attitude to the trade union, particularly in the tertiary institutions where the government (state or federal) is both employer and umpire, has been hostile. The union therefore finds it difficult to persuade unsatisfied and unwilling workers to increase their productivity to enable organizations achieve their goals.

Educational sub-sector, specifically tertiary institutions (universities) in Nigeria have been recording series of industrial unrests in the recent past (Ubabuko, 2010). The effects of repeated and abrupt closure of universities due to industrial bluffs on academic programs and the goals for which they were established can better be imagined. Educational standard is now believed to be questionable. Many academic calendars in the universities have been disorganized with some academic sessions out rightly lost. Students' academic performances have comparatively taken a nose dive while various forms of examination malpractices are on the increase. The situation has assumed such an alarming dimension that the public now accuses the 'ivory towers' of turning out graduates that are ill-equipped in character to contribute to the growth and development of the nation.

Empirical findings according to Ongori (2009) show that organizations are adversely affected by conflicts in terms of performance and wastage of scarce resources. Similarly organizational conflicts like those of the Nigerian universities do have positive effects especially in increasing innovativeness and improving the quality of decisions in the institutions. In addition, conflicts build the spirit of teamwork and cooperation among the employees. This occurs especially when the staff of the universities come together to resolve the conflict.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted the survey research design. The target population of the study includes all the academic and non-academic staff in the three South-West first generation federal universities. All the staff belongs to the three unions (ASUU, SSANU and NASU). A sample size of 1,385 staff (academic and non-academic) was randomly selected from the total population of 10,659, comprising 13% of the total population. Two instruments: a questionnaire titled "Conflict and Staff Effectiveness Questionnaire" (CSEQ) and an interview schedule were used for data collection. The interviews were conducted through one-on-one questions and answers using the prepared questions and their responses were recorded (see attached interview data). The instruments measured the variables under study: conflict resolution strategies, staff effectiveness, and causes of conflict. The instruments were given to management experts in the field for validity check while the test and re-test method was used to establish reliability of the instruments with a reliability coefficient of 0.85. Three research questions and two research hypotheses were answered and tested in the study. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistics of percentages, frequencies, and means while the hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics such as, the t-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The analyses were done through the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). All the findings were held significant at 0.05 probability level.

## ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Research Question One: What are the causes of unresolved conflicts in the South-West federal universities?

Table 1: Causes of Incessant Conflicts

Causes	Frequency	%
The universities inability to arrive at a consensus	49	3.5
The federal government insensitivity to the universities demand	260	18.8
The overbearing power of the federal government	208	15.0
The inability of personalities to be impersonal in their judgment	60	4.3
Unwillingness of universities and government to shift ground during negotiation	24	1.7
The weak nature of collective bargaining strategy by not enforcing compliance during negotiation	166	12.0
The constant resort to the use of arbitration panel	120	8.7
The inability of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> party to bring both parties to accept solution	72	5.2
The universities usual rush to call off strike without concrete evidence	36	2.6
Non-implementation of agreements reached during conflict resolution	390	28.2
Total	1385	100.0

Finding of data analysis as shown in Table 1 revealed that most of the participants (28%) perceived non-implementation of agreement reached during conflict resolution as the most probable cause of the frequent unresolved conflicts in the universities.

Research Question Two: How do conflicts in Nigerian South-West federal universities impact staff effectiveness?

Table 2: Conflict Resolution Strategies and Staff Effectiveness

Effectiveness Impact	Frequency and Percentage
High	504(36%)
Low	881(64%)

As indicated in Table 2, 64% of the participants experienced low effectiveness after the conflicts while 36% of the participants experienced high effectiveness impact after the conflicts.

Research Question Three: How do the activities of the unions (ASUU, NASU, SSANU) during conflicts impact the staff effectiveness in the Nigerian South-West federal universities?

The findings as a result of data analysis as shown in Table 3 showed that the responses of university staff indicated a low impact on staff effectiveness after conflicts were resolved. The findings also revealed a slight variation of opinions among members of the different worker unions.

Table 3: Union Activities and Staff Effectiveness

S/N	Staff Effectiveness indices	Union of Staff	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
1.	My job becomes fascinating and I put in my best at work	ASUU	40 (18.5)	30 (13.9)	104 (48.1)	42 (19.4)	216 (100)
		NASU	124 (16.5)	88 (11.7)	388 (51.7)	150 (20.0)	750 (100)
		SSANU	40 (9.5)	36 (8.6)	238 (56.8)	105 (25.1)	419 (100)
2.	I feel a sense of satisfaction in my job that I try to work harder	ASUU	36 (16.2)	51 (23.6)	80 (37.0)	50 (23.1)	216 (100)
		NASU	117 (15.6)	183 (24.4)	296 (39.5)	154 (20.5)	750 (100)
		SSANU	61 (14.6)	113 (27.0)	165 (39.4)	80 (19.1)	419 (100)
3.	My job becomes boring that I can hardly meet up the usual pace	ASUU	36 (16.7)	160 (74.1)	15 (6.9)	5 (2.3)	216 (100)
		NASU	21 (2.8)	64 (8.5)	529 (70.5)	130 (18.1)	750 (100)
		SSANU	11 (2.6)	41 (9.8)	293 (69.9)	74 (17.7)	419 (100)
4.	I become so creative in my job that I improve on the job	ASUU	18 (8.3)	11 (5.1)	151 (69.9)	36 (16.7)	216 (100)
		NASU	130 (17.3)	493 (65.7)	52 (6.9)	75 (10.0)	750 (100)
		SSANU	70 (16.7)	272 (64.9)	39 (9.3)	38 (9.1)	419 (100)
5.	My job seems meaningless and I become less enthusiastic at work	ASUU	40 (18.5)	30 (13.9)	104 (48.1)	42 (19.4)	216 (100)
		NASU	124 (16.5)	88 (11.7)	388 (51.7)	150 (20.0)	750 (100)
		SSANU	40 (9.5)	36 (8.6)	238 (56.8)	105 (25.1)	419 (100)
6.	The job no longer challenges me and I hold back some of my potentials	ASUU	22 (10.2)	46 (21.3)	65 (30.1)	83 (38.4)	216 (100)
		NASU	97 (12.9)	186 (24.8)	204 (27.2)	263 (16.8)	750 (100)
		SSANU	58 (13.8)	105 (25.1)	118 (28.2)	138 (32.9)	419 (100)
7.	The job place seems uncomfortable that I hardly wait to go home	ASUU	36 (16.7)	149 (69.0)	13 (6.0)	18 (16.7)	216 (100)
		NASU	90 (12.0)	50 (6.7)	484 (64.5)	126 (16.8)	750 (100)
		SSANU	56 (13.4)	31 (7.4)	262 (62.5)	70 (16.7)	419 (100)
8.	My job puts me on guard that I always improve on my past performance	ASUU	20 (9.3)	142 (65.7)	30 (13.9)	24 (11.1)	216 (100)
		NASU	69 (9.2)	470 (62.7)	134 (17.9)	77 (10.3)	750 (100)
		SSANU	36 (8.6)	254 (60.6)	86 (20.5)	43 (10.3)	419 (100)
9.	I become withdrawn from my usual duties that I am less bothered about cooperating with others at work	ASUU	16 (7.4)	133 (61.6)	38 (17.6)	29 (13.4)	216 (100)
		NASU	59 (7.9)	424 (56.5)	169 (22.5)	98 (13.1)	750 (100)
		SSANU	31 (7.4)	232 (55.4)	96 (22.7)	61 (14.6)	419 (100)
10.	I derive a lot of respect from my job and I become more productive	ASUU	24 (11.1)	20 (9.3)	144 (66.7)	28 (13.0)	216 (100)
		NASU	92 (12.3)	80 (10.7)	470 (62.7)	108 (14.4)	750 (100)
		SSANU	40 (9.5)	255 (60.9)	50 (11.9)	48 (11.5)	419 (100)

Key: Figures in parenthesis are percentages

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between conflicts in Nigerian South-West federal universities and staff effectiveness.

Table 4: Correlational Analysis- Relationship between Conflict Resolution Strategies and Staff Effectiveness

Variables	Mean	SD	N	Df	r-cal	r-critical	p-value	Remark
Effectiveness	56.73	2.18	1385	1383	0.64	0.20	0.01	Significant
Conflict Resolution Strategies	2.97	2.09						

Findings as a result of correlation analysis as shown in Table 4 indicated a significant relationship existed between the conflict resolution strategies and staff effectiveness. This is evident with the r-cal 0.64 greater than r-crit of 0.20 at  $p = 0.01$ . Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a relationship between the strategies employed in resolving the universities conflicts and staff morale.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in staff effectiveness among worker unions (ASUU, NASU, SSANU) in the Nigerian South-West federal universities.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance- Differences in Staff effectiveness among Unions

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
ASUU	216	52.467	3.249	.221	52.031	52.903	45.00	60.50
NASU	750	48.178	9.602	.350	47.490	48.867	19.00	59.50
SSANU	419	52.165	3.120	.152	51.866	52.465	44.00	62.50
Total	1385	50.053	7.658	.205	48.650	50.457	19.00	62.50

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-cal	F-tab	p-value	Remark
Between Groups	5764.689	2	2883.344	52.827	3.99	.000	Sig.
Within Groups	75404.054	1382	54.562				
Total	81168.743	1384					

Table 5 shows that the mean scores of ASUU staff in effectiveness (52.47) is the highest. This was closely followed by that of SSANU staff (52.17) while NASU staff had the lowest morale (48.18). The f statistics of 52.83 is significant at  $p = 0.00$  level. This implies that a significant difference existed in staff effectiveness among the members of the unions. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

In order to ascertain the variation in staff effectiveness by the union type, a post hoc analysis was performed and the result of the analysis is presented in Table 6. Findings of the analysis as shown in Table 6 indicates that the effectiveness of ASUU staff is significantly higher than that of NASU member ( $p = 0.000$ ). In addition, a significance difference exists in the effectiveness of NASU staff and SSANU staff ( $p = 0.000$ ). However, there is no significance difference in the effectiveness of ASUU members and SSANU members ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 6: Post Hoc Comparison of Union Type in Staff Effectiveness

(I) Unions	Comparison	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
ASUU	NASU	4.28893*	.57039	.000
	SSANU	.30172	.61872	.626
NASU	ASUU	-4.28893*	.57039	.000
	SSANU	-3.98720*	.45052	.000
SSANU	ASUU	-.30172	.61872	.626
	NASU	3.98720*	.45052	.000

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the study shows that the staff of the universities was all abreast of the major causes leading to these unresolved conflicts in the universities. Most of the participants (28%) perceived non-implementation of agreement reached during conflict resolution as the most probable cause of the frequent unresolved conflicts in the universities. This finding is consistent with that of Welsh (2005) that the constant resort to conflicts signifies major obstacles yet to be well tackled and that the strategies should be modified.

A significant relationship existed between the conflict resolution strategies and staff effectiveness of the universities staff (see testing of Hypothesis 1). This is quite understandable as constant conflicts means the resolution strategies are not adequate resulting in staff demands not being met. This finding has implications on the management of frequent conflicts in the universities. For sure, conflicts have impacted the staff effectiveness in their zeal and willingness to effectively do their job. The finding of this study also echoed those of Marsano (2003), Adebayo (2009) and Albert (2005). They all asserted that there is a high relationship between the strategies employed in resolving conflict and staff effectiveness. Thus there is need to boost staff effectiveness through programs.

There lies significant difference in staff effectiveness among the unions (ASUU, NASU and SSANU) after each resolved conflict in the Nigerian South-West federal universities. This finding confirmed that of Onyeonosu (2004) that each union in the tertiary institutions played significant roles and at other times, the context of struggles dictated distinct and separate roles and values. That morale of the NASU staff was more affected because most non-academic staff is young, versatile and more vibrant in their approach to issues. This poses implication for the continuous in-service of staff in the lower cadre.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING**

Conflict is inevitable in organizations to which the Nigerian universities belong. These findings are quite relevant in Nigerian universities as strikes have always marred most academic sessions. The university management can now assess the weight of staff ineffectiveness and knowing the implications to students' growth will address the conflict issues with a more intelligent approach by learning from previous experiences. Alternative strategies should be explored in resolving the university conflicts as the usual remedies have not been adequate. It is very expedient that caution should be taken in terms of stemming the incessant conflicts. The administrators of universities may want to consider the collective bargaining strategy of resolving conflicts to avoid the after effect of low job effectiveness. This finding has implication for policy planners for the inclusion of ameliorating policies that will reduce the effects of conflict on the staff especially those in the lower cadre who are mostly affected in their job effectiveness. In-service training programs may be needed to be offered to enhance staff morale which relates to productivity. Future planning strategies may include an independent body to be created to act as an umpire that would monitor all the negotiations during the conflict resolution.

### **CONCLUSION**

The persistent conflicts in the Nigerian university system with seemingly unending solutions have necessitated the tendency to evaluate their influence on staff effectiveness thereby ascertaining the relevance of the resolution strategies employed. The Nigerian universities can explore alternative approach to manage conflicts to the minimum to make meaningful impact on the nation's growth and development. This will in turn increase the job effectiveness of the staff of the universities.

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