Greener Journal of Business and Management Studies

ISSN: 2276-7827 ICV: 6.02

Submitted: 15/10/2016

Accepted: 22/10/2016

Published: 11/11/2016

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.15580/GJBMS.2016.3.101516165>

Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Management in Selected Universities in South East Zone of Nigeria

By

**Onyeizugbe Chinedu Uzochukwu
Lilian O. Orogbu
Oyigbo Martha Chidiebere**

Research Article (DOI: <http://doi.org/10.15580/GJBMS.2016.3.101516165>)

Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Management in Selected Universities in South East Zone of Nigeria

^{*1}Dr. Onyeizugbe Chinedu Uzochukwu, ²Dr. Lilian O. Orogbu and
³Oyigbo Martha Chidiebere

^{1,2}Lecturer in the Department of Business Administration, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

³Research Fellow in the Department of Business Administration, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

*Corresponding Author's Email: edu_phd@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This study was necessitated due to the conflicts in Nigerian university system such as the universities' management and ASUU as it has been a threat to Nigerian educational and social development. This is unwholesome for the university community and Nigeria educational system as a whole. It was for this reason that this research titled emotional intelligence and conflict management in selected Federal universities in South East Zone of Nigeria. This study was anchored on Personality Trait Theory. The population of the study was 2271 and it was obtained from respective selected federal universities in South East Zone of Nigeria. Purposive or judgmental sampling technique was adopted in selecting two universities from a total of six (6) universities in the zone. Taro Yamane's formula was used to determine a sample size of 340 and Bowley's proportional allocation formula was used to allocate copies of questionnaire to each of the universities. The study employed survey research design using structured questionnaire to elicit data. The questionnaire developed for this study was subjected to content validity and the reliability obtained was 0.83. The study adopted the use of multiple regression analysis to test the hypothesis at 0.05 significant level. The findings revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between empathy (emotional awareness, self-evaluation) and obliging style of handling conflict in south east zone of Nigeria. The study concluded that empathy helps the school managements and lecturers to be aware of others emotions and react politely to them; and it helps in emotional awareness of one's limitations and strengths so as to avert and handle conflict in Universities in South East Zone of Nigeria. The researcher recommended that the management of the universities in South East Zone of Nigeria should adopt empathy through emotional awareness, self-evaluation with obliging style of handling conflict so as to enable adequate and effective management of conflict within the university system.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Management, Personality Trait Theory.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary world is increasingly multicultural and the identity crisis resulting from this sometimes threatens sustainable human development. This makes the promotion of understanding and dialogue to be a prime issue in the management of multiculturalism, global peace and security (Oloyede, 2009). Conflict is an inevitable friction in any organization which efficient and effective management of conflicts is fundamental to the development of any society, but the prevailing situations in Nigeria constitute a reversal of this reality. Conflict in higher education is inescapable because it exists at every level of academic world. Conflict can be negative and can at the same time, cause deep rifts in the framework of the institution, it can also be used as a tool to take the institution and the people in it from stagnation to a new level of effectiveness. What makes the difference is managing conflict and as well putting the emotions of both conflicting parties into cognizance and that means that emotional has to be put into consideration when handling conflict (Holton, 2008).

Some people can handle conflict in a tactful and sensible way (Iain, 2005). Bar-On hypothesises that these individuals are, in general, more successful in meeting environmental demands and pressures, which often is an indication of one's potential to succeed in life. Coleman (2008) defined Emotional intelligence (EI) or emotional quotient (EQ) as the capacity of individuals to recognize their own, and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different feelings and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior. Some scholars apply the concept of emotional intelligence quotient (or emotional quotient) to quantify people's ability to manage emotion (Bar-On, 1997; Geher, 2004; Schutte & Malouff, 1999). Bar-On, emotional

intelligence has two parts: (i) the intrapersonal – the understanding and management of emotion within oneself; and (ii) the interpersonal – the empathy for the others and the maintenance of interpersonal relationships. This personality trait requires the awareness of how others feel (that is, empathy), the identification with one's social group and cooperation with others (that is, social responsibility) and the establishment of mutually satisfying relationships with others. The concept of emotional intelligence involves the management of emotion within oneself (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). It also emphasises the importance of recognising one's interdependence with other people.

Conflicts will always occur but a well managed conflict with cognizance of individual's emotional intelligence will not degenerate to violence. Since violence will not erupt without conflict as antecedents, one can assume that many of the conflicts in tertiary institutions is because their antecedents (causes) were not properly managed or that the conflicting parties did not explore the power of emotions in resolving the crises (Agbonna, Yusuf, and Onifade, 2009). Conflict results from human interaction in the context of incompatible ends and where one's ability to satisfy needs or ends depends on the choices, decisions and behaviour of others. It is therefore, possible to argue that conflict is endemic to human relationships and societies. It is as a result of interaction among people that there are an unavoidable concomitant of choices, decisions and an expression of the basic fact of human interdependence (Adejuwon & Okewale, 2009).

In Nigerian universities for instance, the demand for improving the working conditions of the lecturers, increasing their pay rise, disagreement arising from the terms and the conditions of employment result mostly in conflict. To compound it more, Academic of Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) join in the fight for the benefits of the lecturers. This gives the situation in different dimension like embarking on industrial action thereby affecting the academic performance of the school and the students' academic performances. This conflict has most times, however, escalated into a wider struggle with political connotations. ASUU has thus declared itself as an anti-imperialist organization, meaning that they seek to fight against the purported interference of foreign bodies in the running of the economic and political affairs of the universities. The government's reaction has been that ASUU's demands are unrealistic and unjustifiable when considered alongside the needs of sister unions. Thus the government labels ASUU as greedy, inconsiderate and a union that tends to parade itself as a political watch dog of government's actions and inactions, neglecting its primary mandate of teaching and research (Agbonna, Yusuf & Onifade, 2009).

The crisis brewing between the authorities at the Nnamdi Azikiwe university Awka orchestrated by the local branch of Academic Staff Union Universities [ASUU] has been described as a power struggle one year to the end of the current Vice Chancellor's tenure. But the union says power game hardly comes into its agenda. Another group that goes by the name ASUU-NAU progressives say the local ASUU seem hell bent on unseating the vice chancellor. The whole thing is struggle for power and the Vice Chancellor has achieved a lot and he is a very broad-minded vice chancellor who accommodates all kinds of views. He has run uninterrupted academic calendar and has facilitated the promotion of many of the academic staff to Professors, so when ASUU accuse him of many wrongs, one wonders where the wrongs are (Dukor, 2015).

The nature of conflict between ASUU in Nnamdi Azikiwe University and university management which represent government is inter-group conflict. Webster's Dictionary defines a group as a number of persons near, placed, or classified together. Others define a group as a social unit that consists of a number of individuals, who, at a given time, have role and status relationships with one another, stabilized in some degree and who possess a set of values or norms regulating the attitude and behaviour of individual members, at least in matters of consequence to them. Intergroup relations between two or more groups and their respective members are often necessary to complete the work required to operate a business. Many times, groups inter-relate to accomplish the organization's goals and objectives, and conflict can occur. Some conflict, called functional conflict, is considered positive, because it enhances performance and identifies weaknesses. Dysfunctional conflict, however, is confrontation or interaction between groups that harms the organization or hinders attainment of goals or objectives. More so, the conflict between ASUU members in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and the university management is also inter-group conflict (Chukwura, 2014). University management and ASUU have a particular goal which is to improve the academic performance of university students and at the same time, improve the standard of education in the country. These two groups work towards the good of the universities, but if one party fails to acknowledge the importance of the efforts of the other, this leads to intergroup conflicts.

These conflicts would have been avoided if management style of handling conflict is taken into cognizance especially when it involves emotion. This is because emotions most times, control human actions. Some universities' managements sometimes employ lecturers most times based on different types of tests like academic qualifications and work experiences without taking into consideration their emotional intelligence not knowing that some lecturers can perform better academically and at the same time, perform poorly in emotional intelligence. It might be that either the university managements do not know much about emotional intelligence, how to use it or they decided to ignore it during recruitment of lecturers. And as a result, the different people from different culture and background, with different views most times results to conflict of interest or opinion with either themselves or with university

managements. Sometimes, university management seems to ignore lecturers' demands like improving their wages and service conditions in government owned universities across the country for the reasons that the government is not making enough money because of the bad economy (Uchendu, Anijaobi and Odigwe, 2013).

Conflict is of four different types which include interpersonal conflict, intra-group conflict, intergroup conflict and inter-organizational conflict. Interpersonal conflict can take an interpersonal form. The sources of this conflict may be personal dislikes or personality differences (Gareth & Jennifer, 2008). Intra-group is a conflict within an internal group, team or department. This type of conflict involves more than one person within a group. Inter-group conflict is a conflict between different groups, teams and departments. One group of employees can unite against other group. Such conflicts can arise from the differences in status and contradicting goals of the groups. A typical example of inter-group conflict is the situation where by lecturers that are members of ASUU agitate for their right which might be against the university management and as a result, conflict is formed. Intergroup conflict usually leads to miscommunication or even to no communication, affecting the universities' abilities to function. The last type of conflict is the inter-organizational conflict which is the conflict between different organizations (Dearborn, 2002).

Avoiding conflict management is also known as withdrawing style (Baron, 2012). In this style, assertiveness and cooperativeness are low. Baron further explained that people who fear conflict use the avoiding style to escape from conflict situations. When this style of conflict management is used, everyone loses. Competing conflict management style or forcing style is a style that is also known as the "win-lose" approach. It can be determined as a conflict management style with high assertiveness and low cooperativeness. A person seeks to reach his/her own preferred outcomes at the expense of a partner. This approach may be appropriate when quick actions are needed, for example during emergencies. Accommodating conflict management style or obliging is also called Smoothing style. This style has a high degree of cooperativeness. A manager using this style tries to get his/her own goals, objectives, and desired outcomes so as to allow partners to achieve their goals and outcomes as well. Victor, (2012) asserted that compromising conflict management style is a style that can be determined as a "give-and-take" approach with moderate levels of both assertiveness and cooperativeness. Compromise can be identified as bargaining or trading. This approach can be applied when the goals and the power of both sides are of equal importance and when it is necessary to find a temporary, timely solution. Collaborating conflict management style is a style that can be characterized by high levels of assertiveness and cooperativeness; it is often described as the "win-win" scenario. Both sides creatively work together to achieve their goals and desired outcomes benefitting all involved parties (Nnabuife, 2009).

When considering using any of the type of conflict management style to resolve or manage conflict, it is important to note that to be in conflict is also to be emotionally activated. Human conflict does not occur in the absence of emotions or behavioural responses to emotions (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001). Gardner (2003) argued that the ability to draw upon those emotions in an adaptive way leads to more effective behaviour. Gardner further stressed that before choosing a behavioural response however, one must identify and categorize one's own feelings. This means that for effective management of conflict with its measures or strategies, emotional intelligence which involves social skills, empathy, motivation, self-regulating, and self-awareness have to come into play.

Resolving or managing conflict through any of the type of conflict management style, the different types of emotional intelligence also have to be considered for it to be effective. Emotional intelligence involves the ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour comes in different types which include Self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, social awareness and social skills (Onuoha, 2001). Onuoha further posited that when these essential conflict management style and emotional intelligence styles are not given due considerations, the ability to manage the conflict within the university system becomes problematic and likewise, resolving the conflict between ASUU and FG in universities especially in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and University of Nigeria, Nsukka becomes a mirage. The extent universities in South East Zone of Nigeria have embraced conflict management through emotional intelligence calls for the present study. It is believed that the outcome of the study will not be biased as to be a representative result of all the Federal universities in the South East Zone of Nigeria.

Conflicts in Nigerian university system have been a threat to Nigerian educational and social development of the universities. In recent years, industrial relations terrain in the Nigerian university system especially in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and University of Nigeria, Nsukka experienced series of conflicts with adverse effects on the advancement of knowledge. It might be that the universities' managements recruit lecturers based on their academic qualifications and work experience without considering their emotional intelligence. Probably, this might be the reason the educational system witnessed an unprecedented industrial unrest than other social institutions. Onuoha (2001) asserted that when the teaching job becomes stressful, frustrating among the lecturers conflict sets in and as a result of this, low team spirit, lack of group cohesion and low job satisfaction comes in which is a resultant effect of lack of using emotional intelligence styles in managing the conflicts between the universities' management and the lecturers.

The conflict between Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka management and ASUU members seems to be power struggle because ASUU wants the Vice Chancellor to run the university according to the law, and also the VC should implement the recommendations of the presidential visitation panel. More so, the vice chancellor should reconstitute the Senate in accordance with the visitation panel. ASUU further posited that the point they are making is that the Senate of Nnamdi Azikiwe University is not properly constituted in accordance with the university act as clearly stipulated in section 3[1] of the third schedule of Decree 34 of 1992, now cap n139 law of the federation and we (ASUU) are saying that it is not right for the Senate to keep sitting without being properly constituted. But some believe that there is more to the ASUU action, insisting that it is a power game given that one of the deputy Vice Chancellors in the school had been appointed vice chancellor in one of the new Federal universities (Ewuzie, 2015). More so, in University of Nigeria, Nsukka, there was also agitation by ASUU of the school management not keeping to the agreement between them and the ASUU members. The process of not keeping to agreement by the university management led to ASUU strike. The school management probably might have failed to put into cognizance the importance of emotional intelligence in conflict management so as to settle the dispute. These situations in both universities show how lack of emotional intelligence causes conflict in the university and as well affects students' academic pursuit (Uchendu, Nijaobi and Odigwe, 2013).

On 1 July 2013, ASUU embarked on another strike which lasted 5 months and 15 days which was called off on 16 December 2013. Claims made by ASUU in regards to the strike are centered largely on funding and revitalization of Nigerian public universities as well as a certain earned allowance which it claims to be in arrears of 92 billion naira (Olorunsola, 2015). Also, in 2015, the recent ASUU strike in University of Nigeria, Nsukka showed that the last agreement ASUU members reached with the school management over increment of salary and the improvement of condition of services of the lecturers were not met. As such, ASUU embarked on strike (Onyekwelu, 2015).

It has been observed that University of Nigeria Nsukka and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka have for some years back faced with so many conflicts ranging from conflict between academic staff and university administrators; non-academic staff versus university administrators; students and university authorities; and students and academic staff. The conflicts have given rise to distrust and hostility among professionals and academics thus contributing in hampering smooth, effective and efficient administration in the universities. It also appeared that despite this situation, stakeholders in education such as government, seemed to develop non-challant attitude towards these conflicts sometimes, forgetting that jobs that requires regular contact with people require as much as emotional intelligence as the academic qualifications and intelligence quotient. The absence of not being aware of people's emotions most times causes disagreement and lack of unity because dealing with people, emotion is involved. When emotions such as self awareness, empathy among others are not used intelligently, conflict management becomes difficult to achieve. This is unwholesome for the university community and Nigeria educational system as a whole. More so, based on the conflicts between different groups within the communities that have affected the smooth running of the affairs of the universities, and due to the vast nature of the study, it was therefore narrowed down to inter-group conflict which is conflict between ASUU and university management. It was against this background that the researcher decided to carry out this research on emotional intelligence and conflict management in selected Federal universities in South East Zone of Nigeria.

The broad objective of this study is to establish the extent emotional intelligence affects conflict management in universities in South East Zone of Nigeria. Specifically, this study intends to;

Ascertain how empathy (emotional awareness, self-evaluation) of university management improve the obliging style of handling conflict in Universities in South East Zone of Nigeria

Research Question

How does empathy of University management improve the obliging style of handling conflict in Universities South East Zone of Nigeria?

Hypothesis

H_A: There is a significant positive relationship between empathy (emotional awareness, self-evaluation) and obliging style of handling conflict in Universities in South East Zone of Nigeria

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

Emotional Intelligence

So many people work alone. Most people work in a form of team or other type of groups. Therefore, employers are seeking for those who can play their role consistent with the group and in line with the improvement of the group (Baron, 2012). Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour (Coleman, 2008). Emotional intelligence is what causes people to appear older in terms of behaviour and mentality. In case of lacking, it makes all adults act like small children and kids (D'Arcy, 2012).

Goleman (2008) defined emotional intelligence as the ability to comprehend, perceive and manage the feelings, emotions and motivation of one's self and of others. In addition, Marquis and Huston (2009) defined emotional intelligence as the process of regulating both feelings and expressions. Organizationally desired emotions are considered standards of behaviour that indicate which emotions are appropriate in each relationship and how these emotions should be publicly expressed or displayed. Theorists studying EI posit that it is a critical ingredient of leaders, which enables them to build a cooperative and effective team. Leaders possess the ability to identify emotions in themselves and others, use emotions in their thought processes, manage emotions in themselves and others, and understand and reason with emotions. Emotional intelligence plays a vital role in the organizations because emotions that are handled effectively may contribute to how one handles the needs of individuals, how one motivates employees, and how comfortable the employees feel at work. Employees who have high levels of emotional intelligence are able to accurately perceive, understand and appraise others' emotions and build supportive networks (Salovey, 2009). They are also considered more interpersonally sensitive and understanding (Davis and Kraus, 2007), warm, protective of others, less critical and deceitful, and more likely to turn to the better perceivers for advice and reassurance (Funder and Harris, 2006).

Goleman (2004) has analyzed emotional intelligence in two main areas:

1. Personal merits and qualifications: how to manage ourselves.
2. Social merits and qualifications: how to manage our communications (Kierstead, 1999).

Each of these two extensive areas includes a number of specific components or dimensions (Cherniss, 2002). According to Goleman's model, the dimensions of emotional intelligence are:

Empathy: This dimension is the basis of emotional intelligence and refers to the ability of understanding and perceiving your own emotions, mental states, and excitements the way they occur and the effect and impact they are having on others. Empathy is having emotional sensitivity toward others, talent for becoming careful in others' emotions and the ability of reading the messages of others which they cannot express (Holahan & Seyers, 1995). This criterion includes two subcriteria:

- a. **Emotional awareness** refers to recognizing one's emotions and their effects. It involves knowing which emotions they are feeling and why, Realizing the links between their feelings and what they think, o, and say, and recognizes how their feelings affect their performance. The person is aware of his own emotions and the impact they have on others.
- b. **Self-Evaluation** this is concerned with knowing one's strengths and weaknesses. That is, being aware of their strengths and weaknesses and showing a sense of humor and perspective about themselves. Also it is the ability that allows a person to be aware of his or her limitations and strengths (Cherniss, 2002).

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

There has been much research in the area of conflict. For example Paton & Giffen (2008) said that conflict is an obstacle to achieving a desired goal. They further stated that it does not always take two to be in conflict because sometimes people are in conflict with themselves. Schmidt & Kochan (2002) see conflict as a dispute

or struggle between two parties that is characterized by overt expression of hostility and or intentional interference in the goal attainment of the opposing party. According to them, interference can involve either active attempts to block some one's goal attainment or passive resistance such as withholding necessary supplies and information from the other party. Mafarland (2004) sees conflict as situation in which persons or groups disagree over means or ends and try to establish their views in preference to others.

Interpersonal conflict – This conflict can take an interpersonal form. The sources of this conflict may be personal dislikes or personality differences (Gareth & Jennifer, 2008). A California State University Sacramento report notes that people respond in different ways to disagreements, with personal feelings, attitudes and goals contributing to the conflict. The university management usually wants the lecturers to settle their differences without its personal intervention, but sometimes the management needs to step in (Green, 2012).

Intragroup conflict – This is the conflict within an internal group, team or department. This type of conflict involves more than one person within a group (Gareth & Jennifer, 2008). The harmony within departments of the company is essential. It helps to maintain productivity and workplace morale, among other things. When two or more people do not get along together, that personal conflict can affect everyone around them. Intragroup conflict may be connected with ethnic, religious or gender prejudice, and also various personality differences. Depending on how strong the conflict is, a manager may need outside help to resolve the issues. At this stage, it could be useful for a manager to have a trusted or otherwise objective third party who has experience in conflict management and settling disputes.

Intergroup conflict – This is the conflict between different groups, teams and departments. Battles between accounting and operations teams or between frontline workers and online customer service agents can be a big problem, especially if customers are involved. One group of employees can unite against other group. Such conflicts can arise from the differences in status and contradicting goals of the groups. Likewise, lecturers in support of ASUU might agitate for their right which might be against the university management and as a result, conflict is formed.

Intergroup conflict usually leads to miscommunication or even to no communication, affecting the universities' abilities to function. The university management can try to resolve the problem through problem solving tactics or following an internal dispute resolution process. Sometimes a facilitator can be useful to help discuss issues of conflict and related concerns. Such types of conflicts should be solved as quickly as possible because the problem continues otherwise, it can destroy the university (Green, 2012).

Interorganizational conflict - is the conflict between different organizations (Jones & George, 2008). There are three types of interorganizational conflict: substantive conflict, emotional conflict and cultural conflict.

Conflict is a necessity of any university. It might be functional or constructive where it supports the goals of the organization and improves its performance. Functional conflict may actually encourage greater work effort and help task performance. One of the main benefits of constructive conflict is that it gives its members a chance to identify the problems and see the opportunities. Also it can inspire to new ideas, learning, and growth among individuals. When individuals engage in constructive conflict, they can learn more about themselves and others. In addition, it can help to improve relationships among members, because when two sides work on resolving a disagreement together, they feel that they have mutually accomplished something (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2008).

Conflict can also be dysfunctional or destructive hinders organizational performance and leads to decreased productivity. This conflict orientation is characterized by competing individual interests overriding the business's overall interests. When this conflict occurs, universities managements withhold information from one another. Employees sabotage others' work, either intentionally or through subtle, conflict-motivated disinterest in teamwork (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2008). The differences between these two types of conflict are not in their sources but in the manner in which each of them is expressed. In constructive conflict, each party resists attacking the other. Instead, both sides take part in thoughtful discussion. They listen to each other's point of view, and try to find mutually beneficial solutions. By contrast, in dysfunctional conflict both parties are involved in confrontation which does not lead to any beneficial solution (Whetten & Cameron, 2012).

Conflict management refers to attempt to control or regulate conflict through a number of measures. The conflict management measures refer to the internal mechanisms used by the various authorities in resolving conflict. The measures through which conflict management can be achieved include withdrawing, avoidance, structural changes, compromise and smoothing (Ladipo, 2007).

Conflict management is the principle that all conflicts cannot necessarily be resolved, but learning how to manage conflicts can decrease the odds of non-productive escalation. Conflict management involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills, and establishing a structure for management of conflict in your environment.' All members of every organisation need to have ways of keeping conflict to a minimum and of solving problems caused by conflict, before conflict becomes a major obstacle

to your work. Conflict management represents a paradigm shift from the more traditional approaches based on the concept that conflict should be avoided at all costs, and when present, resolved or eliminated. Indeed Porter-O'Grady (2004) argues that conflict should be embraced rather than feared. Well managed conflict is the key to effective strategic decision making. Conflict management must be proactive rather than reactive, and therefore mediation strategies should be in place a priori. Assumptions and differences need to be openly acknowledged and, conflict management these days are based on emotional intelligence. Not all manoeuvres to limit conflict result in improved effectiveness.

Types of Conflict management styles

Conflict management styles refer to how we approach the other party in a conflict situation. For effective conflict management in organizations, employees should learn to apply different conflict management styles in different situations. Thomas and Kilmann (2002) identified five conflict management styles based on two dimensions: assertiveness and cooperativeness. Assertiveness is the motivation to achieve individual goals, objectives, and outcomes, while cooperativeness assesses the desire to help the other party to achieve its goals or outcomes. Thomas and Kilmann (2002), the five styles for resolving conflicts in preparation for negotiation are integrating, obliging, compromising, avoiding and dominating. These conflict management styles are explained below;

Avoiding Conflict Management Style: This is also known as withdrawing style. In this style assertiveness and cooperativeness are low. People who fear conflict use the avoiding style to escape from conflict situations. When this style of conflict management is used, everyone loses. The biggest disadvantage is that the issue is never directly addressed or resolved. This style is appropriate to use in the situation where there is no chance of winning or when disruption would be very costly (Victor, 2012).

Competing Conflict Management Style or Forcing style: This style is also known as the "win-lose" approach. It can be determined as a conflict management style with high assertiveness and low cooperativeness. A person seeks to reach his/her own preferred outcomes at the expense of a partner. This approach may be appropriate when quick actions are needed, for example during emergencies. Also it can be useful when an unpopular solution must be applied and a deadline is near. This style is inappropriate in an open and participative climate. Its strength is speed and the weakness is that it creates offenses of one of the parties that didn't win anything (Victor, 2012).

Accommodating Conflict Management Style or Obliging: It is also called smoothing style. This style has a high degree of cooperativeness. A manager using this style tries to get his/her own goals, objectives, and desired outcomes to allow partners to achieve their goals and outcomes. This conflict management style is important for saving future relations between the parties. Obliging can be a very useful conflict-handling strategy if it is possible to get something in return from the other party. This approach encourages cooperation. Accommodating strategy may actually help individuals to strengthen their future negotiating position. Accommodating behaviour is appropriate when a person who knows that he/she was wrong or when the relationship is important (Victor, 2012).

Compromising Conflict Management Style: This style can be determined as a "give-and-take" approach with moderate levels of both assertiveness and cooperativeness. Compromise can be identified as bargaining or trading. This approach can be applied when the goals and the power of both sides are of equal importance and when it is necessary to find a temporary, timely solution (Victor, 2012).

Collaborating Conflict Management Style: This style can be characterized by high levels of assertiveness and cooperativeness; it is often described as the "win-win" scenario. Both sides creatively work together to achieve the goals and desired outcomes benefitting all involved parties. It can be difficult to implement this style as the process of collaborating mandates sincere effort by all parties and it may take a lot of time to reach a consensus (Victor, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Personality Trait Theory: Personality trait theory is an approach to the study of human personality. This theory was propounded by Gordon Allport (1936). Allport was primarily interested in the measurement of traits, which can be defined as habitual patterns of behavior, thought, and emotion. According to this perspective, traits are relatively stable over time, differ across individuals (for example, some people are outgoing whereas others are shy, and others are provocative at the slightest anger while others are mild at the slightest provocation), and all these influence the behavior of people.

In other words, individual behaviour is the result of inherited or acquired traits. Allport (1936) subscribe to the premise that certain traits will be disposed to react to a given situation in a certain way. Personality trait research has provided relative stable and predictable outcomes (McKenna, 2004; Kidder, 2005). For example, an individual with the personality traits of "conscientiousness" shows the qualities of dependability, carefulness and responsibility whereas a person with neuroticism shows the degree to which he or she is anxious, irritable, temperamental, and moody. Neurotic people have the tendency to have emotional adjustment problems and habitually experience stress and depression (Ones, Chockalingam & Schmidt, 2003).

This implies that university managements should always put into consideration the personality trait of individuals before recruiting. That is to say, a recruited lecturer with neurotic personality trait would make the school system uncomfortable and at the same time, cause crises either within the lecturers or make lecturers to agitate against the school management when their demands are not met.

Empirical Review

Many researchers have conducted research on emotional intelligence as it is used with conflict management within organizations. Some of these researches are given below;

Jelena (2012), carried out a research on the influence of empathy on managing conflict in University of Ibadan. The aim of the study was to show how school management would use empathy to oblige their lecturers to put aside their difference so as to improve their performances and to avoid the activities of ASUU of embarking on strike. The study was empirically tested through structural equation modelling. The sample included 59 respondents were used for the study. The findings revealed that empathy helps in the creating, accumulating, organising and utilising, organisations which positively affect the competitive performance of the university lecturers in producing quality graduates because empathy helps the school management in using obliging to have a high degree of cooperativeness. In an organization, a manager using this style tries to get his/her own goals, objectives, and desired outcomes to allow partners to achieve their goals and outcomes. This conflict management style is important for saving future relations between the parties. Obliging can be a very useful conflict-handling strategy if it is possible to get something in return from the other party. This approach encourages cooperation, thereby, increasing the profitability of the organization.

Adomi & Anie (2006), investigate the pattern of conflict management in Nigerian libraries. The researchers employed descriptive design and questionnaire to collect data from professional and para-professional staff of three Nigerian University libraries. T-test was used to analyse the hypotheses for the study. The study found out that majority of the respondents perceived conflict as positive and can be stimulated by library managers. The study further found out that interpersonal conflicts are the dominant conflicts in Nigerian libraries, and accommodation ranks highest as technique of conflict avoidance. The findings of this study compare with that of Olorunsola (1997) who examined the sources of internal conflict among library staff at the University of Ilorin Library. The latter study revealed bureaucratic structure, poor communication and organizational policies, and inadequate material resources as the major causes of conflict in the organization. The close inter-dependency between units in the Library was also identified as a source of friction among staff. The study provided evidence for the effectiveness of managing conflict through prevention, by means of improved and well managed emotional intelligence, communication, and argued for a pro-active approach to handling conflict.

Oloyede (2009), investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and subordinates' conflict management strategies using 5 organizations in Lagos State. Research instrument was a 55-item questionnaire which was distributed among 90 employees of Golestan province gas-company in Lagos out of which 82 was returned and only 79 was usable. Hence, response rate in this research was 91%. While Validity was approved based on conformity factor analysis results, reliability was approved by Cronbach's alpha which more than 0.7 was obtained. In order to test hypothesis we used Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis and structural equation modeling. Research findings indicated that emotional intelligence is negatively associated with problem solving and bargaining strategies. However there is no any significant relationship between emotional intelligence and control strategy. Since conflict management styles are affected by variety of antecedents, future studies are needed to investigate other influence factors such as personal characteristic, innovation and etc. There is also need to investigate this research among managers and subordinates simultaneously in order to compare results.

Barbuto & Ye (2006), examined the impact of emotional intelligence on handling lecturers' agitation in University of Ile-Ife, Osun State. ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses for the study. The study found out that university management with high levels of emotional intelligence when positively applied with social skills to influence others, create strong relationships with lecturers' agitation, and are effective motivators by controlling their emotions and understanding their weaknesses would avoid members of ASUU in the university from disrupting the activities of the university by going on strike.

Victor (2012), carried out a study on emotional intelligence and managing conflict in an organization. The study suggests managers with high emotional intelligence may be more capable of getting more output from less people when conflict is effectively managed and recognizing the nuances of dynamic situations while creating positive outcomes.

Darling & Fogliasso (2009), sought how to deal with conflict in the workplace, and effectively manage conflict across cultural boundaries in Edo State using empathy and compromising. Using a multinational bank with a diverse workforce as a case study, the researchers first established the basic premise that conflict is a fact of life. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. Based on the results, they defined the causes of conflict – the different expectations, experiences, frames of reference and goals. They put forth a three-phase model for conflict management, incorporating nine different steps. The incorporation of empathy and compromising will definitely handle conflict effectively.

Barrett, Lane, Sechrest, and Schwartz (2000), carried out a research on relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management style. The study was empirically tested through structural equation modelling. The sample included 329 companies both in Slovenia and Croatia with more than 50 employees. The findings revealed that conflict management helps in the creating, accumulating, organising and utilising, organisations which positively affect the competitive performance of the organization thereby, increasing the profitability of the organization. More so, the research findings indicated that emotional Intelligence is positively associated with problem solving and bargaining strategies. However, there is significant relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management style.

Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso, (2007), carried out a research to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and conflict management styles among high school teachers, and identified the styles of teachers' conflict management. 108 teachers went through a quantitative study during the year 2006. Data was gathered by two questionnaires, "Siberia Shrink" for EI, and "Robbins" for conflict management styles. Data was analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics, including mean, Kalmogorov -Smirnov, Pearson correlation. The results of Pearson Product Moment correlation revealed that conflict management styles had significant and positive relationship with emotional intelligence and cooperation (mean =3/01) style was the most prominent conflict-handling style among teachers.

Ali, Azim, and Krishnan, (2005), investigated the preferred interpersonal conflict management style(s) and level of emotion self-management competencies (emotion expression and emotion regulation) of certified public accountants in the South African context. A cross-sectional design, including a biographical questionnaire, the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument and selected EQ-Map scales, was utilized to collect data from a convenience sample of respondents. The results show that respondents are able to adapt their conflict management styles to meet the demands of a specific accountant-client relationship. Accountants can also express their emotions when they use one of the more constructive conflict management styles. Their emotional expression is low when they use more destructive conflict management styles. However, they have some limitations in regulating their emotions. This failure to manage negative emotions could impact negatively on the accountant-client relationship. It is recommended that interventions should be implemented by the regulatory body (the CPASA) in South Africa to increase the awareness of certified public accountant. They need to understand the importance and use of conflict management styles and their competency in regulating their emotions constructively have to be enhanced.

Ogene (2010), examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and effective leadership to evaluate the tendency of emotional control of the working class both male and female at a managerial level in a private and public sector of Nigeria mainly Banking sector. A survey of 50 people is conducted by distributing. Random sampling technique is used to answer the instrument of the study. SPSS software was used to analyze the data collected based on descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, percentage. Emotional Intelligence has become increasingly popular as a measure for identifying potentially effective leaders, and as a tool for developing effective leadership skills. There is little empirical research that substantiates the efficacy of emotional intelligence in these areas. The result indicates that the relationship between leadership style and Emotional Intelligence is positive and significant.

Afzal (2010), carried out a research for the evaluation of a model of emotional intelligence and conflict management styles. Regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The result shows that there is a significant positive relationship among emotional intelligence, empathy, social skills and conflict strategies. In a similar research, the result of Bruce (2012) showed that emotional intelligence abilities can increase problem solving success of managers within an organization.

Agbonna, Yusuf and Onifade, (2009) carried out a research to study emotional intelligence and conflict management styles using employees in the Human Resources Division at XYZ University in Edo State. Specifically, it aims to examine the correlation of supervisors' emotional intelligence assessed by themselves and by their subordinates. Second, this study explored the relationship between emotional intelligence possessed by the supervisors and styles of handling conflict as reported by their subordinates. Three sets of surveys were used to

measure the results: Emotional Quotient Index (EQI) (Self-rating), Emotional Quotient Index (EQI) (Observer) and Rahim Organisational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) Form A surveys. From the correlation analysis, there was no significant correlation between supervisors' emotional intelligence ratings of themselves and the ratings given by their subordinates. Results from these surveys also showed that supervisors' emotional intelligence was associated with using more integrating and compromising conflict management styles by the subordinates.

Chuang (2004), examine how emotional intelligence affects the ways diverse groups function, with emphasis on group processes and intra-group conflict. Five major individual demographic attributes were defined as influencing organizational functioning: Age, Gender, Race/Ethnicity, Organizational tenure, and Functional background. The research was a survey design. Z-test was used to analyse the study. The researchers argue that intensity and content of emotional intelligence, not only have direct impact on intra-group conflict, but also moderate the relationship between group diversity and intra-group conflict, depending on the degree of value congruence and the value content shared among group members.

Dearborn (2002), examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management styles of the managers of Tarbiat Modarres University. The research method used in this study is descriptive – correlation method and the estimated sample volume are equal to 160 people that considering the small volume of the research population, sampling has been conducted with the method of census. The measurement instrument includes the two questionnaires of Shering's emotional intelligence questionnaire and Thomas's conflict management styles questionnaire that the obtained reliability coefficient for them is 0.84 and 0.79, respectively. For analyzing the collected data, the MANOVA analysis statistical method and Multiple Regression have been used. Findings based on the statistical estimations show that there is a positive and significant relationship between the dimensions of emotional intelligence - except for the social and self-awareness skills - and conflict management styles.

Oluwale (2010), investigated the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and the moderating role of trait emotional intelligence (EI) in Delta State. Participants were 320 public servants (male = 180, female = 140) randomly selected from five states in Southwestern Nigeria. Measures of trait EI, OCB, and conflict resolution strategies were administered to the respondents. Multiple regression was used to analyse the data collected. The results indicate that forcing and withdrawing strategies negatively and significantly predicted OCB. Confronting, compromising and smoothing strategies significantly predicted OCB. Trait EI moderated the relationship between OCB and forcing and withdrawing strategies. It was recommended that counsellors and psychologists should develop programmes to foster emotional intelligence and conflict resolution for both subordinates and superiors in work organisations.

Chukwuma, (2009) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and conflict management was using 229 college students and 43 participants from organizational settings. A positive correlation was found between emotional intelligence scores and use of the integrating style of handling conflict with one's bosses, one's subordinates and one's coworkers. Of the five styles of handling conflict, emotional intelligence had the highest significant positive relationship with the integrating style; this style is generally considered to be the best approach to handling conflict. High levels of emotional intelligence were associated with high levels of socially desirable responding. Emotional intelligence scores decreased with age, and no significant differences were found between scores for males and females. Regression analysis revealed that the three integrating styles of handling conflict, socially desirable responding, age and years of education explain 24% of the variance in emotional intelligence. A significant positive relationship was found between being happy in the workplace and use of the integrating style with subordinates and co-workers. The findings in this study may be applicable for organizations, in that incorporating programs aimed at increasing employees' emotional intelligence skills may be conducive to a more satisfying work environment, as well as an increase in profitability for the organization.

Schutte, Malouff, Bibik, Coston, Greeson, Jedlicka, and Wendorf (2001), ascertain the relationships of the five dimensions of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills of supervisors to subordinates' strategies of handling conflict: problem solving and bargaining. Data (N = 1,395) for this study were collected with questionnaires from MBA students in seven countries (U.S., Greece, China, Bangladesh, Hong Kong and Macau, South Africa, and Portugal). Psychometric properties of the measures were tested and improved with exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis and analysis of indicator and internal consistency reliabilities, and the hypotheses were tested with a structural equations model for each country. Results in the U.S. and in the combined sample provided support for the model which suggests that self-awareness is positively associated with self-regulation, empathy, and social skills; self regulation is positively associated with empathy and social skills; empathy and social skills are positively associated with motivation; which in turn, is positively associated with problem solving strategy and negatively associated with bargaining strategy.

SUMMARY OF REVIEWED LITERATURE

This study reviewed the concept of emotional intelligence which involved (EI) the ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour. This study also reviewed the different types of conflict and was anchored on intergroup conflict. Conflict management as it relates to emotional intelligence was also reviewed where some authors' researches and their findings were reviewed. In one of the findings, it was noted that empathy helps in the creating, accumulating, organising and utilising, organisations which positively affect the competitive performance of the university lecturers in producing quality graduates because empathy helps the school management in using obliging to have a high degree of cooperativeness. In an organization, a manager using this style tries to get his/her own goals, objectives, and desired outcomes to allow partners to achieve their goals and outcomes. This conflict management style is important for saving future relations between the conflicting parties. Obliging can be a very useful conflict-handling strategy if it is possible to get something in return from the other party. This approach encourages cooperation, thereby, increasing the profitability of the organization.

Jelena (2012) carried out a research on the influence of empathy on managing conflict in University of Ibadan. The result revealed that empathy helps in the creating, accumulating, organising and utilising, organisations which positively affect the competitive performance of the university lecturers in producing quality graduates. This is because empathy helps the school management in using obliging to have a high degree of cooperativeness. Based on this study universities in the South East Zone of Nigeria have not really practiced empathy in managing conflict. For this reasons, conflict becomes inevitable thereby hampering the smooth running of the school programmes.

Adomi & Anie (2006) revealed in their study that conflict can be perceived as positive when properly managed. Some universities in the South East Zone of Nigeria, sometimes see conflict from the negative perspective because of lack of adequate management. This had led to strikes between ASUU and the school authority (that is government) which have interrupted the school activities.

Oloyede (2009) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and subordinates' conflict management strategies using 5 organizations in Lagos State. Oloyede found out that there is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and control strategy. Since conflict management styles are affected by variety of antecedents, future studies are needed to investigate other influence factors such as personal characteristic, innovation and etc. Some South East Zone Universities of Nigeria believed much on these findings without considering other factors. Strikes will continue to ensue until other factors are given due consideration before it would be settled amicably.

Victor (2012) carried out a study on emotional intelligence and managing conflict in an organization. The study suggests managers with high emotional intelligence may be more capable of getting more output from less people when conflict is effectively managed and recognizing the nuances of dynamic situations while creating positive outcomes. When applied in the university settings of the South East Zone of Nigeria, this result might not apply because some of the lecturers are sensitive to changes and learned as well. This might disrupt the result and makes it not to work in the university settings.

Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso, (2007) carried out a research to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and conflict management styles among high school teachers, and identified the styles of teachers' conflict management. The findings of this research revealed that conflict management styles had significant and positive relationship with emotional intelligence and cooperation style was the most prominent conflict-handling style among teachers. The findings of this research can still be applied in the universities of South East Zone of Nigeria because different styles of conflict management and emotional intelligence were involved.

DATA ANALYSIS

The study employed survey research design. Survey design indicates the direction and the magnitude of the influence of one variable to the other. More so, it ensures that the information collected is relevant and useful to conduct research project more effectively and efficiently. In this study, attention was paid to the variables of study which are Conflict Management (CM) in terms of Obliging Style (OS) as (dependent variables) and Emotional Intelligence as the independent variables in terms of Emotional Awareness (EA), Self-Evaluation (SE). Based on the variables given above, the study showed how empathy (emotional awareness, self-evaluation) of university management improves the obliging style of handling conflict in Universities in South East Zone of Nigeria.

The population of this study was made up of lecturers of the selected two (2) South East Zone Universities (Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and University of Nigeria, Nsukka) of Nigeria.

Table 1: Two South East Zone Universities of Nigeria

S/N	Institutions	Number of Teaching Staff
1	Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka	1282
2	University of Nigeria, Nsukka	989
Total		2271

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

Proportional sampling technique was adopted in administering the research instrument to the respondents. This technique helped an equal proportion of the academic staff within the sample frame to have equal chance of being selected. The sample size was obtained through Taro Yamane's formula which is given as;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = Sample size

N = Total Population

e = sampling error (0.05) or 5%

Where N = 2271

Substituting in the formula, we have

$$n = \frac{2271}{1 + 2271 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{2271}{6.6775} = 340.0973$$

Thus, the sample size is 340 academic staff of the two selected Federal universities in the South East Zone of Nigeria. This study made use of purposive or judgmental sampling technique in selecting participants for the study. The targeted participants for the study are academic staff whose ranks range from assistants lecturer up to the rank of professor. However, the proportion of the questionnaire to be administered to each of the selected Federal university was determined using Bowley's proportional allocation formula.

Thus,

$$nh = \frac{n \times Nh}{N}$$

Where, nh = Number of questionnaire allocated to each university

n = Total sample size

Nh = Number of lecturers in each of the selected university

N = Population size

For Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka,

n = 340

Nh = 1282

N = 2271

$$nh = \frac{340 \times 1282}{2271}$$

Thus, nh = 191.93

Approximately 192 copies of questionnaire were distributed to Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

For University of Nigeria, Nsukka,

n = 340

Nh = 989

N = 2271

$$nh = \frac{340 \times 989}{2271}$$

Thus, $nh = 148.07$

Approximately 148 copies of questionnaire were distributed to University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Table 2: Questionnaire Allocation to each of the selected University

S/N	Institutions	Population	Questionnaire Allocated
1	Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka	1282	192
2	University of Nigeria, Nsukka	989	148
Total		2271	340

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

The major source of data for the study was the primary source. The primary source made use of questionnaire to collect information on emotional intelligence and conflict management. However, overt attempts were made to compliment the primary data with the secondary information gotten through literature review.

Structured questionnaire was used for collection of necessary data for this study. The questionnaire was made up of sections A and B. Section 'A' sought information on personal data of the respondents. Section 'B' consists of information relating to statement of the problem, objectives and research questions. The questionnaire was structured on a five points rating scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The questions in the questionnaire were well structured in line with the objectives of the study. The instrument was subjected to experts' evaluation in measurement and management from which necessary corrections were made before the questionnaire was distributed to respondents.

The instrument was pilot tested using test re-test method. 40 copies of the questionnaire were administered in two separate occasions within an interval of two weeks. The data generated from the respondents were then correlated using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation co-efficient.

Table 3: Reliability Test Table

S/N	Pretest Response	Post-test Response	$x-y = di$	di^2
1	36	35	1	1
2	37	36	1	1
3	32	34	-2	4
4	35	33	2	4
5	37	36	1	1
6	30	32	-2	4
7	34	36	-2	4
8	32	34	-2	4
9	35	36	-1	1
10	35	37	-2	4
Total				28

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

$$= 1 - \frac{6\sum di^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

$$= 1 - \frac{6(28)}{10(10^2 - 1)}$$

$$= 0.83$$

A correlation coefficient of 0.83 was obtained which shows that the instrument was reliable.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The data obtained were presented in tables, described using simple percentages and the hypothesis were tested using multiple regression analysis. The researcher administered 340 copies of the questionnaire and was able to retrieve 300 monitored and properly filled copies of the questionnaire. Thus, 88.24% of the sample size was used for the study.

Test of Hypothesis

Decision Rule: If $p < 0.05$ or $p = 0.05$, it is significant but if $p > 0.05$, it is not significant

H_A: There is a significant positive relationship between empathy (emotional awareness, self-evaluation) and obliging style of handling conflict in Universities in South East Zone of Nigeria

Table 4: Model Summary of Test of Hypothesis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.015 ^a	.747	.663	15.140

a. Predictors: (Constant), Obliging_style

R is the square root of R-Squared and is the correlation between the observed and predicted values of dependent variable. This signifies that the R- value is 0.015 showing that there is a significant positive relationship between empathy (emotional awareness, self-evaluation) and obliging style of handling conflict in Universities in South East Zone of Nigeria. More so, the R-Square - value which is 0.747 is the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (Obliging style) which can be explained by the independent variables (emotional awareness and self-evaluation). This is an overall measure of the strength of association and does not reflect the extent to which any particular independent variable is associated with the dependent variable. Hence, there is a strong relationship between empathy and obliging style.

Table 5: Summary of multiple Regression Analysis showing relationship between empathy and obliging of handling conflict

Model	Un standardize coefficient B	Standard coefficient Std. Error	Beta (β)	T	Sig
(Constant)	25.238	29.402		8.583	.000
Empathy (EA, SE)	1.421	.477	.192	9.279	.000*
Obliging style	.376	.481	.169	4.923	.000*

* Significant at 0.05 Level

Table 5 shows that $\beta = 0.192, .169$; $t = 9.279, 4.923$; $P (.000) < 0.05$. This reveals that there is a positive significant relationship between empathy (emotional awareness, self-evaluation) and obliging style of handling conflict in Universities in South East Zone of Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result value of $\beta = 0.192$, showing the strength of empathy at $P(.000) < 0.05$ and $t = 0.169$ for obliging style at $P (.000) < 0.05$ showed that there is a positive relationship between empathy (emotional awareness, self-evaluation) and obliging style of handling conflict in Universities in South East. This indicates that empathy which involved emotional awareness and self-evaluation work best with obliging style of handling conflict in Universities in South East Zone of Nigeria.

Based on the statistical result of the hypothesis showed that there is a significant positive relationship between empathy (emotional awareness, self-evaluation) and obliging style of handling conflict in Universities in South East Zone of Nigeria. The findings shows that empathy helps people work with other people in a mutual way which increases the smooth cooperation of the employees. It helps the employees to work together so as to allow each of them to achieve their goals and outcomes. In confirmation to this finding, Jelena (2012), found out that empathy helps in the creating, accumulating, organising and utilising, organisations which positively affect the competitive performance of the university lecturers in producing quality graduates because empathy helps the school management in using obliging to have a high degree of cooperativeness. In an organization, a manager using this style tries to get his/her own goals, objectives, and desired outcomes to allow partners to achieve their goals and outcomes. This conflict resolution style is important for saving future relations between the parties. Obliging can be a very useful conflict-handling strategy if it is possible to get something in return from the other party. This approach encourages cooperation, thereby, increasing the profitability of the organization.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was deduced that empathy helps the school management and lecturers to be aware of ones and others emotions, and react politely to them; and it helps in self-awareness of one's limitations and strengths so as to use empathy through emotional awareness and self evaluation to avert and handle conflict in Universities in South East Zone of Nigeria. In addition, integrating conflict management style is important for saving future relations between the parties. Obliging can be a very useful conflict-handling strategy if it is possible to get something in return from the other party. This approach encourages cooperation, thereby, increasing the profitability of the organization. More so, empathy helps people work with other people in a mutual way which increases the smooth cooperation of the employees. It helps the employees to work together so as to allow each of them to achieve their goals and outcomes. In essence, university management with high levels of emotional intelligence when positively applied with empathy to influence others, create strong relationships with lecturers' agitation, and are effective motivators by controlling their emotions and understanding their weaknesses would avoid members of ASUU in the university from disrupting the activities of the university by going on strike.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following were recommended;

1. The management of the universities in South East Zone of Nigeria and other universities/tertiary institutions should consider emotional intelligence as one of their criteria for employing lecturers so as to avoid unnecessary conflict that would arise within the university system.
2. The management of the universities in South East Zone of Nigeria should also use obliging to handle conflict because the combination of obliging and empathy handles conflict effectively.
3. The management of the universities in South East Zone of Nigeria should use empathy in handling conflict so as to ensure effective management of conflict within the universities.

REFERENCES

- Agbonna; Y., Yusuf, M., & Onifade, C. (2009). Sources of motivation, interpersonal conflict management styles & leadership effectiveness: A structural model. *Psychological Reports*, 98(1), 3-20.
- Adomi, S. & Anie, P. S. (2006). Trust as a mediator of the relationship between organizational justice and work outcomes: test of a social exchange model. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23(3), 267-285.
- Afzal, B. E. (2010). Climate formation: Issues and extensions. *Academy of Management Review*, 4, 837-847.
- ASUU Strike Bulletin (2015). *Archive ASUU Strike Bulletins*. Available at www.asuubulletin.org.ng
- Azamosa, S. M. (2004). Organizational conflict: a comparative analysis of conflict styles across cultures. *The International Journal of Conflict Management*, 7(1), 71-81.
- Ali, K., Azim, A., & Krishnan, A. (2005). multi method examination of the benefits and detriments of intra group conflict, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40, 256-82
- Barbuto, D. & Ye, A. (2006). Relationship between the Big Five Personality Factors and Conflict, *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 9(4), 336-356
- Barling, L., Slater, F., & Kelloway, T. (2000). Conflict Management Styles and Emotional Intelligence, *National Changhua University of Education*
- Barrett, J. H., Lane, C. S., Sechrest, W. Y., & Schwartz, M. G. (2000). Model of Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Management Strategies: A Study in Seven Countries, *The International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 10(4), 302-326.
- Baron, R. (2012). Emotoinal quotient inventory (EQ-i):Technical manual, Toranto: Multi-Health System.
- Bar-On, R. (1997). *Bar On Emotional Quotient Inventory, A Measure of Emotional Intelligence*, ON-North Tonawanda, NY, Multi-Health Systems Inc, Toronto,.
- Boyatzis, J. K. (2009). Toward understanding and measuring conditions of trust: Evolution of a conditions of trust inventory. *Journal of Management*, 17(3), 643.

- Bradberry, P. T. & Greaves, S. (2002). *Relationship of Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Management Styles among Management Teachers and Students*, UAC funded filed study Department of Management Studies. Chennai: University of Madras.
- Christa, C. K. W., Garashi, M. A., Odhiambo, A. H., & Ochieng, S. (2012). *Origins and consequences of emotions in organizational teams*. Chichester, UK: Wiley.
- Chuang, D. R. (2004). What is the difference between organizational culture and organizational climate? A native's point of view on a decade of paradigm wars. *Academy of Management Review*, 21(3), 619-654.
- Chukwuma, G. E. (2009). *Conflict in schools: Student nurses' conflict management styles*. Nurse Education Today 29, 100–107.
- Chukwura, K. T. (2014). The effects of interpersonal trust on work group performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84(3), 445-455.
- Coleman, A. (2008). *A Dictionary of Psychology* (3 ed.). Oxford University Press
- Coleman, V. C. (2008). Examining the relationship between leadership, emotional intelligence and intuition in senior female managers. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 27(4), 250-264.
- D'Arcy, S. B. (2012). Building the emotional intelligence of groups. *Harvard Business Review*, 79(3), 81-90.
- Dearborn, A. E. (2002). Emotional intelligence and team performance: The good, the bad and the ugly. *International journal of organizational analysis*, 10(4), 343-362.
- Dukor (2015). Pursuit of rule of law or power game? Available at www.unizik.edu.org/news.html retrieved January, 5th, 2016.
- Erik Erikson (1902–1994). *Psychosocial Development*. New York: McGraw – Hill.
- Goleman, D. (1995). The emotional and social intelligences of effective leadership: An emotional and social skill approach. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23(2), 169-185.
- Goleman, D. (1998). Leader Self-Reported Emotional Intelligence and Perceived Employee Creativity: An Exploratory Study. *Creativity & Innovation Management*, 16(3), 250-264.
- Goleman, D. (2004). Leader Self-Reported Emotional Intelligence and Perceived Employee Creativity: An Exploratory Study. *Creativity & Innovation Management*, 16(3), 250-264.
- Goleman, D. (2008). Relationship-based approach to leadership: Development of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory of leadership over 25 years: Applying a multi-level multi-domain perspective. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 6(2), 219-247.
- Gordon A. (1936). *Personality Trait Theory*. London, Hill-Top Publishing House.
- Jelena, A. C. (2012). Emotional intelligence and conflict resolution in nursing. *Contemporary nurse : a journal for the Australian nursing profession*, 13(1), 94-100.
- Mayer, L. W. & Salovey, R. M. (2005). Transformational leader behaviors and their effects on followers' trust in leader, satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviors. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 1(2), 107-142.
- Mayer, L. W., Salovey, R. M., & Caruso, R. T. (2007). Organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover among psychiatric technicians. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 59(5), 603-609. Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Staff Conditions of services (nd).
- Ogene, E. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- O'Grady, A. G. (2004). Role of individual attachments to the dissolution of inter-organisational relationships. *Academy of Management Journal*, 35, 22-60.
- Oloyede, M. S. (2009). Health, performance and emotional intelligence: An exploratory study of retail managers. *Stress and Health*, 18(2), 63-68.
- Onyeizugbe, U. C. (2013). *"Practical guide to research methodology in Management"*. Department of Business Administration, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Good Success Press, Onitsha. Pp.87-88.
- Onyekwelu, D. H. (2014). *A Brief Analysis of 20 Years of Emotional Intelligence: An Introduction to Current Advances in EI Assessment and Application*: Springer.
- Porter-O'Grady, K. S. (2004). The effects of leader and follower emotional intelligence on performance and attitude: An exploratory study. *Leadership Quarterly*, 13(3), 243-274.
- Rahim, D. E. (2006). Trust and managerial problem solving. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 17, 229-239.
- Rahim, D. & Bonoma, P. (2009). What is emotional intelligence? In P. Salovey & D. Sluyter (Eds.), *Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Implications for educators* (3–31), New York: Cambridge University.
- Schutte, N. S. & Malouff, J. M. (1999), *Measuring Emotional Intelligence and Related Constructs*, United Kingdom, The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., Bibik, R., Coston, J., Greeson, T., Jedlicka, F., & Wendorf, E. (2001). Types of intra group conflict and affective reactions, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 20(3/4), 219-230
- Thomas, M. & Kilmann, M. (2002). Relationship of school administrators self-awareness with conflict management strategies, *Journal of New Thoughts on Education*, 1(4), 35-48

Victor, A. T. (2012). On the several facets of personality assessment: the case of social acuity. *Journal of Personality*. 54, 528-550.

Cite this Article: Onyeizugbe CU, Orogbu LO and Oyigbo MC (2016). Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Management in Selected Universities in South East Zone of Nigeria. Greener Journal of Business and Management, 6(3):077-093, <http://doi.org/10.15580/GJBMS.2016.3.101516165>