The role of organisational culture in conflict management among university stakeholders

iD **Bunmi Isaiah Omodan**

Walter Sisulu University, Eastern Cape, South Africa.
Email: bomodan@wsu.ac.za

ABSTRACT

Organisational conflict is a pervasive issue in university systems, particularly in South Africa, which can harm the work environment and productivity if left unaddressed. This research investigates how organisational culture affects conflict management practices among university stakeholders and proposes measures to establish a culture that promotes effective conflict resolution. Drawing on the competing values framework (CVF) and social identity theory (SIT), the study adopts a transformative paradigm perspective, utilising a participatory research design to encourage collaborative problem-solving. Ten prominent stakeholders were purposefully selected from a specific university, including two deans, two heads of departments, two lecturers, two student leaders, and two non-teaching staff members. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather data, which were then analysed thematically. The results indicate that a culture of respect, inclusivity, and openness, as well as training and resources, significantly affect conflict resolution. Consequently, open communication, active listening, collaboration, and a culture of diversity, inclusivity, and respect were identified as practical approaches to create a culture of effective conflict resolution. The study concludes that establishing a culture that promotes effective conflict resolution in universities necessitates prioritising open communication, active listening, and collaboration and fostering a culture of diversity, inclusivity, and respect.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to knowledge by highlighting the importance of fostering a culture of respect, inclusivity, and openness in universities. It emphasises the need to provide stakeholders with training and resources to effectively manage organisational conflicts to ensure a positive working and learning environment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict is inevitable in organisations, including universities, where stakeholders hold varying interests and values. Universities are complex organisations that bring together diverse stakeholders, including lecturers, students, administrators, and other staff, who may have competing priorities and perspectives. Conflict can arise from differences in opinion on academic policies, research interests, or resource allocation or even from personal disagreements (Fowden & Moore, 2012; Rockett, Fan, Dwyer, & Foy, 2017; Yidana, 2022). If left unmanaged, these conflicts can escalate and negatively impact the work environment, leading to decreased productivity, increased turnover rates, and a breakdown in trust and collaboration among stakeholders.

Effective conflict management is crucial for maintaining a healthy and productive university work environment. Conflict management involves a range of strategies, including communication, negotiation, mediation, and arbitration, that can be used to resolve conflicts constructively and collaboratively (Barsky, 2016; Bercovitch & Jackson, 2001; Roche, Teague, & Colvin, 2014). However, effective conflict management is often hindered by the complexities of university culture, as well as power dynamics, limited resources, and a lack of training in conflict resolution (Akanji, Mordi, Ajonbadi, & Mojeed-Sanni, 2018; Gabriel, 2011; John-Eke & Akintokunbo, 2020). Recently, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of developing conflict management skills (Bundy, Pfarrer, Short, & Coombs, 2017; Watson, Rogers, Watson, & Liau-Hing Yep, 2019) and promoting a culture of open communication and collaboration in universities (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020; Longe, 2015). This has led to an increased interest in research on conflict management among university stakeholders in order to identify best practices and strategies for promoting effective conflict resolution in universities.

Organisational culture is a critical factor that can impact university conflict management practices. Scholars have identified organisational culture as a critical driver of employee behaviour and attitudes, which shapes how individuals perceive their roles within the organisation and interact with one another (Ojo, 2012; Szczepańska-Woszczyna, 2015). According to Cameron and Quinn (2011), there are four dimensions of organisational culture: clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy. According to Marquez (2022), these dimensions reflect different values, beliefs, and norms that influence how individuals perceive and respond to conflict situations. For example, a clan culture may prioritise collaboration and teamwork, while a market culture may emphasise competition and individual achievement. Thus, the type of culture that predominates in a university can shape how stakeholders manage and resolve conflicts.

Despite the importance of organisational culture, there is limited research on how it specifically impacts conflict management practices in universities. Mohammed, Prabhakar, and White (2008) investigated organisational culture and conflict management among project managers. The study found that organisational culture was a significant predictor of conflict resolution styles, with individuals in a more supportive and cooperative culture employing more collaborative approaches to conflict resolution. This suggests that a positive organisational culture that values collaboration and teamwork can facilitate effective conflict resolution practices. However, further research is needed to explore how different types of organisational culture impact conflict management practices in universities and how universities can promote a culture that supports effective conflict resolution.

Understanding the role of organisational culture in conflict management among university stakeholders is crucial to improving conflict resolution practices and promoting a healthy and productive work environment (Ebrahim, 2020). That is, conflict management is not simply a matter of adopting the right strategies and techniques but also involves understanding the underlying values, beliefs, and norms that shape how stakeholders perceive and respond to conflict situations. By investigating the role of organisational culture in conflict management among university stakeholders, this study sheds light on the complex dynamics that influence conflict resolution practices in universities and the steps universities can take to create a culture that supports effective conflict resolution. The findings of this study may have important implications for universities seeking to promote effective conflict resolution strategies and interventions that promote a culture of effective conflict resolution, leading to a more productive and positive work environment for all stakeholders.

1.1. Research Questions

Based on the above considerations, the following research questions are formulated to guide the study:

- How does the organisational culture of a university influence conflict management practices among stakeholders?
- What steps can universities take to create a culture that supports effective conflict resolution?

1.2. Theoretical Frameworks

Two theories underpin the study, the competing values framework (CVF) and social identity theory (SIT), and are used to dissect the role of organisational culture in conflict management among university stakeholders.

The CVF was developed by Cameron and Quinn (2011). The framework identifies four dimensions of organisational culture (clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy) based on two sets of opposing values: internal vs external focus and flexibility vs stability. The CVF has been widely used to analyse organisational culture in various contexts, including universities. It is relevant for this study because it provides a framework for analysing the different dimensions of organisational culture that may influence conflict management practices (Cameron, Quinn, DeGraff, & Thakor, 2022; Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016; Schneider, González-Romá, Ostroff, & West, 2017). The four dimensions of the CVF (clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy) are each associated with distinct values, beliefs, and norms that can affect how stakeholders perceive and respond to conflicts. For example, a clan culture prioritising collaboration and teamwork may encourage stakeholders to seek win-win solutions and build stronger relationships through conflict resolution. On the other hand, a market culture, which emphasises competition and individual achievement, may encourage stakeholders to take a more adversarial approach to conflicts and prioritise their own interests over those of others. By using the CVF to analyse a university's cultural values and norms, stakeholders can gain insight into how culture may affect conflict management practices and identify strategies for improving conflict resolution. Another theoretical framework is social identity theory (SIT), which explores how individuals identify with and are influenced by their group memberships (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019; Trepte & Loy, 2017). According to Scholz, Eberhard, Ostrowski, and Wijermans (2021), SIT suggests that individuals derive their self-concept and self-esteem from their social identities and that intergroup conflict arises when groups perceive threats to their status or identity. This is relevant for the current study because it highlights the importance of group identities and dynamics in conflict management. Stakeholders in a university may identify with different groups, such as departments, schools, or student organisations, and conflicts can arise when these groups have competing interests or perceptions. SIT suggests that people are more likely to seek conflict resolution strategies that benefit their in-group, even if it means harming an out-group. Therefore, understanding how group identities and intergroup dynamics influence conflict management practices is crucial for improving conflict resolution in universities. Using SIT as a theoretical framework, the researcher explores how group identities and social norms affect conflict management practices among university stakeholders and develops strategies for promoting cooperation and reducing intergroup conflict. The point of connection between these theories is that they both offer relevant theoretical perspectives from which to study the role of organisational culture in conflict management among university stakeholders. The CVF provides a lens for analysing the different dimensions of organisational culture and its influence on conflict management practices. At the same time, SIT highlights the importance of group identities and dynamics in shaping conflict resolution strategies. Using these frameworks, the researcher gained insight into how cultural values and norms, as well as group identities and intergroup dynamics, affect conflict management practices among different stakeholders in the selected university. This insight, in turn, helped to suggest cultural practices capable of promoting a more productive and harmonious work environment in the university system.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study is situated within the transformative paradigm because it has the potential to transform university practices (Underhill & McDonald, 2010). Traditional universities have been characterised by conflicts among various stakeholders, including faculty, administration, and students. These conflicts have been rooted in power imbalances, disagreements over resource allocation, and differing values and priorities. The transformative paradigm seeks to move beyond these conflicts by promoting social change (Mertens, 2012) and collaborative and inclusive practices among stakeholders (Mertens, Fraser, & Heimlich, 2008; Underhill & McDonald, 2010). This

study's qualitative research approach allows for a more in-depth exploration of the relevant stakeholders' experiences, perspectives, and attitudes (Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013). This approach increases the relevance and applicability of the study's findings to the stakeholders' real-world context (Pyett, 2003). For stakeholders to be actively involved, a participatory research (PR) design is most appropriate. By employing a PR design, the study actively involves the stakeholders in the research process, allowing them to contribute to developing solutions and recommendations (Mistry, Berardi, Bignante, & Tschirhart, 2015; Petrova, Dewing, & Camilleri, 2016). This is relevant to this study because PR is a method that seeks to involve relevant stakeholders in the research process (Mistry et al., 2015). In this case, the stakeholders were invited to become solution providers. They were actively involved in identifying problems, generating solutions, and implementing changes. The use of PR is particularly relevant within the transformative paradigm, as it emphasises the importance of involving stakeholders in the transformation process. The transformative paradigm and PR design have essential implications for the study of university management. By involving stakeholders in the research process, the study generates insights and solutions grounded in the needs and perspectives of those most affected by university management practices. This approach can lead to more effective and sustainable changes within universities, as stakeholders are more likely to accept and implement the proposed solutions. Ultimately, the transformative paradigm and PR design offer a way to move beyond conflict and towards more collaborative and inclusive management practices within universities, making them all the more relevant as a philosophical foundation for the study.

2.1. Research Site

This study was conducted in a university in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, a typical institution comprising students, lecturers, management staff, and other support services. As an academic institution, the university's primary goal is to provide its students with quality education and research opportunities and contribute to the development of society through knowledge creation and dissemination. The university's location in the Eastern Cape Province is significant because it is one of the poorest regions in South Africa, with high unemployment, poverty, and social inequality (South Africa Gateway, n.d; Westaway, 2012). Therefore, the study's findings on conflict management within the university are particularly relevant as they can contribute to improving the management of conflicts in a region that faces social and economic challenges, which have been recognised as potential causes of organisational conflict.

2.2. Participants and Selection of Participants

The involvement of ten notable university stakeholders in the study, including two deans, two heads of departments, two lecturers, two student leaders, and two non-teaching staff members, is crucial because these individuals are considered leaders in their respective spaces, and each plays a vital role in managing their subordinates. Their experience gives them a deep understanding of the university's culture and how it affects conflict management practices. As a result, their participation in the study provides valuable insights into the complexities of conflict management within a university. Their perspectives are essential in developing effective solutions and recommendations grounded in the reality of the university environment.

The use of the purposive sampling method to select the study's participants is significant because it allowed for the selection of individuals who possessed the characteristics needed for the research (Campbell et al., 2020). By selecting participants based on specific criteria, such as their experience and leadership roles within the university, the study was able to gather relevant data that provided a deep understanding of the conflict management practices within the university. This method ensured that the participants' perspectives represented the population, making the study more accurate and reliable. Ultimately, the use of the purposive sampling method enhances the study's relevance and contributes to the development of practical conflict management solutions within universities.

2.3. Method of Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were used to elicit information from the participants. The use of this method is significant because it provides a flexible and open-ended approach that allows the participants to share their experiences, opinions, and perspectives (Whiting, 2008). This method enables the participants to collaborate with the researcher, leading to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the topic. Additionally, semi-structured interviews allow for follow-up questions to clarify or expand on the participants' responses, ensuring that the data gathered is more detailed and accurate (Adams, 2015). Therefore, the use of semi-structured interviews in this study is relevant because it enhances the quality and validity of the data gathered and provides a deeper insight into the experiences and perspectives of the participants.

2.4. Data Analysis Method

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The use of thematic analysis as the method for analysing the data in this study is significant because it allows for the identification of themes that emerge from the participants' responses. Thematic analysis is a flexible and iterative method that enables the researcher to identify patterns, meanings, and connections within the data (DeJarnette & González, 2016). In this study, the thematic analysis focused on the two research questions, representing each question as a theme. The six steps of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006) were employed to ensure a systematic and rigorous approach to data analysis. These six steps include familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and refining themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. By following these steps, the researcher was able to identify and analyse the themes that emerged from the participants' responses. This method ensured that the data was thoroughly analysed and that the identified themes were grounded in the data. Ultimately, this study's use of thematic analysis is relevant because it enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of the influence of organisational culture on conflict management within universities.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

This study was ethically approved under protocol number FEDREC03-11-21. Proper consideration of ethical issues is essential in this study as it ensures that the participants' rights and well-being are protected throughout the research process. The participants' consent was sought before their involvement in the study, and they were informed about the research's purpose, procedures, and potential risks and benefits. Additionally, the participants were free to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative consequences. By ensuring that the participants' rights and autonomy were respected, the study maintained the trust and integrity of the research process.

Overall, the ethical considerations in this study reflect the researcher's commitment to conducting respectful, responsible, and beneficial research for all parties involved. Most importantly, the researcher ensured that the participants' names and identities were hidden and represented with pseudonyms in the reports to ensure that their statements and contributions could not be traced to them. That is, the participants were coded with D1 and D2 for the deans, H1 and H2 for the heads of departments, L1 and L2 for the lecturers, S1 and S2 for the student leaders, and N1 and N2 for the non-teaching staff members.

3. PRESENTATION OF DATA

In order to answer the research questions, the participants were interviewed, and their responses were tape-recorded, transcribed, and arranged based on the research questions they addressed, which formed the baseline interview questions.

3.1. The Influence of Organisational Culture on Conflict Management Practices

In answer to the first research question, "How does the organisational culture of a university influence conflict management practices among stakeholders," the following responses were elicited from the participants:

D1: "The organisational culture of a university plays a significant role in shaping conflict management practices among stakeholders. At our university, we strive to create a culture of respect, openness, and transparency, which helps to facilitate effective conflict resolution. We encourage all members of the university community to express their opinions and ideas in a constructive manner, and we provide them with the necessary resources and support to help them resolve any conflicts they may encounter."

D2: "At our university, we believe that conflict is a natural part of any organisation, and we strive to approach it with a positive attitude. We encourage our stakeholders to engage in open communication and dialogue and provide them with the necessary training and resources to help them navigate conflicts effectively. We also have a formal conflict resolution process in place, which ensures that any conflicts that arise are resolved promptly and respectfully."

H1: "At our university, we encourage our staff members to engage in constructive dialogue and to approach conflicts with an open mind. We provide them with the necessary training and resources to help them manage conflicts effectively, and we encourage them to seek guidance from our conflict resolution experts whenever necessary."

H2: "I agree with my colleague. As the head of a department, it's important to create a culture of respect and understanding within our departments. We encourage our faculty members to listen to each other's perspectives and to approach conflicts with a solutions-focused mindset. We also provide them with the necessary tools and resources to help them resolve conflicts in a productive manner."

L1: "I believe that the organisational culture of a university has a significant impact on how we manage conflicts as lecturers. We encourage open communication and dialogue among our faculty members and provide them with the necessary resources to help them navigate conflicts effectively. We also encourage our students to engage in respectful and constructive dialogue, which helps to prevent conflicts from escalating."

L2: "As a lecturer, it's important to create a culture of trust and respect within our classrooms. We encourage our students to share their perspectives and to engage in respectful dialogue with their peers. We also provide them with the necessary tools and resources to help them manage conflicts effectively."

S1: "As a student leader, I believe that a university's organisational culture significantly impacts how we manage conflicts among students. At our university, we encourage our students to engage in respectful and constructive dialogue and provide them with the necessary resources and support to help them resolve conflicts effectively."

S2: "As a student leader, creating a culture of inclusivity and respect within our student community is important. We encourage our students to approach conflicts with an open mind and to seek guidance from our conflict resolution experts whenever necessary. We strive to create a safe and supportive environment where students can share their perspectives and work towards solutions together."

N1: "As a non-teaching staff member, I believe that the organisational culture of a university plays a crucial role in shaping how we manage conflicts among staff members. At our university, we encourage open communication and dialogue among our colleagues, and we provide them with the necessary resources and support to help them navigate conflicts effectively."

N2: "From my perspective as a non-teaching staff member, I believe that the organisational culture of a university is critical in shaping how we manage conflicts among all stakeholders. As an institution, we need to foster a culture of open communication, respect, and inclusivity. This means providing all university community members with the necessary training and resources to help them navigate conflicts effectively, regardless of their role within the organisation."

The participants' responses highlight the role of organisational culture in shaping conflict management practices among stakeholders in a university setting. In particular, the data indicate that a culture of respect, openness, and transparency is crucial in facilitating effective conflict resolution. This involves encouraging all members of the university community to express their opinions and ideas constructively and providing them with the necessary resources and support to help them resolve any conflicts they may encounter. Furthermore, the data

suggest that a positive attitude towards conflict is important in managing it effectively. This involves encouraging stakeholders to engage in open communication and dialogue and providing them with the necessary training and resources to navigate conflicts in a productive manner. A formal conflict resolution process can also help ensure that conflicts are resolved promptly and respectfully.

The responses also highlight the importance of creating a culture of trust, respect, and inclusivity among stakeholders. This involves valuing and prioritising diversity, fostering an environment where all university community members feel valued and heard, and providing them with the necessary tools and resources to manage conflicts effectively. Overall, the data suggest that a university's organisational culture significantly impacts the conflict management practices employed by its stakeholders and that fostering a culture of respect, openness, and inclusivity is key to promoting effective conflict resolution.

3.2. Steps to Creating a Culture that Supports Effective Conflict Resolution

In answer to the second research question, "What steps can universities take to create a culture that supports effective conflict resolution," the following responses were elicited from the participants:

D1: "As a university, we can take several steps to create a culture that supports effective conflict resolution. One important step is to prioritise open communication and dialogue. This means encouraging all university community members to share their perspectives and ideas and creating opportunities for constructive dialogue between stakeholders. We can also provide training and resources to help individuals develop conflict resolution skills, and we can establish formal conflict resolution processes to ensure that conflicts are addressed in a timely and respectful manner."

D2: "I completely agree with my colleague. In addition to these steps, we can also work to foster a culture of respect and inclusivity. This means valuing and prioritising diversity and creating a safe and supportive environment where all university community members feel valued and heard."

H1: "As the head of a department, I believe that one important step we can take to create a culture that supports effective conflict resolution is to lead by example. This means modelling the behaviours we want to see in our faculty and staff, such as open communication, active listening, and a willingness to collaborate. We can also prioritise training and resources to help our faculty and staff develop conflict resolution skills and create opportunities for cross-departmental collaboration and dialogue."

H2: "I agree with my colleague. As the head of a department, it's also important to create a culture of accountability and ownership. This means encouraging our faculty and staff to take responsibility for their actions and to work collaboratively to resolve conflicts. We can also establish clear policies and procedures for conflict resolution and ensure that all members of our department are familiar with them."

L1: "As a lecturer, I believe that we can take several steps to create a culture that supports effective conflict resolution. One important step is to prioritise active listening and empathy. This means taking the time to understand the perspectives and needs of all parties involved in a conflict and working collaboratively to find a mutually beneficial solution. We can also provide training and resources to help our students develop conflict resolution skills and create a classroom environment that prioritises respectful dialogue and collaboration."

L2: "I completely agree with my colleague. In addition to these steps, we can also work to create a classroom environment that values and prioritises diversity and inclusivity. This means creating opportunities for students to share their perspectives and ideas and encouraging them to engage in constructive dialogue with their peers. By prioritising these values and creating a supportive environment, we can create a culture that encourages effective conflict resolution."

S1: "As a student leader, I believe that we can take several steps to create a culture that supports effective conflict resolution among students. One important step is to prioritise education and training. This means providing our student community with the necessary resources and support to help them develop conflict-resolution skills. We can also create opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration and establish clear policies and procedures for conflict resolution."

S2: "I agree with my colleague. As student leaders, creating a culture of respect and inclusivity is also important. By prioritising these values and creating a supportive environment, we can create a culture that encourages effective conflict resolution."

N1: "As a non-teaching staff member, I believe that we can take several steps to create a culture that supports effective conflict resolution among all members of the university community. One important step is to prioritise communication and collaboration. This means creating opportunities for open dialogue between stakeholders and encouraging them to work collaboratively to find mutually beneficial solutions."

N2: "I completely believe that we can work to foster a culture of respect and inclusivity. This means valuing and prioritising diversity and creating a safe and supportive environment where all university community members feel valued and heard. By prioritising these values and creating a supportive environment, we can create a culture that encourages effective conflict resolution and promotes a positive working environment for all."

The presented data provide various perspectives from different stakeholders within a university community on what steps can be taken to create a culture that supports effective conflict resolution. A common thread among the responses is the importance of communication, collaboration, and respect for diversity and inclusivity. Stakeholders highlight the need for training and resources to develop conflict resolution skills and the establishment of formal processes to address conflicts. One department head emphasises leading by example, while one of the lecturers focuses on prioritising active listening and empathy. Meanwhile, student leaders and non-teaching staff members also emphasise the importance of education and training and of creating a safe and supportive environment where diverse perspectives are valued.

In terms of specific actions that can be taken, the respondents suggest creating opportunities for constructive dialogue and cross-cultural collaboration and establishing clear policies and procedures for conflict resolution. It is also important to prioritise diversity and inclusivity and model respectful behaviour to encourage accountability and ownership among all university community members. By taking these steps, a culture that encourages effective conflict resolution can be fostered, creating a positive working and learning environment for all. Overall, the data highlight the importance of creating an environment that values open communication, collaboration, and inclusivity to support effective conflict resolution. The perspectives presented above demonstrate the potential for various stakeholders to contribute to this goal, emphasising the need for a collective effort towards a shared vision of a positive and supportive university community.

4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This section presents the findings organised by theme based on the research questions. Each research question generated two findings, which stand as sub-themes. The following table summarises the findings.

Table 1. Thematic representation of findings.

Themes based on research questions	Findings as sub-themes
The influence of organizational culture on conflict management practices	Finding 1: A culture of respect, inclusivity, and openness influences effective conflict resolution.
	Finding 2: Training and resources influence effective conflict resolution.
Steps to create a culture that supports effective conflict resolution	Finding 1: Ensuring open communication, active listening, and collaboration.
	Finding 2: Fostering a culture of diversity, inclusivity, and respect.

Table 1 presents a thematic representation of the findings as themes in response to each research question. Each of research questions 1 and 2 generated two findings.

Question 1, Finding 1: A culture of respect, inclusivity, and openness influences effective conflict resolution

The data collected from the ten participants indicate that a culture of respect, inclusivity, and openness facilitates effective conflict resolution among stakeholders. This is consistent with Parker's (2015) argument that a culture of respect, inclusivity, and openness facilitates effective conflict resolution among stakeholders at universities. This finding also aligns with the literature on organisational culture and conflict management. According to Akpa, Asikhia, and Nneji (2021), organisational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that characterise an organisation. This culture can affect the way employees perceive and respond to conflicts within the organisation. In short, if the organisational culture emphasises open communication, mutual respect, and a solutions-focused mindset, it can help prevent conflicts from escalating and facilitate their resolution. Therefore, organisational culture significantly influences conflict management practices at universities.

Question 1, Finding 2: Training and resources influence effective conflict resolution

The data collected from the participants show that a culture of providing stakeholders with the necessary training and resources enhances the effective management of conflicts among stakeholders. This finding is consistent with the literature on conflict management, which suggests that individuals need the skills, knowledge, and tools to navigate conflicts successfully (Fisher et al., 2020). According to Buss (2011), effective conflict management requires an understanding of the different conflict management styles, communication skills, problem-solving techniques, and negotiation strategies. By providing stakeholders with the necessary training and resources, universities can equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to manage conflicts effectively and prevent them from escalating. Therefore, training and resources are essential for effective conflict management at universities.

Question 2, Finding 1: Ensuring open communication, active listening, and collaboration

The study found that prioritising open communication, active listening, and collaboration is essential for creating a culture that supports effective conflict resolution in universities. The literature has widely documented the importance of communication, active listening, and collaboration as key components of effective conflict resolution. For instance, in their studies on conflict management in higher education, Filippelli-DiManna (2012) and Kaitelidou et al. (2012) found that communication and collaboration were two of the most important factors in managing conflicts among university faculty. Similarly, a study by Cristófol, De-San-Eugenio-Vela, and Paniagua-Rojano (2020) on conflict resolution in higher education emphasised the importance of communication and active listening in resolving conflicts among students, faculty, and staff.

To create a culture that prioritises open communication, active listening, and collaboration, universities can take various actions, including establishing formal conflict resolution processes, providing training and resources for conflict resolution skills, and modelling the desired behaviours through leadership and policy implementation. This approach is consistent with the recommendations of various studies, such as that of Shin (2009), which have highlighted the importance of proactive conflict management policies and practices in organisations. Furthermore, studies have also suggested the need for ongoing training and education on conflict resolution to enhance the effectiveness of these approaches (Lazarus, 2014; Salami, Orishede, & Morka, 2022).

Question 2, Finding 2: Fostering a culture of diversity, inclusivity, and respect

The study found that fostering a culture of diversity, inclusivity, and respect is crucial for creating a supportive environment that encourages effective conflict resolution in universities. The literature also emphasises the importance of fostering a culture of diversity, inclusivity, and respect to create a positive and supportive environment that encourages effective conflict resolution in universities. Studies have shown that a lack of diversity and inclusivity can contribute to conflicts in academic settings (Mujtaba, 2013; White et al., 2005), while a culture of respect can promote collaboration and conflict resolution. To foster a culture of diversity, inclusivity, and respect, universities can take various actions, such as prioritising diversity in recruitment and retention efforts, providing

training and resources on diversity and inclusivity, and creating policies and practices that promote a respectful and inclusive environment. For example, a study by Eddington, Corple, Buzzanell, Zoltowski, and Brightman (2020) suggested that proactive policies to promote diversity and inclusivity can help prevent conflicts in academic settings. Similarly, a study by Wolbring and Lillywhite (2021) recommended that universities provide faculty, staff, and students with ongoing education and training on diversity and inclusivity to create a culture of respect.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined how the organisational culture of a university influences conflict management practices among stakeholders and what steps universities can take to create a culture that supports effective conflict resolution. Based on the findings, it is concluded that universities need to foster a culture of respect, inclusivity, and openness while providing stakeholders with the necessary training and resources to manage conflicts effectively. Creating a culture that supports effective conflict resolution in universities, therefore, requires prioritising open communication, active listening, and collaboration and fostering a culture of diversity, inclusivity, and respect. This can help prevent conflicts from escalating, facilitate their resolution, and create a positive and productive working and learning environment. Universities can achieve this by developing formal conflict resolution processes, providing training and resources on conflict management, and promoting a culture of open communication, mutual respect, and a solutions-focused mindset.

Based on the findings, the following four recommendations are made:

- Develop a formal conflict resolution process. Universities should establish a formal conflict resolution process that provides clear guidelines and procedures for addressing conflicts among stakeholders. This process should involve a neutral third-party mediator to help facilitate dialogue and resolution.

- Provide training and resources. Universities should provide stakeholders with the necessary training and resources to manage conflicts effectively. This can include conflict resolution workshops, coaching, and resources on communication and active listening skills.

- Foster a culture of diversity, inclusivity, and respect. Universities should prioritise creating a culture of diversity, inclusivity, and respect. This can be achieved by promoting diversity in hiring and admissions practices, creating safe spaces for underrepresented groups, and encouraging open dialogue and stakeholder collaboration.

- Lead by example. University leaders should model the behaviours they want to see in their faculty, staff, and students. This includes prioritising open communication, active listening, and collaboration and promoting a culture of diversity, inclusivity, and respect.

REFERENCES

Adams, W. C. (2015). Conducting semi-structured interviews. *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, 492-505. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119171386.ch19

Akanji, B., Mordi, T., Ajonbadi, H., & Mojeed-Sanni, B. (2018). Impact of leadership styles on employee engagement and conflict management practices in Nigerian universities. *Issues in Educational Research*, 28(4), 830-848.

Akpa, V. O., Asikhia, O. U., & Nneji, N. E. (2021). Organizational culture and organizational performance: A review of literature. *International Journal of Advances in Engineering and Management*, 3(1), 361-372.

Barsky, A. (2016). *Conflict resolution for the helping professions: Negotiation, mediation, advocacy, facilitation, and restorative justice.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Bercovitch, J., & Jackson, R. (2001). Negotiation or mediation?: An exploration of factors affecting the choice of conflict management in international conflict. *Negotiation Journal, 17*(1), 59-77. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1571-9979.2001.tb00227.x

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Bundy, J., Pfarrer, M. D., Short, C. E., & Coombs, W. T. (2017). Crises and crisis management: Integration, interpretation, and research development. *Journal of Management, 43*(6), 1661-1692. http://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316680030

Buss, H. (2011). Controlling conflict costs: The business case of conflict management. *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association, 4*(1), 54-62.

Cameron, K. S., & Quinn, R. E. (2011). *Diagnosing and changing organizational culture: Based on the competing values framework* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cameron, K. S., Quinn, R. E., DeGraff, J., & Thakor, A. V. (2022). *Competing values leadership.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: Complex or simple? Research case examples *Journal of Research in Nursing, 25*(8), 652-661. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206

Chatman, J. A., & O'Reilly, C. A. (2016). Paradigm lost: Reinvigorating the study of organisational culture. *Research in Organisational Behavior, 36*, 199-224. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.riob.2016.11.004

Cristófol, F. J., De-San-Eugenio-Vela, J., & Paniagua-Rojano, F. J. (2020). Active listening in the management of crisis communication: Case study of the 2017 terrorist attack in Barcelona. *Communication & Society, 33*(4), 61-74. https://doi.org/10.15581/003.33.4.61-74

DeJarnette, A. F., & González, G. (2016). Thematic analysis of students' talk while solving a real-world problem in geometry. *Linguistics and Education, 35*, 37-49. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2016.05.002

Ebrahim, E. K. (2020). Negotiation as a management strategy for conflict resolution and its effect on enhancing collaboration between nurses and physicians. *Egyptian Nursing Journal, 17*(1), 13-22. https://www.enj.eg.net/text.asp?2020/17/1/13/300781

Eddington, S. M., Corple, D., Buzzanell, P. M., Zoltowski, C., & Brightman, A. (2020). Addressing organizational cultural conflicts in engineering with design thinking. *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research, 13*(3), 263-284. https://doi.org/10.1111/ncmr.12191

Fernandez, A. A., & Shaw, G. P. (2020). Academic leadership in a time of crisis: The Coronavirus and COVID-19. *Journal of Leadership Studies, 14*(1), 39-45. https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21684

Filippelli-DiManna, L. P. (2012). *Exploring opportunities for conflict resolution in higher education.* Doctoral Dissertation, Walden University.

Fisher, J., Stutzman, H., Vedoveto, M., Delgado, D., Rivero, R., Quertehuari Dariquebe, W., & Rhee, S. (2020). Collaborative governance and conflict management: Lessons learned and good practices from a case study in the amazon basin. *Society & Natural Resources, 33*(4), 538-553. https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2019.1620389

Fowden, A. L., & Moore, T. (2012). Maternal-fetal resource allocation: Cooperation and conflict. *Placenta, 33*, e11-e15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.placenta.2012.05.002

Gabriel, R. J. (2011). Managing conflict. *Law Library Journal, 103*(4), 685-689.

John-Eke, E. C., & Akintokunbo, O. O. (2020). Conflict management as a tool for increasing organisational effectiveness: A review of literature. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 10*(5), 299-311. http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v10-i5/7198

Kaitelidou, D., Kontogianni, A., Galanis, P., Siskou, O., Mallidou, A., Pavlakis, A., & Liaropoulos, L. (2012). Conflict management and job satisfaction in paediatric hospitals in Greece. *Journal of Nursing Management*, *20*(4), 571-578. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2834.2011.01196.x

Kemparaj, U., & Chavan, S. (2013). Qualitative research: A brief description. *Indian Journal of Medical Sciences*, *67*(3-4), 89-98. https://doi.org/10.4103/0019-5359.121127

Lazarus, U. K. (2014). Conflict management strategies and employees productivity in a Nigerian state civil service. *Journal of Business and Management Sciences*, *2*(4), 90-93. https://doi.org/10.12691/jbms-2-4-2

Longe, O. (2015). Impact of workplace conflict management on organisational performance: A case of Nigerian manufacturing firm. *Journal of Management and Strategy*, *6*(2), 83-92. http://dx.doi.org/10.5430/jms.v6n2p83

Marquez, K. E. (2022). *Creating a healthy workplace: Burnout and the four dimensions of OCAI*. Doctoral Dissertation, Azusa Pacific University.

Mertens, D., Fraser, J., & Heimlich, J. (2008). M or F?: Gender, identity, and the transformative research paradigm. *Museums & Social Issues*, *3*(1), 81-92. https://doi.org/10.1179/msi.2008.3.1.81

Mertens, D. M. (2012). Transformative mixed methods: Addressing inequities. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *56*(6), 802-813. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764211433797

Mistry, J., Berardi, A., Bignante, E., & Tschirhart, C. (2015). Between a rock and a hard place: Ethical dilemmas of local community facilitators doing participatory research projects. *Geoforum*, *61*, 27-35. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2015.02.010

Mohammed, U. K., Prabhakar, G. P., & White, G. (2008). Culture and conflict management style of international project managers. *International Journal of Business Management*, *3*(5), 3-11. https://doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v3n5p3

Mujtaba, B. G. (2013). Ethnic diversity, distrust and corruption in Afghanistan: Reflections on the creation of an inclusive culture. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, *32*(3), 245-261. https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-12-2012-0113

Ojo, O. (2012). Influence of organisational culture on employee work behavior. *International Journal of Contemporary Business Studies*, *3*(11), 46-57.

Parker, C. (2015). Practicing conflict resolution and cultural responsiveness within interdisciplinary contexts: A study of community service practitioners. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, *32*(3), 325-357. https://doi.org/10.1002/crq.21115

Petrova, E., Dewing, J., & Camilleri, M. (2016). Confidentiality in participatory research: Challenges from one study. *Nursing Ethics*, *23*(4), 442-454. https://doi.org/10.1177/0969733014564909

Pyett, P. M. (2003). Validation of qualitative research in the "real world". *Qualitative Health Research*, *13*(8), 1170-1179. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732303255686

Roche, W. K., Teague, P., & Colvin, A. J. (2014). *The Oxford handbook of conflict management in organisations*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Rockett, P., Fan, S. K., Dwyer, R. J., & Foy, T. (2017). A human resource management perspective of workplace bullying. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, *9*(2), 116-127. https://doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-11-2016-0262

Salami, C. G. E., Orishede, F., & Morka, O. (2022). Enhancing employee productivity through effective conflict management in Transmission Company of Nigeria. *Journal of Global Social Sciences*, *3*(12), 101-113.

Scheepers, D., & Ellemers, N. (2019). Social identity theory. *Social Psychology in Action: Evidence-Based Interventions from Theory to Practice* 129-143. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13788-5_9

Schneider, B., González-Romá, V., Ostroff, C., & West, M. A. (2017). Organizational climate and culture: Reflections on the history of the constructs in the Journal of Applied Psychology. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *102*(3), 468-482. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/apl0000090

Scholz, G., Eberhard, T., Ostrowski, R., & Wijermans, N. (2021). *Social identity in agent-based models—Exploring the state of the art*. Paper presented at the in Advances in Social Simulation: Proceedings of the 15th Social Simulation Conference: 23–27 September 2019, Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Shin, J. H. (2009). Developing constructive and proactive conflict management strategies in healthcare. *Journal of Communication in Healthcare, 2*(1), 78-94.

South Africa Gateway. (n.d). *Mapping poverty in South Africa.* Retrieved from https://southafrica-info.com/people/mapping-poverty-in-south-africa/#:~:text=South%20Africa's%20poorest%20province%20is,610%2C000%20people%20live%20in%20poverty

Szczepańska-Woszczyna, K. (2015). Leadership and organisational culture as the normative influence of top management on employee's behaviour in the innovation process. *Procedia Economics and Finance, 34*, 396-402. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(15)01646-9

Trepte, S., & Loy, L. S. (2017). Social identity theory and self-categorisation theory. *The International Encyclopedia of Media Effects*, 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783764.wbieme0088

Underhill, J., & McDonald, J. (2010). Collaborative tutor development: Enabling a transformative paradigm in a South African University. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 18*(2), 91-106. https://doi.org/10.1080/13611261003678853

Watson, N. T., Rogers, K. S., Watson, K. L., & Liau-Hing Yep, C. (2019). Integrating social justice-based conflict resolution into higher education settings: Faculty, staff, and student professional development through mediation training. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly, 36*(3), 251-262. https://doi.org/10.1002/crq.21233

Westaway, A. (2012). Rural poverty in the Eastern Cape Province: Legacy of apartheid or consequence of contemporary segregationism? *Development Southern Africa, 29*(1), 115-125.

White, R., Fischer, A., Hansen, H. P., Varjopuro, R., Young, J., & Adamescu, M. (2005). *Conflict management, participation, social learning and attitudes in biodiversity conservation.* Michigan: Alter-Net Project.

Whiting, L. S. (2008). Semi-structured interviews: Guidance for novice researchers. *Nursing Standard (through 2013), 22*(23), 35-40.

Wolbring, G., & Lillywhite, A. (2021). Equity/equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in universities: The case of disabled people. *Societies, 11*(2), 49. https://doi.org/10.3390/soc11020049

Yidana, P. (2022). Workplace conflicts and perception of quality higher education in Ghana. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education Research, 4*, 1-14. https://doi.org/10.51986/ijer-2022.vol4.01