



## Administrative Strategies For Managing Social Problems in Public Universities In Rivers State

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### ABSTRACT

The study investigated administrative strategies for managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. Six objectives were formulated and translated into corresponding research questions and hypotheses. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 6397 staff of the three Data were collected using a researcher-designed instrument titled "Administrative Strategies for Managing Social Problems Questionnaire (ASMSPQ)." The completed copies of the questionnaire were analyzed for reliability using the Cronbach Alpha method, yielding reliability coefficients ranging from 0.78, 0.81, 0.77, 0.87, 0.88 and 0.81. were obtained for the various clusters of the instrument which showed the instrument was reliable. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while independent t-test statistics were employed to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that strategies such as conflict resolution programs, counseling and support services, inclusive communication channels, campus security enhancements, student engagement initiatives, and diversity and inclusion policies collectively enhanced the effective management of social problems. The study concluded that robust administrative strategies are essential for creating a harmonious academic environment, fostering inclusivity, and ensuring effective management of social issues in public universities. It was recommended that university administrators strengthen these strategies by integrating technology, providing regular training for staff, and promoting stakeholder collaboration to ensure sustainable solutions.

## INTRODUCTION

Public universities are institutions of higher learning established and funded by the government to provide accessible and affordable education to citizens. They play an important role in adopting intellectual growth, research, and societal development. In Nigeria, public universities are overseen by federal or state governments, and they cater to a diverse population of students from various socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. As centers of academic excellence, public universities aim to provide quality education, promote critical thinking, and contribute to national development through research and innovation.

However, with the large and diverse student population, public universities often face numerous social challenges, such as conflicts, student unrest, violence, drug abuse, and discrimination. These issues can disrupt the academic environment, hinder effective teaching and learning, and affect the well-being of both students and staff. Managing these social problems requires strategic administrative approaches that ensure a safe and conducive environment for academic and personal development. In Rivers State, public universities like the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University, and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education are critical to the region's educational and economic growth. Yet, they also grapple with social issues that, if left unaddressed, could undermine the academic mission of the institutions.

Consequently, social problems in public universities are those devices that seem to inhibit the effective and efficient administration of the institutions. They are undesirable conditions in the academic community. Such social problems can be found at the local, state, national and international institutions of higher learning. The most prevalent social problem in public universities in Nigeria include excessive unionism, secret cultism, Fraudulent activities, indiscipline, examination malpractice, indecent dressing among others. Nwafor, (2012).

Again, Ogunleye, (2021) sees social problems in public universities as a range of issues that disrupt the academic environment that impede effective learning and teaching. These issues often stem from the diverse backgrounds and experiences of students and staff, leading to challenges such as student unrest, peer conflicts, substance abuse, violence, and discrimination. In Nigerian public universities, such problems are not uncommon and can significantly impact the well-being of the university community, hinder academic productivity, and damage institutional reputation. To address these challenges, university administrators must adopt well-structured strategies to promote social harmony, ensure safety, and enhance the overall academic experience.

One of the most effective administrative strategies for managing social problems is the implementation of conflict resolution programmes. These programmes aim to address disputes among students, staff, or between both groups in a peaceful and constructive manner. Mediation committees and peer mediation services are often established to facilitate communication between conflicting parties, providing a neutral platform for resolving issues before they escalate. A successful conflict resolution programme not only reduces tension but also promotes mutual understanding and cooperation within the university

community (Adeola, 2020). For instance, a mediation system that addresses student grievances can help prevent strikes, protests, or violent confrontations that may arise from unresolved issues.

Counseling and support services play an important role in managing social problems related to mental health, stress, and personal challenges faced by students and staff. These services offer a confidential and safe space for individuals to discuss their concerns, whether related to academic pressure, social anxiety, or emotional distress. By providing professional counseling, universities can mitigate the effects of stress and anxiety, which are often triggers for more significant social problems such as substance abuse or violence (Eze, 2022). Counseling services also support students facing discrimination or harassment, providing guidance on coping mechanisms and legal recourse.

Several scholars have conducted research on managing social problems in universities, highlighting various administrative strategies. For instance, Adeola (2020) examined the use of conflict resolution mechanisms, particularly peer mediation, in Nigerian public universities. The study found that peer mediation programmes effectively reduced student conflicts and improved relationships within the campus. However, the work focused primarily on student-student conflicts, neglecting broader issues like staff-student conflicts and external influences such as community unrest that affect the university environment. This gap suggests the need for a more comprehensive approach to conflict resolution that addresses all stakeholders in the university community. Again, Eze (2022) investigated the role of counseling services in mitigating mental health challenges among students in public universities. His research demonstrated that counseling services significantly improve students' ability to cope with academic stress and personal issues. Nevertheless, the study was limited to mental health concerns and did not examine how counseling services could address other social problems, such as substance abuse, violence, or discrimination. The findings highlight the importance of expanding counseling services to cover a broader range of social challenges that affect students and staff alike.

These gaps in previous studies emphasize the need for an investigation into a more holistic range of administrative strategies, including not only conflict resolution and counseling but also enhanced communication channels, campus security, student leadership development, and diversity and inclusion policies. The present study aims to address this gap by examining how these comprehensive strategies can be effectively employed in public universities in Rivers State to manage various social problems which prompted the investigation of the research on administrative strategies for managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Universities are expected to provide a conducive environment for learning, where students and staff coexist peacefully, and the academic mission is achieved without social disruptions. Public universities should be safe spaces that foster intellectual growth, student engagement, and institutional

development. However, in public universities in Rivers State, social problems such as student unrest, conflicts, violence, substance abuse, indecent dressing, fraudulent activities in and out of campuses and discrimination are becoming more prevalent. These issues disrupt the academic environment and hinder both student and staff performance.

Over the years, several measures have been implemented to manage these problems, including security patrols, occasional counseling services, and student disciplinary committees. Various universities have also introduced conflict resolution platforms to address interpersonal disputes and reduce tensions on campuses. Despite these efforts, the social problems persist. Incidents of violence, cultism, and student dissatisfaction continue to rise, leading to protest, academic disruptions, and safety concerns among students and staff. These problems negatively affect the universities' ability to function effectively. Students are often distracted from their studies, staff morale is affected, and the reputation of these institutions suffers. Furthermore, the safety concerns within these universities also affect external stakeholders, such as parents and the surrounding community, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and tension.

There is a growing concern that if these social problems are not addressed, they could escalate, causing long-term damage to the universities' academic integrity and student welfare. While existing studies have investigated conflict resolution and counseling as solutions to social problems, there is limited research on the combined impact of other strategies like inclusive communication, enhanced security, leadership development, and diversity policies. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by investigating administrative strategies for managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to investigate administrative strategies for managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State. In specific the objectives seek to:

1. Examine the extent to which conflict resolution programmes is used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State
2. Ascertain the extent to which counseling and support services is used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State
3. Assess the extent to which inclusive and transparent communication is used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent are conflict resolution programmes used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State?
2. To what extent are counseling and support services used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State?
3. To what extent are inclusive and transparent communication conflict resolution programmes used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State?

## **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

**HO1:** There is no significant difference between the mean responses of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent conflict resolution programmes is used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State.

**HO2:** There is no significant difference between the mean responses of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent counseling and support services is used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State.

**HO3:** There is no significant difference between the mean responses of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent inclusive and transparent communication is used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study will be guided by Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968)

### **Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968)**

Systems Theory, developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1968, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding complex organizations and their interrelated components. Von Bertalanffy proposed that organizations, including educational institutions, function as systems composed of various interconnected parts. Each part, whether it be departments, processes, or personnel, interacts with others, and changes in one part can have significant effects on the entire system (von Bertalanffy, 1968).

The core concept of Systems Theory is that an organization operates as a whole, where its components are interdependent and work together to achieve common goals. This theory emphasizes the importance of understanding the relationships and interactions between different elements within the system. It suggests that organizations are open systems, meaning they interact with their external environment and must adapt to changes and challenges to maintain stability and functionality (von Bertalanffy, 1968).

In the context of managing social problems in public universities, Systems Theory is highly relevant. Universities are complex systems with multiple interacting components, including administrative strategies, faculty, students, and support services. Applying Systems Theory to this study allows for a holistic examination of how various administrative strategies, such as conflict resolution Programmes, counseling services, and campus security enhancements, impact the overall functioning of the university. For example, the implementation of a new conflict resolution program affects not only the resolution of disputes but also influences student satisfaction, staff morale, and overall campus harmony. Understanding these interconnections helps in designing comprehensive solutions that address multiple aspects of social problems simultaneously.

Furthermore, Systems Theory highlights the necessity of feedback loops and continuous adaptation. In managing social problems, universities must continuously assess the effectiveness of their strategies and make necessary adjustments based on feedback from students, staff, and other stakeholders. This

approach ensures that the administrative strategies remain relevant and effective in addressing emerging social challenges.

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Social Problems in Public Universities**

Social problems are issues that adversely affect individuals, groups, and communities, disrupting societal stability and well-being. These problems arise from complex interactions within society and can manifest in various forms, including economic inequality, crime, substance abuse, and educational disparities. Addressing social problems requires a nuanced understanding of their nature, causes, and consequences. Social problems are defined by their widespread impact and the way they challenge societal norms and values. According to Cockerham (2020), social problems are conditions that significantly disrupt social order and impact individuals' quality of life. These problems are not isolated incidents but are deeply embedded in broader social, economic, and political contexts. They often require collective action and intervention to address effectively. Economic Inequality, Crime and Violence, Substance Abuse, Educational Disparities, Health Inequities, Sexual Promiscuity / Hook Up Activities, Examination Malpractice, Cultism

#### **Conflict Resolution Programmes in Managing Social Problems**

Conflict Resolution Programmes are a crucial component of administrative strategies for managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State. These programmes are designed to address and mitigate conflicts that arise within the university community, promoting a harmonious academic environment. Conflict Resolution Programmes in universities typically involve a structured approach to identifying, addressing, and resolving disputes between various stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, and administration (Ekpenyong, 2018). These programmes aim to foster understanding, improve communication, and develop mutually acceptable solutions to conflicts. In the context of Rivers State public universities, Conflict Resolution Programmes often incorporate both preventive and reactive measures. Preventive measures may include educational workshops, seminars, and training sessions that focus on conflict management skills, effective communication, and cultural sensitivity (Amadi & Nwoke, 2016). These proactive approaches aim to equip university community members with the tools to handle potential conflicts before they escalate.

Reactive measures, on the other hand, involve mechanisms for addressing conflicts that have already emerged. This may include mediation services, peer counseling, and formal grievance procedures (Nwanko, 2017). Many universities in Rivers State have established dedicated conflict resolution centers or offices that provide these services and coordinate conflict management efforts across the institution.

The implementation of Conflict Resolution Programmes in Rivers State public universities has been shown to have several benefits. According to a study by Onyeizugbe and Asiegbu (2019), such programmes have led to reduced instances of student unrest, improved student-faculty relationships, and a more positive overall campus climate. Additionally, these programmes have been found to contribute to the development of students' social skills and emotional

intelligence, preparing them for future professional environments (Ekpenyong, 2018). However, the effectiveness of Conflict Resolution Programmes can vary depending on factors such as resource allocation, administrative support, and cultural acceptance within the university community (Amadi & Nwoke, 2016). Therefore, ongoing evaluation and adaptation of these programmes are essential to ensure their continued relevance and efficacy in addressing the evolving social dynamics within Rivers State public universities.

### **Counseling and Support Services in Managing Social Problems**

Counseling and Support Services play an important role in managing social problems within public universities in Rivers State, serving as a cornerstone of comprehensive student welfare initiatives. These services encompass a wide array of Programmes and interventions designed to address the psychological, emotional, and social needs of students, faculty, and staff. The implementation of robust counseling and support services has become increasingly critical in the face of growing mental health concerns, academic pressures, and social challenges that permeate the higher education landscape in Rivers State and beyond.

The concept of counseling and support services in public universities extends far beyond traditional notions of academic advising. It encompasses a holistic approach to student well-being, addressing issues ranging from personal and emotional difficulties to career guidance and life skills development. According to Adebayo and Eke (2019), effective counseling and support services in Rivers State universities typically include individual and group counseling sessions, crisis intervention, mental health awareness Programmes, peer support initiatives, and specialized services for at-risk students. These services are often provided by trained professionals, including licensed counselors, psychologists, and social workers, who work collaboratively to create a supportive and nurturing campus environment.

One of the primary objectives of counseling and support services is to promote mental health and emotional well-being among the university community. Ekpenyong (2018) notes that the prevalence of mental health issues among university students in Rivers State has been on the rise, with stress, anxiety, and depression being particularly common. In response to this trend, many universities have expanded their mental health services, offering confidential counseling sessions, support groups, and workshops on stress management and coping strategies. These initiatives not only help individual students navigate personal challenges but also contribute to a more positive and productive academic atmosphere overall.

The scope of counseling and support services also extends to academic and career development. Many universities in Rivers State have recognized the importance of integrating academic support with personal counseling to enhance student success. Onyeizugbe and Asiegbu (2019) report that universities offering comprehensive academic counseling services, including study skills workshops, time management training, and individualized academic planning, have observed improvements in student retention rates and overall academic

performance. Furthermore, career counseling services have become increasingly important in preparing students for the competitive job market. These services often include career assessments, resume writing workshops, interview preparation, and networking opportunities with potential employers.

The implementation of effective counseling and support services, however, is not without challenges. Resource constraints, stigma associated with seeking help, and a lack of awareness about available services can hinder the full utilization of these Programmes. Amadi and Nwoke (2016) point out that many public universities in Rivers State struggle to maintain adequate staffing levels for their counseling centers, leading to long wait times and limited accessibility. To address these challenges, some institutions have begun exploring innovative approaches, such as online counseling platforms, peer support networks, and partnerships with community mental health providers. As universities continue to evolve and face new challenges, the role of counseling and support services will likely expand, necessitating ongoing investment, innovation, and adaptation to meet the changing needs of the student population. By prioritizing the development and enhancement of these services, public universities in Rivers State can create more supportive, inclusive, and successful academic communities, ultimately contributing to the broader goals of higher education and societal development.

### **Inclusive and Transparent Communication Channels in Managing Social Problems**

Transparency, on the other hand, refers to the openness and clarity with which information is shared within the university system. This principle is crucial for building trust and credibility among stakeholders. Okoye et al. (2017) emphasize that transparent communication involves not only sharing information but also providing context and rationale for decisions made by university administration. This approach helps to reduce misunderstandings, rumors, and potential conflicts that can arise from a lack of clear information.

The implementation of inclusive and transparent communication channels in Rivers State public universities typically involves a multi-faceted approach. This may include the use of traditional methods such as notice boards, departmental meetings, and university-wide assemblies, as well as modern digital platforms like university websites, social media accounts, and dedicated mobile applications. Nwosu (2020) notes that the integration of digital communication tools has significantly enhanced the reach and efficiency of information dissemination in many universities, allowing for real-time updates and interactive engagement with the university community.

One key aspect of effective communication channels is the establishment of formal feedback mechanisms. These mechanisms provide avenues for students, faculty, and staff to voice their concerns, offer suggestions, and participate in decision-making processes. Igwe and Onyekwere (2018) highlight the importance of structured feedback systems, such as regular town hall meetings, suggestion boxes, and online forums, in promoting a sense of inclusion and shared responsibility within the university community.

Moreover, the concept of inclusive and transparent communication extends beyond mere information sharing to active engagement and dialogue. Universities in Rivers State are increasingly recognizing the value of participatory approaches in addressing social problems. Okorie (2021) discusses the implementation of student-led initiatives and collaborative problem-solving workshops as effective means of engaging the university community in tackling various issues. These approaches not only lead to more comprehensive solutions but also foster a sense of ownership and commitment among participants. The effectiveness of communication channels in managing social problems is also contingent on the quality and relevance of the information shared. Eze and Amadi (2019) argue that universities must prioritize the dissemination of accurate, timely, and pertinent information to maintain the credibility of their communication channels. This involves careful vetting of information sources, regular updates to ensure currency, and proactive communication to address emerging issues before they escalate.

However, the implementation of inclusive and transparent communication channels is not without challenges. Uzoagulu (2018) identifies several obstacles faced by Rivers State universities, including inadequate infrastructure, limited digital literacy among some university community members, and resistance to change from traditional communication methods. Overcoming these challenges requires sustained investment in technology, training Programmes for staff and students, and gradual cultural shifts within the institutions. Inclusive and transparent communication channels are indispensable tools for managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State. By fostering open dialogue, ensuring equitable access to information, and promoting active engagement, these channels contribute significantly to creating a more harmonious and responsive academic environment. As universities continue to evolve, the ongoing development and refinement of communication strategies will remain crucial in addressing the dynamic social challenges faced by higher education institutions in Rivers State and beyond.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 6397 staff of the three public universities in Rivers State which consisted of 2805 staff of University of Port Harcourt, 2965 staff of Rivers State University and 627 staff of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.

The sample for this study consist of 20% of the total population, which is 705 respondents. To ensure that the sample is representative of the entire population, stratified random sampling was employed. The population was divided into two primary strata: teaching staff and non-teaching staff. Out of the total population of 3,525 staff members, 423 teaching staff using 60% of the sample size and 282 non-teaching staff using 40% of the sample size. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire designed by the researcher titled 'Administrative Strategies for Managing Social Problems Questionnaire" (ASMSPQ) The instrument was divided into two sections:

Section A was used to collect demographic data from the respondents, section B contained questionnaire items that assessed the raised research questions and the questionnaire was based on four-point modified rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE)-4, High Extent (HE)-3, Low Extent (LE)-2, and Very Low Extent (VLE)-1. The instrument was given to the researcher's supervisor and two other experts in Measurement and Evaluation in Rivers State University, to scrutinize and analyze both face and content validity in terms of clarity and appropriateness.

The completed copies of the questionnaire were analyzed for reliability using Cronbach Alpha Method. The reason was to establish the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability coefficients of 0.78, 0.81, and 0.81. were obtained for the various clusters of the instrument which showed the instrument was reliable. A total of 705 copies of the questionnaire were administered on teaching staff and non-teaching staff from the three public Universities used in the study by the researcher and two (2) research assistants who are post graduate students of Rivers State University. Completed copies of the questionnaire were retrieved by the researcher and her assistants on the spot, while others were collected at later days within the period of three weeks. However, due to poor accessibility and availability on several visits to the respondents for collection, only 649 (92% rate) were retrieved and this proportion was used for the analysis. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation statistics. For the hypotheses, t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance

**Research Questions1:** To what extent are conflict resolution programmes used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State?

**Table 4.1: Mean and standard deviation of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent conflict resolution programmes used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State**

S/N	ITEMS	Teaching Staff		Non-Teaching		Mean set (X1+X2)/2	DECISION
		$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD		
1	Mediation and negotiation services are accessible to all staff and students as part of the conflict resolution programme	3.58	0.61	3.61	0.59	3.60	HE
2	Conflict resolution programmes help to address interpersonal disputes among students and staff.	3.55	0.61	3.45	0.63	3.50	HE
3	Conflict resolution programmes reduce the frequency of	3.41	0.66	3.50	0.63	3.45	HE

	violent conflicts on campus.						
4	Training on conflict management is regularly provided to staff and students through these programmes.	3.36	0.68	3.56	0.66	3.46	HE
5	Conflict resolution programmes foster a peaceful learning and working environment	3.49	0.64	3.54	0.54	3.52	HE
	<b>Grand mean</b>	<b>3.48</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>3.53</b>	<b>0.46</b>	3.51	HE

Table 4.1 revealed the mean and standard deviation of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent conflict resolution programmes are used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State. The data indicate that the mean of teaching staff for item 1 is (3.58) while the non-teaching staff mean is (3.61). Based on the criterion mean of 2.50, both the teaching and non-teaching staff rated item 1 agreed that mediation and negotiation services are accessible to all staff and students as part of the conflict resolution programme.

However, majority of the teaching respondents agreed that from items 2-5 the mean ratings are (3.55), (3.41), (3.36), (3.49), while the non-teaching staff mean ratings are (3.45), (3.50), (3.56), (3.54). Based on the criterion mean of 2.50, both the teaching and non-teaching staff rated items 2-5 agreed that conflict resolution programmes help to address interpersonal disputes among students and staff, reduce the frequency of violent conflicts on campus, provide regular training on conflict management for staff and students, and foster a peaceful learning and working environment. The cluster means are (3.48) for teaching staff and (3.53) for non-teaching staff, while the grand mean is (3.51), which indicates that the answer to research question one is that conflict resolution programmes are utilized to a high extent in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State.

**Research Questions 2:** To what extent are counseling and support services used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State?

**Table 4.2: Mean and standard deviation of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent counseling and support services used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State**

S/N	ITEMS	Teaching Staff		Non-Teaching		Mean set	DECISION
		$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$(X_1+X_2)/2$	
6.	Counseling services help students manage stress and academic challenges.	2.29	1.21	2.36	1.30	2.29	LE
7	Support services provide assistance to staff experiencing work-related issues	3.27	0.65	3.30	0.64	3.27	HE
8	Regular workshops on mental health and well-being are offered to the university community.	3.32	0.67	3.33	0.64	3.32	HE
9	Counseling services are readily accessible to students, reducing the impact of social issues.	3.24	0.58	3.30	0.62	3.24	HE
10	Counseling and support services enhance the overall emotional well-being of students and staff.	3.15	0.66	3.17	0.65	3.15	HE
	<b>Grand mean</b>	<b>3.07</b>	<b>0.67</b>	<b>3.09</b>	<b>0.64</b>	3.08	HE

Table 4.2 revealed the mean and standard deviation of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent counseling and support services are used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State. The data indicate that the mean of teaching staff for item 6 is (2.29) while the non-teaching staff mean is (2.36). Based on the criterion mean of 2.50, both the teaching and non-teaching staff rated item 6 disagreed that counseling services help students manage stress and academic challenges. However, majority of the teaching respondents agreed that from items 7-10 the mean ratings are (3.27), (3.32), (3.24), and (3.15), while the non-teaching staff mean ratings are (3.30), (3.33), (3.30), and (3.17). Based on the criterion mean of 2.50, both the teaching and non-teaching staff rated items 7-10 agreed that support services provide assistance to staff experiencing work-related issues, regular workshops on mental health and well-being are offered to the university community, counseling services are readily

accessible to students, reducing the impact of social issues, and counseling and support services enhance the overall emotional well-being of students and staff. The cluster means are (3.07) for teaching staff and (3.09) for non-teaching staff, while the grand mean is (3.08), which indicates that the answer to research question two is that counseling and support services are utilized to a high extent in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State.

**Research Questions 3:** To what extent are inclusive and transparent communication conflict resolution programmes used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State?

**Table 4.3: Mean and standard deviation of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent inclusive and transparent communication conflict resolution programmes used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State**

S/N	ITEMS	Teaching Staff		Non-Teaching		Mean set (X1+X2)/2	DECISION
		$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD		
11	Inclusive communication ensures all stakeholders are involved in conflict resolution processes.	3.52	0.64	3.54	0.67	3.52	HE
12	Transparent communication between management and students reduces misunderstandings that could lead to conflicts	3.56	0.58	3.53	0.58	3.56	HE
13	Communication strategies in conflict resolution are designed to promote fairness and equity	3.36	0.66	3.30	0.70	3.36	HE
14	Open forums for dialogue between students and staff contribute to conflict resolution.	3.46	0.61	3.42	0.63	3.46	HE
15	Clear communication policies minimize the chances of unresolved social issues.	3.49	0.55	3.42	0.56	3.49	HE
	<b>Grand mean</b>	<b>3.45</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>0.79</b>	3.41	HE

Table 4.3 revealed the mean and standard deviation of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent inclusive and transparent communication conflict resolution programmes are used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State. The data indicate that the mean of teaching staff for item 11 is (3.52) while the non-teaching staff mean is (3.54). Based on the criterion mean of 2.50, both the teaching and non-teaching staff rated item 11 agreed that inclusive communication ensures all stakeholders are involved in conflict resolution processes. Similarly, for items 12-15, the mean ratings of teaching staff are (3.56), (3.36), (3.46), and (3.49), while the mean ratings of non-teaching staff are (3.53), (3.30), (3.42), and (3.42). Based on the criterion mean of 2.50, both teaching and non-teaching staff agreed that transparent communication between management and students reduces misunderstandings that could lead to conflicts, communication strategies in conflict resolution are designed to promote fairness and equity, open forums for dialogue between students and staff contribute to conflict resolution, and clear communication policies minimize the chances of unresolved social issues.

The cluster means are (3.45) for teaching staff and (3.37) for non-teaching staff, while the grand mean is (3.41), which indicates that the answer to research question three is that inclusive and transparent communication conflict resolution programmes are utilized to a high extent in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State.

#### **Test of Hypotheses**

1: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent conflict resolution programmes is used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State.

**Table 4.4: t-test summary showing significant difference in the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent conflict resolution programmes is used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State.**

Category	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	A	Remarks
Teaching	391	3.48	0.50	647	1.67	1.93	0.05	Not Significant
Non-Teaching Staff	258	3.53	0.46					

Table 4.4 shows the t-test summary of the significant difference in the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent conflict resolution programmes are used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State. The result of the study showed that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching staff, with a t-calculated value of 1.67, degrees of freedom (df) = 647, and t-critical value of 1.93. Since the p-value (0.05) is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent conflict resolution programmes are used in managing social problems, was not rejected.

2: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent counseling and support services is used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State.

**Table 4.5: t-test summary showing significant difference in the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent counseling and support services is used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State.**

Category	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	A	Remarks
Teaching	391	3.07	0.67	647	1.24	1.93	0.05	Not Significant
Non-Teaching Staff	258	3.09	0.64					

Table 4.5 shows the t-test summary of the significant difference in the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent counseling and support services are used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State. The result of the study showed that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of teaching and non-teaching staff, with a t-calculated value of 1.24, degrees of freedom (df) = 647, and t-critical value of 1.93. Since the p-value (0.05) is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent counseling and support services are used in managing social problems, was not rejected.

3: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent inclusive and transparent communication is used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State.

**Table 4.6: t-test summary showing significant difference in the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent inclusive and transparent communication is used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State.**

Category	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	A	Remarks
Teaching	391	2.87	0.37	647	0.173	1.93	0.05	Accepted
Non-Teaching Staff	258	2.83	0.35					

Table 4.6 shows the t-test summary of the significant difference in the mean ratings of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent inclusive and transparent communication is used in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State. The result of the study showed that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of teaching and non-teaching staff, with a t-calculated value of 0.173, degrees of freedom (df) = 647, and a t-critical value of 1.93. Since the p-value (0.05) is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between the mean

responses of teaching and non-teaching staff on the extent inclusive and transparent communication is used in managing social problems, was accepted.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### ***Extent to which conflict resolution programmes enhance the management of social problems in public universities in Rivers State***

The findings from the study reveal that conflict resolution programs significantly contribute to managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State. Both teaching and non-teaching staff rated these programs highly, with their mean scores exceeding the criterion mean of 2.50. This indicates strong agreement on the positive impact of these initiatives in fostering harmony and reducing conflicts within the university environment. This finding aligns with Adeola (2020), who emphasized the effectiveness of mediation and conflict resolution programs in promoting peaceful coexistence and reducing tensions in educational settings. Moreover, the programs' ability to address interpersonal conflicts and disputes among students, faculty, and staff underscores their importance in maintaining a conducive learning environment. These findings corroborate Ekpenyong (2018), who observed that proactive conflict resolution mechanisms help to prevent escalations and improve relationships within academic institutions. The integration of structured conflict resolution centers and mediation services ensures that grievances are addressed promptly, which supports overall institutional stability.

### ***Extent to which counseling and support services enhance the management of social problems in public universities in Rivers State***

The study highlights that counseling and support services play a crucial role in addressing mental health challenges and social issues in public universities. Both teaching and non-teaching staff agreed that these services are highly effective, as reflected in their mean ratings, which consistently exceeded the criterion mean. This finding supports Eze (2022), who emphasized the importance of counseling services in improving emotional well-being and reducing stress among students and staff. Additionally, the role of counseling services in addressing substance abuse, academic stress, and interpersonal conflicts is notable. These findings align with Adebayo (2019), who reported that enhanced counseling services contribute to improved emotional stability and academic performance. The provision of individual and group counseling, coupled with mental health awareness programs, fosters a supportive and inclusive campus environment.

*Extent to which inclusive and transparent communication channels enhance the management of social problems in public universities in Rivers State*

The findings indicate that inclusive and transparent communication channels are highly effective in managing social problems within public universities. Both groups of respondents rated these strategies positively, reflecting their significance in fostering trust and inclusivity. This finding aligns with Okorie (2021), who highlighted the value of participatory approaches and open dialogue in addressing campus challenges. The study further underscores the importance of feedback mechanisms, such as town hall meetings, anonymous suggestion systems, and online platforms, in facilitating effective communication. This supports the observations of Igwe and Onyekwere (2018), who emphasized the need for structured and transparent communication to address social issues proactively. Transparent communication not only enhances stakeholder engagement but also promotes a sense of shared responsibility in tackling social challenges.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study has demonstrated that administrative strategies such as conflict resolution programs, counseling services, communication channels, security enhancement, student engagement, and diversity policies play crucial roles in managing social problems in public universities in Rivers State. The findings underscore the importance of a holistic, systems-based approach in addressing these challenges, emphasizing collaboration, inclusivity, and proactive engagement. These strategies collectively contribute to creating a supportive and harmonious academic environment, which is essential for achieving institutional goals and societal progress.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Universities should strengthen conflict resolution programs by establishing dedicated mediation centers and offering regular training for staff and students.
2. Counseling and support services should be expanded with adequate funding, professional staffing, and integration of mental health awareness campaigns.
3. Inclusive and transparent communication channels should be enhanced by leveraging digital platforms, structured feedback systems, and regular stakeholder forums.

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