

# Impact of Conflict Management Competence on Effective Management of Technical Education Programme in Tertiary Institutions in Southeast, Nigeria

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## Abstract

The study explored the impact of conflict management competence on effective management of technical education programme in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. Specifically, the study determined the impact of arbitration, collective bargaining, dialogue and smoothing competencies on effective management of technical education programme in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. In this study, a mixed methods design was adopted because it involved collecting data to answer questions about the current state of the study subject through both the quantitative and qualitative means. The participants in this study were 168 stakeholders in the management of technical education programme in tertiary institutions in South-Eastern Nigeria which offer technical education. Structured questionnaire and Interview were the instruments used for collecting data in this study. Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Reliability coefficients of 0.90, 0.92, 0.92 and 0.95 for arbitration, collective bargaining, dialogue and smoothing competencies respectively. Linear Regression and thematic analysis via illustrative quotes were used to analyze the data. Findings revealed that arbitration, collective bargaining, dialogue and smoothing competencies have a positive and significant impact on effective management of technical education programme in tertiary institutions in Anambra state.

## 1. Introduction

It is a common knowledge that individuals have different and dynamic esteemed values, core objectives which often lead to disparity in agreement among individuals. This disparity which mostly occurs in terms of views, opinions and values, most often, brings about aggregate inevitable conflict in organizations. Institutions of learning, as an organization, could experience conflict when a person perceives the action of another as impeding to the chances of attaining a given goal. Conflicts impede progression in an organization; hence conflict management is required to consciously and concertedly strategize measures to prevent and contain the occurrences of conflict (Lukman et al., 2022). Managing conflicts is a way of ameliorating the various adverse effects of conflict (Grammatikopoulos, 2022). Effective conflict management requires the involved parties to possess conflict resolution skills, enabling them to strategize, prevent, or resolve disputes. This involves addressing the underlying causes of the conflict and/or reaching fair and mutually acceptable solutions (Edet et

al., 2020). Amoda et al. (2021) opined that effective management of institution-based conflicts facilitates the achievement of quality educational goals. Hence, effective educational management of institutions' programmes such as technical education will be more effective in a well conflict managed environment than in conflict-infused environment.

Technical education programme refers to the type of education designed specifically to enable students acquire the basic knowledge, abilities, skills, understanding and attitudes that are needed for efficient performance in a chosen occupational career for self-reliance (Oviawe et al., 2017). Effective management of technical education enhances the actualization of the goal, helping to enrich the recipient with knowledge, dexterity to work with their hands (Amobi et al., 2021), and promoting the equipment of the recipients with requisite skills and competencies for relevance and contribution to national development. Technical education aims to cultivate skills, work ethics, comprehension, and appreciation of knowledge, equipping individuals with the necessary competencies to enter the workforce and advance productively in their careers (Mbah et al., 2021).

Thus, as long as persons are involved in the running of technical education programme in an institution, conflict cannot be avoided. Persistent and unresolved conflicts among technical education programme personnel can hinder the effective training of students, preventing them from acquiring essential technical skills, knowledge, attitudes, critical thinking habits, and character traits (Adekunle, 2020). Ultimately, students bear the impact of these conflicts, despite their primary goal of enrolling in technical education being to achieve self-reliance and contribute to the economic growth and development of their nations (Okolie et al., 2019). Therefore, the major preoccupation of technical education facilitators should be to design strategies that reduce human problems and secure the cooperation of all staff doing their job through conflict preventive or resolving measures. Inadequate possession of conflict management skills can encourage disintegration, disharmony, distrust and lack of tranquility (Sakiyo & Mohammed, 2016). Grammatikopoulos (2022) reported that conflict management competencies, including arbitration, smoothing, collective bargaining, communication, and dialogue competencies are essential for staff members to effectively interact with other participants in the teaching and learning process and to prevent and resolve problematic and chaotic situations, and to reach consensus. Kyrychok et al. (2021) also emphasize that conflict management competencies involve practicing humanity, responsibility, tolerance, and cooperation. Possessing these competencies is crucial for establishing and maintaining peaceful relationships among people, as well as creating orderliness, calm, and decorous conditions.

Collective bargaining competence (CBC) refers to the process in which workers, via their unions, engage in negotiations with their employers to determine employment terms, including salaries, benefits, work hours, leave entitlements, workplace safety policies, and work-life balance arrangements. Arbitration competence (ARB) is a neutral and fair dispute-resolution approach in which an impartial third party facilitates the resolution of conflicts between or among disputing groups. Dialogue competence (IDC) refers to a process where conflicting parties engage in direct, face-to-face discussions to convey their perspectives on any issue at hand. Lastly, smoothing competence (SMC) requires administrators to set aside personal interests and prioritize addressing the concerns of the conflicting parties.

In Anambra State, the researchers have observed that the dearth of adequate conflict management competence among academic administrators and faculty in Anambra State's tertiary institutions has become a prevailing concern. Instances of unresolved conflicts, strained relationships, and communication breakdowns have been observed, impeding the smooth functioning of technical education programs. The absence of a comprehensive conflict resolution framework has led to disputes festering over time, negatively impacting the learning environment and hindering program effectiveness.

The implications of this absence of framework for conflict resolution is extensive and adversely affect the quality and reputation of technical education programmes in Anambra State's tertiary institutions. Persistent conflicts lead to a decline in faculty morale, decreased student engagement, and a weakened sense of community among stakeholders. Additionally, unresolved conflicts could result in decreased faculty turnover, reduced academic productivity, and compromised learning outcomes. Ultimately, the failure to address conflict management competence issues may jeopardize the overall success and relevance of technical education programs, undermining the institutions' capacity to produce skilled and competitive graduates.

Several studies on conflict management practices and its impact on effective management of diverse programmes have been conducted in the past. Owan (2018) investigated the relationship between conflict management strategies and secondary school teachers' job effectiveness in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State. Findings of the study indicated that arbitration, dialogue, and effective communication strategies each significantly impacted on the job effectiveness of secondary school teachers. In another study, Mbah et al. (2021) researched on conflict management strategies used by principals in technical colleges for effective administration in Anambra State. The study revealed that accommodating and collaborating strategies are being employed by principals in resolving conflicts in technical colleges for effective administration in Anambra State. On the other hand, Amoda et al. (2021) investigated conflict management strategies as determinants of job effectiveness among business studies teachers in public secondary schools within Ogun East Senatorial District, Ogun State, Nigeria. The study's findings indicated that arbitration, dialogue, effective

communication, and smoothing strategies were among the key conflict management approaches employed by principals to enhance business studies teachers' job effectiveness. In a study conducted by Lukman, Amoo et al. (2022) to appraise conflict management and its impact on institutions of learning in South Africa, they discovered that student funding, annual fee increment, botched communication, and cliques, as significant factors contributing to higher institution internal conflict crises. Based on the foregoing, it can be seen that none of the studies specifically determined the impact of conflict management competence on effective management of technical education programme (EMT) in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

From the foregoing, we therefore hypothesize that:

**H<sub>1</sub>** Arbitration competency significantly predicts effective management of technical education programme in tertiary institutions.

**H<sub>2</sub>** Collective bargaining competency significantly predicts effective management of technical education programme in tertiary institutions.

**H<sub>3</sub>** Dialogue competency significantly predicts effective management of technical education programme in tertiary institutions.

**H<sub>4</sub>** Smoothing competency significantly predicts effective management of technical education programme in tertiary institutions.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Research Design

In this study, a mixed methods design was adopted. A mixed methods design is a research approach that systematically integrates qualitative and quantitative perspectives, data collection, analysis, and inference techniques to enhance the depth and breadth of understanding of a phenomenon and ensure corroboration (Onyeizugbe, 2015). It seeks to provide a comprehensive and detailed account of the subject under investigation without attempting to manipulate or control variables. The mixed methods design is especially useful in this study, as both quantitative and qualitative data were independently gathered from participants before being integrated to triangulate the findings derived from the quantitative analysis.

### 2.2 Area of the Study

The study area is South-Eastern Nigeria, which comprises five states and is home to numerous higher education institutions. These include Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; Anambra State University, Uli; Federal Polytechnic, Oko; College of Education (Technical), Umunze; Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike; University of Nigeria, Nsukka; Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, among others. These institutions offer various programmes, including technical education, which is crucial in providing skilled labour for the sub-region and the nation at large. South-Eastern Nigeria, like many other sub-regions in Nigeria, places significant emphasis on technical education to meet the growing need for skilled workers in various industries. As a result, the effective management of technical education programs is of utmost importance to ensure the production of competent and industry-ready graduates. Investigating conflict management competence in South-Eastern Nigeria is, therefore, highly relevant and has practical implications for improving the quality of technical education in the region.

### 2.3 Participants

One hundred and sixty-eight (168) subjects comprising support staff and lecturers of technical education in 10 tertiary institutions in South-Eastern Nigeria which offer technical education. This is to ensure that a comprehensive and inclusive representation of key stakeholders who play a crucial role in the effective management of technical education programs in the state. In Table 1, the distribution of participants in the study is presented.

**Table 1** *Distribution of participants*

Institution	HOD	Administrative Assistant	Secretary	Lecturers	Total
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka	1	5	1	15	22
Federal College of Education (Technical), Umunze	1	4	3	15	23
Anambra State Polytechnic, Mgbakwu	1	4	1	8	14
Alvan Ikoku University of Education	1	3	1	8	13

University of Nigeria Nsukka	1	2	1	15	19
Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu	1	2	1	8	12
Enugu State College of Education (Technical), Enugu	1	3	3	12	19
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike	1	3	1	9	14
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	1	4	1	14	20
Federal Polytechnic, Oko.	1	3	1	7	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>168</b>

The study adopted a census sampling approach, which involves including all targeted participants in the research. In this case, the target participants consisted of 168 support staff and lecturers responsible for technical education programme in the four institutions offering technical education programme in Anambra state.

### 3. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

In this study, a structured questionnaire and interview were used to gather primary data. *Quantitative data-* A questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data. It is a data collection instrument that includes a series of questions and prompts to obtain information from respondents. The questionnaire was chosen as it is a convenient instrument, especially when a large number of subjects are involved, and information can be obtained easily within a limited time. The questionnaire in the present study consisted of six sections. The first section collected background information about the participants, while the rest of the sections covered each of the research variables used in formulating the research questions. The questionnaire was structured with predetermined questions and closed-ended response options. The closed-ended questions included alternative response options, allowing respondents to select the response that best fit their situation. In order to determine the validity of the questionnaire, the researchers sought for expert opinions and the feedback obtained were utilized to improve the instrument prior to collecting data. The reliability of the various scales of the instrument used in this research was established using Cronbach's Alpha. Reliability coefficients of 0.90, 0.92, 0.92 and 0.95 for arbitration, collective bargaining, dialogue and smoothing competencies respectively. These values were considered high enough (Orodho, 2009); thus, the questionnaire was adjudged to be sufficiently reliable. The data obtained were analyzed using a linear regression tool and thematic analysis. This tool is considered appropriate since the study sought to analyze the extent of predictive ability of independent variable on the dependent.

*Qualitative data-* To collect qualitative data, a structured interview was conducted to triangulate, complement, and expand the findings derived from the quantitative analysis (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). The data obtained from the structured interview were analyzed using thematic analysis with illustrative quotes. This method involves systematically searching through a dataset to identify, analyze, and report recurring patterns (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Thematic analysis was deemed suitable for this study, as it is an effective approach for understanding shared experiences, thoughts, or behaviors within a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

### 4. Results and Discussions

The results obtained from the data collected to determine the Extent of Impact of Conflict Management Competence on Effective Management of Technical Education Programme in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State are presented in this section. The findings from the data are also discussed and presented.

#### 4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents (gender, age bracket, length of years of experience and also highest educational qualification) are shown in Table 2:

**Table 2 Respondents' demography**

Demography		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	72	42.9
	Female	96	57.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>100</b>

Age Bracket	Less than 31 years	25	14.9
	31-40 years	65	38.7
	41 – 50 years	50	29.8
	51- 60 years	22	13.1
	Above 60 years	6	3.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>100</b>
Length of years of work experience	1-10years	69	41.1
	11-20years	60	35.7
	21 and above	39	23.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>100</b>
Highest Academic Qualification	Bachelor Degree	58	34.3
	Master Degree	60	35.8
	Doctorate Degree	50	29.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents. In terms of gender distribution, 72 respondents (42.9%) are male, while 96 respondents (57.1%) are female, resulting in a total of 168 respondents representing 100%. The distribution of respondents based on age brackets indicates that 14.9% of the sample falls within the less than 31 years category, 38.7% are in the 31-40 years range, and 29.8% belong to the 41-50 years age group. Notably, there are 13.1% participants in the 51-60 years and 3.5% above 60 years categories, indicating a predominance of relatively young individuals in the sample.

In terms of work experience, 69 respondents (41.1%) have 1-10 years of experience, 60 respondents (35.7%) have 11-20 years of experience, 39 respondents (23.2%) have 21 years of experience and above, contributing to a total of 168 respondents representing 100%. Concerning the highest academic qualification, 58 respondents (34.3%) hold a Bachelor's Degree, 60 respondents (35.8%) have a Master's Degree, and 50 respondents (29.9%) possess a Doctorate Degree, resulting in a total of 168 respondents representing 100%.

## 4.2 Quantitative Study

The quantitative data obtained through the questionnaire administered on the participants are analyzed and presented under this sub-heading in line with the hypotheses formulated:

### 4.2.1 Arbitration Competency and Effective Management of Technical Education Programme

The results from the data obtained to determine the impact of arbitration competency on effective management of technical education programmes are presented under this sub-heading.

**Table 3** Simple linear regression of ARB and EMT

Model	SS	df	MS	f	R <sup>2</sup>	B	t	P
Regression	120.898	1	120.898	279.434	.627	1.179	16.716	000
Residual	71.821	166	.433					
Total	192.719	167						

**Note:** SS = Sum of Squares; df = Degrees of Freedom; MS = Mean Square; f = Indicator of the overall significance of the regression model; R<sup>2</sup> = Proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the regression model; B = Regression Coefficient; t = Statistical significance measure of the regression coefficient; P = Probability of observing the estimated regression coefficient.

The data in Table 3 shows that ARB significantly predicts EMT:  $f = 279.434$ ,  $B = 1.179$ ,  $t = 16.716$ ,  $p = .000$  or  $<.001$  then  $R =$  Square value of 0.627 indicates that 62.2% variation in EMT is accounted for by ARB. In all, the hypothesis is retained.

### 4.2.2 Collective Bargaining Competency and Effective Management of Technical Education Programme

The results from the data obtained to determine the impact of collective bargaining competency on effective management of technical education programmes are presented under this sub-heading.

**Table 4** Simple linear regression of CBC and EMT

Model	SS	df	MS	f	R <sup>2</sup>	B	t	P
Regression	128.386	1	128.386	331.278	.666	.932	18.201	.000
Residual	64.333	166	.388					
Total	192.719	167						

**Note:** SS= Sum of Square; df = Degrees of freedom; MS= Mean Square; f= measures of the overall significance of the regression model; R<sup>2</sup>= measures of the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the regression model; B= regression coefficient; t= measures of statistical significance of the regression coefficient; P= represents the probability of observing the estimated regression coefficient.

Table 4 shows that CBC significantly predict EMT:  $f = 331.278$ ,  $B = .932$ ,  $t = 18.201$ ,  $p = .000$  or  $< .001$ . Then R. Square value of 0.666 indicates that 66.6% variation in EMT is accounted for by CBC. In all, the hypothesis is retained.

### 4.2.3 Dialogue Competency and Effective Management of Technical Education Programme

The results from the data obtained to determine the impact of dialogue competency on effective management of technical education programmes are presented under this sub-heading.

**Table 5** Simple linear regression of DC and EMT

Model	SS	df	MS	f	R <sup>2</sup>	B	t	P
Regression	122.308	1	122.308	288.353	.635	.862	16.981	.000
Residual	70.411	166	.424					
Total	192.719	167						

**Note:** SS = Sum of Squares; df = Degrees of Freedom; MS = Mean Square; f = Indicator of the overall significance of the regression model; R<sup>2</sup> = Proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the regression model; B = Regression Coefficient; t = Statistical significance measure of the regression coefficient; P = Probability of observing the estimated regression coefficient.

The data in Table 5 shows that DIC significantly predict EMT:  $f = 288.353$ ,  $B = .862$ ,  $t = 16.981$ ,  $p = .000 < .001$ . Then the R. Square value of 0.635 indicates that 63.5% variation in EMT is accounted for by DIC. In all the hypothesis is retained.

### 4.2.4 Smoothing Competency and Effective Management of Technical Education Programme

The results from the data obtained to determine the impact of smoothing competency on effective management of technical education programmes are presented under this sub-heading.

**Table 6** Simple linear regression of SMC and EMT

Model	SS	df	MS	f	R <sup>2</sup>	B	t	P
Regression	128.965	1	128.965	335.796	.669	.838	18.325	.000
Residual	63.754	166	.384					
Total	192.719	167						

**Note:** SS= Sum of Square; df= Degrees of freedom; MS= Mean Square; f= measures of the overall significance of the regression model; R<sup>2</sup>= measures of the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the regression model; B= regression coefficient; t= measures of statistical significance of the regression coefficient; P= represents the probability of observing the estimated regression coefficient.

The Table 6 shows that SMC significantly predict EMT:  $f = 335.796$ ,  $B = .838$ ,  $t = 18.325$ ,  $p = .000$  or  $< .001$ . Then R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.669 indicate that 66.9% variation in EMT is accounted for by SMC. In all, the hypothesis is retained.

## 4.3 Qualitative Study

The qualitative data obtained through the structured interviews are analyzed and presented thematically via illustrative quotes in line with the hypotheses formulated. As customary with qualitative study, not all the participants were involved in the interview sessions.

**Table 7** Illustrative quotes from the structured interview

Dimensions	Illustrative Quotes from the Structured Interview	Exploratory notes
Arbitration Competency and Effective Management of Technical Education Programme (H <sub>1</sub> )	<p>“...of course, arbitration can reduce the rate of inter or intra organization conflicts” <b>(Participant 3)</b></p> <p>“the last time we had industrial disharmony, it was through the instrument of arbitration that the issue was brought to a close” <b>(Participant 1)</b></p> <p>“Though it can lead to a positive outcome, there are situations where the arbiters were found wanting by being partisan. If it’s done well, it’s an excellent way of reducing conflict” <b>(Participant 6)</b></p>	From these illustrative quotes, it can be deduced that Arbitration Competency can lead to Effective Management of Technical Education Programme
Collective Bargaining Competency and Effective Management of Technical Education Programme (H <sub>2</sub> )	<p>“It is a well-recognized means through which labour disputes are resolved. It has a significant role to play in managing labour dispute that may arise in managing technical education programme especially in institutions of higher learning” <b>(Participant 2)</b></p> <p>“enhancing workers condition of service is a critical success factor in every programme and collective bargaining is the most used platform to achieve that” <b>(Participant 4)</b></p> <p>“the local branch of our labour union always insist on collective bargaining agreement in resolving most of our labour-related disputes” <b>(Participant 1)</b></p>	From these illustrative quotes, it can be deduced that Collective Bargaining Competency can lead to Effective Management of Technical Education Programme
Dialogue Competency and Effective Management of Technical Education Programme (H <sub>3</sub> )	<p>“Conflict is an inevitable phenomenon in every organization, the manner in which it is managed is what will determine the eventual outcomes. So, when two or more persons involved in managing the affairs of technical education programme are in conflict, providing a platform for dialogue has the potential to do the desired magic” <b>(Participant 7)</b></p> <p>“Religiously, it is said that in time of conflict, dialogue should be encouraged” <b>(Participant 10)</b></p>	From these illustrative quotes, it can be deduced that Dialogue Competency can lead to Effective Management of Technical Education Programme
Smoothing Competency and Effective Management of Technical Education Programme (H <sub>4</sub> )	<p>“As an administrator, I often keep aside my personal desires and ego for peace to reign” <b>(Participant 8)</b></p> <p>“I have long recognized that my staff are my greatest assets, so I always strive to satisfy their</p>	From these illustrative quotes, it can be deduced that Smoothing Competency can lead to Effective Management of Technical Education Programme

demands so that the work can move. And that approach has been giving me consistent results”

**(Participant 9)**

“even as a technical teacher, for my peace of mind, I often ignore certain things be it between mw and students or my colleagues; that does not make me stupid”

**(Participant 7)**

The data in Table 7 shows through illustrative quotes from the interview the views of the participants on the on impact of conflict management competencies based on the four dimensions under consideration. Based on the pattern of the responses as aggregated under the individual themes, it can be deduced that the result concurred with the results obtained from the quantitative data.

## 5. Discussion

The findings of the study reveal significant and positive association between various competencies and the effective management of technical education programme within the tertiary institutions in Anambra state. These relationships are backed by strong regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ) and very low p-values, which together suggest that these competencies play a crucial role in shaping the effectiveness of management in the context of technical education programmes.

The study found a significant positive impact of arbitration competency on the effective management of technical educators. This implies that individuals who possess strong arbitration skills are more likely to contribute positively to the overall management of these programmes. This finding is consistent with the findings of Katz and Kovack (2016) who demonstrated wide use of appropriate dispute resolution practices consistent with recommendations from various bodies including the American Arbitration Association (AAA) and globally-recognized experts in the field of conflict resolution, and found arbitration to be useful in conflict resolution. Also, Ibanga et al. (2023) revealed that the use of arbitration skills in conflict resolution positively correlates to job satisfaction of teachers. This entails that arbitration skill is helpful in settling conflicts for maximum performance. Effective arbitration competency enables smoother conflict resolution, fostering conducive learning and working environment. The high and significant association indicates a robust relationship, suggesting that institutions with higher levels of arbitration competency tend to exhibit more effective management practices.

The study's finding that collective bargaining competence has a significant positive impact on the management of technical education programmes underscores the importance of collaborative negotiation skills. In line with this, Okon and Uke (2016) found that collective bargaining and crisis management in technical and vocational education training (TVET) in Nigeria led to improved industrial peace and better management of educational programs. Against the findings of this study, some researchers argue that collective bargaining have some weaknesses when used for conflict resolution. Some of the weaknesses are lack of flexibility (Oke, 2022), likely to focus on workers' interests rather than the needs of students in technical education settings (Adelabu, 2022), and lack of accountability (Afolabi, 2020). These studies, on the other hand, acknowledged that collective bargaining promotes economic efficiency by limiting industrial conflict (Oke, 2022), improves the administration and enforcement of workers' rights (Adelabu, 2022) and facilitates investment in the training of workers (Afolabi, 2020) in technical education institutions. This goes to say that collecting bargaining can be context-specific in that it may be suitable in one situation and unsuitable in another setting. Effective collective bargaining ensures fair terms and conditions, thereby contributing to harmonious operations. The substantial correlation coefficient and the extremely low p-value highlight the strong connection between collective bargaining skills and effective management practices.

The observed significant and positive impact of dialogue competency on the effective management of technical educators underscores the importance of effective communication and understanding. Ibanga et al. (2023) identified effective communication as a conflict resolution strategy which corroborates the findings of this study. They further found that effective communication correlates job satisfaction. In educational settings, effective dialogue fosters collaboration among stakeholders, leading to informed decision-making and shared objectives (Komba & Nkamba, 2022; Bush & Hansen, 2020; Sachs & Shultz, 2017). The high correlation coefficient and the very low p-value emphasize the substantial role of dialogue competency in promoting effective management practices.

The finding that smoothing competence significantly and positively influences the effective management of technical educators highlights the importance of conflict resolution skills. In educational institutions, conflicts can disrupt operations and hinder progress, decreased productivity, increased stress, and a negative impact on

student learning outcomes (Goddard & Keleher, 2022; Akinboye & Adeyemi, 2020; Smyth & Davis, 2019). Effective smoothing skills contribute to a positive working environment and enhance the overall management of technical education programmes (Olawale, 2019). Also, Adham (2023), which corroborated the findings of this, posited that strong managerial support serves as a protective factor, reducing the adverse effects of intra-group conflict on negative emotions. The strong correlation coefficient and the very low p-value underscore the substantial impact of smoothing competency on effective management.

## 6. Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research

The outcomes of this study serve as a cohesive testament to the critical significance of a spectrum of competencies, including arbitration, collective bargaining, dialogue, and smoothing, in molding and influencing the efficacy of managing technical education programmes. These distinct yet interrelated competencies are instrumental in fostering an environment conducive to seamless operations within tertiary institutions. Each of these competencies offers a distinctive facet that collectively contributes to the comprehensive landscape of effective management. The use of both structured questionnaires and interview for data collection provides the opportunity for robust exploration of nuanced insights or deeper perspectives on the competencies under examination.

The study exhibits several limitations that warrant consideration. Firstly, the focus solely on technical education institutions in South-eastern states may limit the generalizability of findings to other regions or academic domains. Additionally, the sample size may raise concerns about representativeness, potentially limiting the comprehensive understanding of the entire population. Finally, the study's reliance on self-reported competencies and their impact could introduce potential biases and subjectivity.

This study lays the groundwork for further investigations in several critical areas. Firstly, extending the research to encompass a broader geographical scope with increased number of educational institutions could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of conflict management competencies on effective management. Exploring the perceptions of various stakeholders, such as students, faculty, and external partners, would offer a holistic perspective on the identified competencies and their influence. A longitudinal study could delve into the dynamic nature of these competencies and their evolving impact over time.

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## Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this research paper.

## Author Contribution

*The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: **study conception and design:** Ijeoma Madonna Onwusuru and Ihechiluru Miracle Okam; **data collection:** Nnaemeka Martin Agbo, Mohammed Adamu Auta and Ihechiluru Miracle Okam. Nnaemeka Martin Agbo and Mohammed Adamu Auta **did analysis and interpretation of results as well as draft manuscript preparation.** All the authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.*

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