

Dr. A. A. Showunmi, Dr. Jimoh T. B.

## **Perception of stakeholders on School Management Awareness Creation on the Functionality of Complaint Mechanisms in Peculiar Situations in Nigeria**

**SHOWUNMI, A. A.**

Department of Educational Management  
University of Ilorin  
showunmi.aa@unilorin.edu.ng  
2348023048939

**&**

**JIMOH, Taibat Bolanle**

Department of Educational Management  
University of Ilorin  
jimohtaibat@unilorin.edu.ng  
2348168849794

### **Abstract**

*Complaint mechanisms in higher institutions of learning: In Nigeria is established to arbitrate, resolute conflicts and expedite justice among students, academic staff and non-academic staff. However, reports have shown that lack of creating awareness on the existence and functionality of complaint mechanisms especially in federal universities in the south-west, Nigeria can lead to negative outcomes. Previous studies on complaint in Nigerian universities concentrated largely on the causes, effects and use of leadership style and other conflict resolution approaches with little efforts on awareness of the existence and functionality of this complaint mechanism. In the light of this, the study intends to investigate school governance awareness creation and functionality of complaint mechanisms in peculiar situations in the South-West, Nigeria. Two research questions was raised and formulated. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consist of students, academic and non- teaching staff of the university. The sample of 1,260 respondents were drawn from the target population. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics. The study found out that academic staff members within the sampled universities perceived that their institutions' governance or management adequately create awareness of the mechanisms for handling disputes when they arise. The concluded that institution governance should make creation of awareness of complaint mechanism during peculiar situation is very significance to functionality of the complaint mechanism. It was recommended that more awareness should be created about the functionality of complaint mechanism The recommendations was also not be left out.*

### **Introduction**

The functionality of complaint mechanisms or its management in peculiar

situation is grounded in the fundamental principles of management processes as outlined by Taylor in Gothehrer and Hostina, (2009). Functionality of complaint mechanism as a process entails of activities of planning and monitoring the performance of a process, especially in the sense of a complaint handling process. The mechanism involves the application of knowledge, skills, tools, techniques and systems to define, visualize, measure, control, report and improve processes with the goal of achievement a harmonious environment of co-existence. Complaints mechanism is a system or process put in place by a institutions or governments to allow individuals to voice their grievances, dissatisfaction, or concerns about a particular issue, service, or behavior. These mechanisms typically involve procedures for submitting complaints, investigating them, ad providing resolutions or responses to address the issues raised. They are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, and responsiveness in addressing concerns raised by stakeholders. Examples include customer service hotlines, online complaint forms, ombudsman offices, ad grievance committees.

However, Rajani (2009) stated that the alternative functionality of complaint mechanism in peculiar situation is the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) movement has matured with the emergence of newer types of complaint mechanism especially on campuses such as campus judicial systems, peace counselling, peer mediation, student affairs unit, Staff Disciplinary Council (SDC) and other varieties alternative dispute resolution mechanism. It is also important to note that, organizations including universities can adopt any one or more of these alternatives depending on the country's constitution and the organization's norms and ethics.

The school should make sure that all reasonable measures are taken to ensure that the whole institutions personnel (students, non-teaching and academic) are responsive to complaint mechanism and its role. The required materials needed to handle complaint should be available at places where potential complainants are likely to tender their complaint and seek redress or information. This includes any organisations covered by the institutions, colleges, faculty, centres, departments and units.

The awareness of the existence of complaint mechanism may be broadcast through memo, fliers, bulletin, to mention but a few from relevant websites. Logos should be displayed on letterheads, office doors, lecture rooms and notice boards to make the complaint mechanism recognizable. The complaint mechanism must be known within the institutions of learning covered by its activities. Those organisations, should refer potential complainants as a part of their own in-house complaint-handling procedures, and be ready to give helpful information verbally moreover as in complaints and other promotional literature.

The goals of tertiary education in Nigeria, (including university education) as contained in Section 5 of National Policy on Education (FRN 2014:39) are to: contribute to national development through high level manpower training; provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal

education in response to the needs and interests of all Nigerians; provide high quality career counselling and lifelong learning programmes that prepare students with the knowledge and skills for self-reliance and the world of work; reduce skill shortages through the production of skilled manpower relevant to the needs of the labour market; promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service; forge and cement national unity; and promote national and international understanding and interaction.

The aforementioned objectives of tertiary education can only be achieved through a well-equipped and adequately through functionality of complaint mechanisms. Bombin (2014) noted that higher institutions of learning are made up of people (men and women), i.e employees who carry out assigned functions and the employers who monitor the assigned functions and encounter challenge that would need to e complain about to appropriate authority. Therefore, the smooth performance of any tertiary institutions involves the collective responsibility of people that are working in such places. Also, tertiary institutions cannot be better than the people that make it up and that the success or failure of any institutions depends on the quality of people found in it (Stipanowich & Lamare, 2014). Human interaction in tertiary institutions in the context of incompatibility ends where the ability of people to satisfy their needs are affected or where the interaction depends on choices, decisions and the behaviour of others, in which case, incompatibility easily degenerates into disputes and conflicts. This implies that there is the need for organizations or institutions to map out strategies that will help to reduce the rate of incompatibility within the system. Complaints which are allowed to degenerate into conflicts and disputes due to failure to attend to essential student personnel services retards progress anywhere including organizations in which universities are not left out. In view of this realization, universities are expected to consider human interactions as an important exercise that requires attention. Moreover, with the different groups of people whose functions overlap in the tertiary institutions system in terms of unions, there is the likelihood that complaint will occur.

Complaint is peculiar to human relationships and societies because of the interaction among people due to differences in choices and decisions and an expression of the basic fact of human interdependence(Adejuwon&Okewale, 2009). As organization grows, the tendency for it to expand its operation and workforce becomes imminent. In view of this awareness, simple and complex complaints by the organizational stakeholders should be expected. Organizational stakeholders' complaints can either be as a result of conditions of service or disciplinary actions that may arise due to reasons that are centred to human and organisational development. According to Adejuwon & Okewale (2009) the reasons for complaints include but not limited to ineffective or insufficiently trained management, unfair treatment, unclear job roles, poor communications, poor work environment, lack of equal opportunities, bullying and harassment, unresolved problems from the past and an increase in workload. It can then be inferred that universities being

organization that have overlap roles are also prone to issues that bother on the aforementioned actions. These issues are capable of causing massive complaints in the universities and have to be treated as very important or better still reduced to the barest minimum or if possible, avoided totally.

### Research Questions

1. What is the perception of academic staff, non-academic staff and students on the School governance awareness creation of the complaints Mechanism in peculiar situations?
2. What is the perception of the Academic Staff, Non-Academic staff and Students Respondents about Functionality of Complaints Mechanism in their Institutions during Peculiar situation?

### Methodology

This adopted descriptive survey design. The target population comprised the entire staff (academic and non-academic) and students of federal universities in South West Nigeria which are 5,475 academic staff and Non-academic staff. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select the sample for the study. Simple random sampling procedure was used to select fifty (50) academic staff members, fifty (50) non-academic staff while proportionate to size sampling procedure was used to select one hundred and ten (110) students from each of the federal university in Southwestern Nigeria. In all, three hundred (300) Non-academic staff, three hundred (300) academic staff and six hundred and sixty (660) students were considered for the study, to make a total sample of one thousand, two hundred and sixty (1,260) participants. The instruments used were questionnaires titled: Governance Awareness Creation and Complaint Mechanism Functionality (GACCMF). The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics for the two research questions.

### Results

Answer to Research Questions

**Research Question 1:** What is the perception of academic staff, non-academic staff and students on the School governance awareness creation of the complaints Mechanism in peculiar situations?

**Table 1: Perception of the Academic Staff on Complaints Handlers in their Institutions**

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD
There is wide spread Manner of Handling complaints in your institution	151 50.3%	88 29.3%	61 20.3%	0 0.0%	3.30	0.02
My Institution is aware of Public Complaints Commission Directive	133 44.3%	109 36.3%	58 19.3%	0 0.0%	3.25	0.34

Dr. A. A. Showunmi, Dr. Jimoh T. B.

requirements

My institution is aware of the benefit of proper handling of complaints	113	125	62	0	3.17	0.56
	37.3%	41.7%	20.7%	0.0%		
This institution upholds general complaints to any extent	120	107	73	0	3.16	0.4
	40.0%	35.7%	24.3%	0.0%		
Members of this academic community including myself knows where complaints are to be lodged in this institution	146	62	71	21	3.11	0.61
	48.7%	20.7%	23.7%	7.0%		
The institution has enough facilities to redress complaints	112	107	71	10	3.07	0.3
	37.3%	35.6%	23.7%	3.3%		
Weighted Average Mean	2.81					

Source: Field Work (20..)

Table 1 reveals the rating of the factors that determine the perception of the academic staff of dispute handlers in their institutions. The mean item scores explained the perception of the academic staff perception of awareness of the wide spread Manner of Handling complaints in your institution was rated highest with 79.5% of the respondents agreeing that there is adequacy of delegation of dispute resolution (Mean = 3.30, SD=0.02). This is followed by my Institution is aware of Public Complaints Commission Directive requirements (Mean= 3.25, SD=0.34), my institution is aware of the benefit of proper handling of complaints (Mean = 3.17, SD=0.56); this institution upholds general complaints to any extent (Mean = 3.16, SD=0.4); members of this academic community including myself knows where complaints are to be lodged in this institution (Mean = 3.11, SD=0.61); and lastly, the institution has enough facilities to redress complaints (Mean = 3.07, SD=0.3). From the results, it was observed that, academic staff in the sampled universities perceived that universities governance or management fairly create awareness of handling mechanism of the dispute whenever they occur.

**Table 2: Perception of the Non-Academic Staff of awareness creation of Complaint Mechanism in the Institutions by the governance**

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std
There is wide spread Manner of Handling complaints in your institution	144	95	61	0	3.28	1.00
	48.0%	31.7%	20.3%	0.0%		
My Institution is aware of Public Complaints Commission Directive requirements	132	105	63	0	3.17	.98
	44.0%	35.0%	21.0%	0.0%		
My institution is aware of the benefit of proper handling of complaints	146	67	77	10	3.16	0.85
	48.7%	22.3%	25.7%	3.3%		
This institution upholds general complaints to any extent	119	108	64	9	3.12	1.00
	39.7%	36.0%	21.3%	3.3%		
Members of this academic community including myself knows where complaints are to be lodged in this institution	121	98	73	8	3.11	0.50
	40.3%	32.7%	24.3%	2.7%		
The institution has enough facilities to redress complaints	108	109	71	12	3.04	0.17
	36.6%	36.3%	23.7%	4.0%		
Weighted Average Mean	3.18					

Source: Field Work (20..)

Table 2 reveals the rating of the factors that determines the perception of non-academic staff of dispute handlers in their institutions. The mean item scores explained the perception of the non-academic staff awareness creation of complaints handlers by the institution governance in the Nigerian universities using the entire six factors. Wide spread Manner of Handling complaints in your institution was rated highest (Mean = 3.28, SD=1.00). This is followed by Institution awareness of Public Complaints Commission Directive requirements (Mean = 3.17, SD=0.98); institution awareness of the benefit of proper handling of complaints (Mean = 3.16, SD=0.85); institution upholds general complaints to any extent (Mean = 3.12, SD=1.00); Members of this academic community including myself knows where complaints are to be lodged in this institution (Mean = 3.11, SD=1.00) and lastly, The institution has enough facilities to redress complaints (Mean = 3.04, SD=0.17). The general implication of the result from Table 2 is that, dispute handlers are objective in their ways of settling disputes.

**Table 3: Perception of Students on Complaints Mechanism awareness creation of Complaint Mechanism by the governance in their Institutions**

Description	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD
There is wide spread Manner of Handling complaints in your institution	305 50.8%	144 24.0%	151 25.2%	0 0.0%	3.26	0.23
My Institution is aware of Public Complaints Commission Directive requirements	248 41.3%	244 40.7%	108 18.0%	0 0.0%	3.23	0.46
My institution is aware of the benefit of proper handling of complaints	290 48.4%	158 26.3%	152 25.3%	0 0.0%	3.23	0.12
This institution upholds general complaints to any extent	210 35.0%	281 46.8%	109 18.2%	0 0.0%	3.22	0.35
Members of this academic community including myself knows where complaints are to be lodged in this institution	240 40.0%	208 34.7%	152 25.3%	0 0.0%	3.15	0.65
The institution has enough facilities to redress complaints	263 43.8%	143 23.8%	143 23.8%	51 8.5%	3.03	0.21
Weighted Average Mean	3.19					

Source: Field Work (20..)

Table 3 reveals the rating of the factors that determine the perception of students of dispute handlers in their institutions. The mean item scores explained the perception of the students towards complaint handlers in the Nigerian universities using the entire six indicators. Wide spread Manner of Handling complaints in your institution was rated highest (Mean = 3.26, SD=0.23). This is followed by Institution is aware of Public Complaints Commission Directive requirements (Mean = 3.23, SD=0.46), institution is aware of the benefit of proper handling of complaints (Mean = 3.23, SD= 0.12); institution upholds general complaints to any extent (Mean = 3.22, SD=0.65); members of this academic community including myself knows where complaints are to be lodged in this institution (Mean = 3.15, SD=0.65); and lastly, institution has enough facilities to redress complaints (Mean = 3.03, SD=0.21).



**Research question 2: What are the perception of the Academic Staff, Non-Academic staff and Students Respondents about Functionality of Complaints Mechanism in their Institutions during Peculiar Situation?**

**Table 4: Perception of the Academic Staff, Non-Academic staff and Students Respondents about Functionality of Complaints Mechanism in their Institutions during Peculiar situation**

<b>Description</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>STD</b>
Issues are handled fairly	151 50.3%	88 29.3%	61 20.3%	0 0.0%	3.30	.95
Aggrieved stakeholders feel satisfied after mediation	146 48.7%	85 28.3%	69 23.0%	0 0.0%	3.26	.95
Rancour are minimized based on effective handling of cases	139 46.3%	101 33.7%	60 20.0%	0 0.0%	3.26	.97
Rapid action is always taken on complaint lodge	135 45.0%	101 33.7%	64 21.3%	0 0.0%	3.24	1.50
Cases are resolved within litigation	116 38.7%	116 38.7%	68 22.7%	0 0.0%	3.16	1.01

**Source: Field Work (20..)**

Table 4 presents the result of the perception of academic staff, Non-academic staff and students of the complaint handling mechanism functionality in their various institutions. The result revealed that, 79.6% of the respondents agreed that issues were handled fairly while 20.4% disagreed (mean=3.30, SD=0.92). 77.0% of the respondents agreed that aggrieved stakeholders feel satisfied after mediation while 23.0% disagreed (mean=3.26, SD=0.95). Also, 80.0% of the academic respondent agreed that rancour are minimized based on effective handling of cases while 20.0% disagreed (mean=3.26, SD=0.79). Furthermore 78.7% of the respondents agreed that rapid action is always taken on complaint lodge while 21.3% disagreed (mean=3.24, SD=1.50). Again, 71.4% of the respondents agreed that cases are resolved within litigation (mean=3.16, SD=1.00). From the result, inference could be made that majority of the respondents agreed that complaint handling mechanism is functional.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Based on the results of the study, the findings are discussed as follow;  
The research conducted aimed to assess the factors influencing the perceptions of academic staff regarding dispute resolution handlers within their institutions. The findings revealed that academic staff members within the sampled universities perceived that their institutions' governance or management adequately create awareness of the mechanisms for handling disputes when they arise. This result suggests a positive perception among academic staff regarding the responsiveness and effectiveness of university governance or management in

addressing disputes. It indicates that the institutions have established clear procedures and mechanisms for handling disputes and have effectively communicated these to academic staff members. This proactive approach to dispute resolution likely contributes to a sense of confidence and trust among academic staff, fostering a conducive working environment within the institutions.

Moreover, the perception that universities' governance or management fairly creates awareness of dispute handling mechanisms highlights the importance of transparent and equitable procedures in resolving conflicts. By ensuring that all stakeholders are aware of the established processes for addressing disputes, universities can promote fairness, accountability, and trust within their academic communities.

Moreover, the perception that universities' governance or management fairly create awareness of dispute handling mechanisms highlights the importance of transparent and equitable procedures in resolving conflicts. By ensuring that all stakeholders are aware of the established processes for addressing disputes, universities can promote fairness, accountability, and trust within their academic communities.

However, it's essential to recognize that perceptions of dispute resolution mechanisms may vary among different stakeholders within the institutions. Future research could explore the perspectives of other groups, such as students and administrative staff, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of dispute resolution practices within universities.

Overall, the findings of this study underscore the significance of effective communication and transparent procedures in managing disputes within academic institutions, ultimately contributing to a positive organizational climate and conducive working environment for all stakeholders.

The rating of the factors that determines the perception of non-academic staff of dispute handlers in their institutions. The general implication of the result is that, dispute handlers are objective in their ways of settling disputes.

The research aimed to assess the factors influencing the perceptions of non-academic staff regarding dispute handlers within their institutions. The findings revealed a significant implication: non-academic staff perceives dispute handlers as being objective in their approach to resolving disputes.

This finding suggests that non-academic staff members within the institutions view dispute handlers as fair and impartial in their methods of settling disputes. This perception is crucial as it indicates a sense of trust and confidence among non-academic staff in the dispute resolution processes implemented within their institutions. When dispute handlers are perceived as objective, it enhances the credibility of the dispute resolution mechanisms and fosters a conducive work environment where conflicts can be addressed effectively and fairly.

Moreover, the implication that dispute handlers are objective in their ways of settling disputes underscores the importance of fairness and impartiality in conflict



resolution. Objective handling of disputes ensures that decisions are based on merit, evidence, and established procedures rather than personal biases or preferences. This contributes to the legitimacy and integrity of the dispute resolution processes within the institution.

Additionally, the perception of dispute handlers as objective may have broader implications for organizational culture and morale. When staff members believe that disputes are handled fairly and impartially, it can enhance job satisfaction, promote trust in leadership, and foster a sense of loyalty to the institution. Conversely, perceptions of unfairness or bias in dispute resolution can lead to dissatisfaction, resentment, and disengagement among staff members.

Overall, the implication that dispute handlers are perceived as objective in their ways of settling disputes highlights the importance of fairness, impartiality, and professionalism in dispute resolution processes within academic institutions. It underscores the need for institutions to prioritize the training and development of dispute handlers to ensure they possess the skills, knowledge, and ethical principles necessary to handle conflicts effectively and objectively. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of transparency and accountability in dispute resolution processes to maintain the trust and confidence of staff members in the institution's leadership and governance.

The rating of the factors that determine the perception of students of dispute handlers in their institutions. This academic community including myself knows where complaints are to be lodged in this institution (Mean = 3.15, SD=0.65); and lastly, institution has enough facilities to redress complaints (Mean = 3.03, SD=0.21).

The research aimed to evaluate the factors influencing students' perceptions of dispute handlers within their academic institutions. The findings indicate several noteworthy points regarding students' perceptions of the availability and accessibility of complaint resolution mechanisms within their institutions.

Firstly, the mean rating of 3.15, with a standard deviation of 0.65, suggests that students generally perceive that they know where to lodge complaints within their institution. This indicates a moderate to high level of awareness among students regarding the channels or offices designated for addressing grievances. This is a positive finding as it implies that the institution has been successful in communicating the relevant information to students, ensuring they are aware of the appropriate channels for lodging complaints.

These findings are in line with Secondly, the mean rating of 3.03, with a smaller standard deviation of 0.21, suggests that students perceive that their institution possesses sufficient facilities to address complaints effectively. This implies that students believe their institution has adequate resources, procedures, and support systems in place to handle grievances and disputes efficiently. This perception is crucial as it reflects students' confidence in the institution's ability to resolve issues promptly and satisfactorily.

Overall, these findings highlight the importance of effective communication and the availability of resources in fostering a positive perception of dispute handlers among students. When students feel informed about where to seek assistance and trust that their institution has the necessary resources to address their concerns, it can contribute to a more supportive and harmonious learning environment. However, it's essential for institutions to continually assess and improve their complaint resolution mechanisms to ensure they meet the evolving needs and expectations of students.

Future research could delve deeper into specific aspects of complaint resolution processes, such as the timeliness of responses, the transparency of procedures, and the effectiveness of outcomes, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions and experiences with dispute handlers within academic institutions.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion the widespread manner of handling complaints, Institution's awareness of complaints handling requirements, institutions' awareness of benefit of proper handling of complaints, Knowledge of complaints lodgement centre and availability of appropriate remedies are all factors responsible for the simplicity of resolutions of dispute in the institutions are very necessary. This is of paramount important in a peculiar situation. The institution governance should make creation of awareness of complaint mechanism during peculiar situation is very significance to functionality of the complaint mechanism.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the discussions of the finding and conclusion, the study came up with this recommendation: a vigorous creation of awareness should be mounted to keep the students and staff abreast of the functionality of the complaint handling mechanism. A team of competent, aggressive, and enterprising personnel must be attracted to the Ombudsman to enhance efficiency and professionalism in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

### **References**

- Adejuwon, K. D and Okewale, R. A. {2009}. "Ethnic Militancy, Insurrections and Democracy in Africa: The Case of Nigeria", *Journal of Social and Policy*.6(4), 240-255.
- Adeleke, A. (2006). Management Concepts and applications, Lagos, Concepts Publications
- Adesina, S. (1988). The Development of Modern Education in Nigeria. Heinemann Education Books, Ibadan.
- Rajani, G. (2009). Role of the office of the ombudsman in resolving extra-judicial killings, Hawaii.