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6-22-2021

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Agbakwuru, Kelvin N. and Yusuf, Jemilat, "Conflict Management Styles and Organisational Commitment amongst Library Staff in ABUAD" (2021). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 5942. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/5942>

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## Conflict Management Styles and Organisational Commitment amongst Library Staff in ABUAD

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigated the effect of five different conflict management styles on organisational commitment amongst library staff in Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD). Also, it examined the relationship between conflict management styles and organisational commitment. In achieving these objectives, quantitative approach was adopted. A sample size of 27 library staff of ABUAD was used and data was collected with the use of close-ended paper questionnaires. Six hypotheses were formulated for this study and data obtained were analysed using multiple regression and Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis with the aid of the SPSS version 20.0. Results obtained showed that only integrative conflict management style had a significant and positive effect on organisational commitment and that a positive relationship exists between conflict management styles and organisational commitment. The study further recommended that organisations should adopt the integrative style in managing conflict if they are to get employees more committed.*

**Keywords:** Conflict, conflict management styles, organisational commitment, librarians, organisations

## **1.0 Introduction**

Conflict is an inevitable and natural phenomenon that is tailored to the fabrics of human relationships. Where there is an interaction between two or more people, a potential for conflict exists. An organisation which is a canopy of two or more people houses to a great degree prospects for the occurrence of conflict. Alzahrani (2013) consented to this by stating that conflict is natural in organisations as revealed by organisational theorists. The negative consequences its occurrence is known to have prompts organisations to set up mechanisms or frameworks for its proper management.

However, some scholars are of the viewpoint that conflict should not be totally dismissed as a negative phenomenon. Hussein and Al-mamary (2019) affirmed this by stating that conflict not only has negative effects but also positive effects. According to them, some of its positive effects include inspiration of creative and productive ideas, improvement of mutual understanding between parties, discouragement of group premature decision-making. However, responsibility still lies on organisations to rightly approach conflict situations with the right strategies so as to reap its rich benefits (Rahim, 1986). This therefore, brings to the fore the different conflict management styles which are; integration, collaborating, compromising, obliging and dominating.

Amongst several reasons for the proper management of conflicts in an organisation is the issue of organisational commitment. Every organisation wants their employees to continually work with them. Choong, Wong and Lau (2012) defined organisational commitment as the strong desire of employees to remain a member of an organisation. The organisational commitment is believed to exist in three dimensions – affective, normative and continuance (Meyer & Allen, 1987). An organisation whose employees are committed on these three levels should be seen as one with a high degree of organisational commitment. Meyer and Allen (1997) further stated that organisational commitment is a psychological state of how employees perceive their employment with an organisation to be and the resultant desire to still stay with the organisation.

From the foregoing, it is seen that organisational commitment is critical to the high level performance of organisations. And with the inevitability of conflict in organisations, this study seeks to determine the relationship between and effect of the various conflict management styles on organisational commitment with respect to all librarians in Afe-Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti.

## **1.1 Research Questions**

This study seeks to proffer answers or solutions to the following questions:

- (i) What is the effect of obliging style on organisational commitment amongst library staff in ABUAD?

- (ii) What is the effect of integrative style on organisational commitment amongst library staff in ABUAD?
- (iii) What is the effect of compromising style on organisational commitment amongst library staff in ABUAD?
- (iv) What is the effect of dominating style on organisational commitment amongst library staff in ABUAD?
- (v) What is the effect of avoiding style on organisational commitment amongst library staff in ABUAD?
- (vi) What is the relationship between conflict management styles and organisational commitment amongst library staff in ABUAD?

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

- (i) To determine the effect of obliging style on organisational commitment amongst library staff in ABUAD?
- (ii) To ascertain the effect of integrative style on organisational commitment amongst library staff in ABUAD?
- (iii) To determine the effect of compromising style on organisational commitment amongst library staff in ABUAD?
- (iv) To establish the effect of dominating style on organisational commitment amongst library staff in ABUAD?
- (v) To determine the effect of avoiding style on organisational commitment amongst library staff in ABUAD?
- (vi) To identify the relationship between the conflict management styles and organisational commitment amongst library staff in ABUAD.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Conflict Management Styles**

Conflict management style refers to an approach used by an individual in dealing with an issue of conflict (Abdulraheem, 2020). According to Khanaki and Hassanzadeh (2010), conflict management styles are the gestures adopted in the confrontation of conflict. From the view of Chandolia and Anastasiou (2020), conflict management styles are those approaches used to tackle a conflict. Conflict management style can also be seen as the strategies adopted for the proper management of a conflict so as to prevent its negative consequences. There exists conflict management so as to prevent its adversarial effect on the organisation.

The five conflict management styles were first introduced into the literature by Follet in 1940 (Ilgan, 2020). These styles include: Integration style, obliging style, dominating style, avoiding style and compromising style. Rahim (2010) was able to explain these different styles with the use of two major dimensions – concern for others and concern for self.

### **2.1.1 Integrative Style**

This style is also known as collaborative style and it has to do with where the concerns of parties in a conflict are thoroughly cared about. The aim of this approach is to ensure the concerns of the parties involved in a conflict are completely satisfied as a result of their collaboration to tackle every underlying concern and to search for options for every party's satisfaction (Khanaki & Hassanzadeh, 2010). It is a style that involves a high concern for one's self and others in a conflict resolution process. Moreover, using the dimensions of assertiveness and cooperation, it requires high level of assertiveness and high level of cooperation.

### **2.1.2 Obliging Style**

This style of conflict management aims at bringing peace and harmony by one's disregard for his/her personal concerns so as to satisfy the other party's concerns. This style is characterised by low concern for self and high concern for others. It can also be called accommodating style. Here, the party who sacrifices his/her concerns for the concerns of the other party is particularly concerned about the conflict being resolved. The use of this style entails the unassertiveness and cooperation of a party.

### **2.1.3 Avoiding Style**

Avoiding style of conflict management has to do with where both parties to a conflict pay insignificant attention to their concerns and the concerns of each other. It involves a low concern for self and others. Asyraf, Ibrahim and Kassim (2014) opined that avoiding style has to do with withdrawal or neglecting the actual conflict situation.

### **2.1.4 Dominating Style**

This style which is also known as competing style involves a situation where either of the party in a conflict has high concern for oneself and low concern for others. It is a self-centered approach where one party goes home satisfied at the expense of the other. The outcome of the adoption of this style is a win-lose situation

### **2.1.5 Compromising Style**

The compromising style of conflict management is concerned with where parties in a conflict are willing to compromise on some of their positions or concerns so as to reach an agreement. In this situation, each party forgoes or neglects some of his/her concerns so as to bring a resolution to the ongoing conflict situation.

## **2.2 Organisational Commitment**

Organisational commitment can be defined as the ideology and emotions internally generated or a collection of motives that contribute to the desire of an employee to stay with an organisation and willingly accept its values and goals (Porter, Crampton & Smith,

1976 as cited in Majid & Ibrahim, 2017). According to Loan's (2020) interpretation of Meyer and Allen's (1984) definition of organisational commitment, it is a psychological condition that encompasses employees' acceptance of work relations which becomes vital to the continual membership status of an organisation. This means it is a psychological issue that makes employee accept to work with an organisation and remain with such organisation for a long period of time. Dominic and Salim (2018) described organisational commitment as a mental state which has an implication on the choice of an employee to decide if he/she is to retain his/her membership status with an organisation.

### **2.2.1 Forms of Organisational Commitment**

In the literature, scholars agree that organisational commitment constitute three forms. These forms are: Affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment. Affective commitment has to do with the emotional attachment or connection employees have towards an organisation. Asyraf et al. (2014) revealed that employees who have low affective commitment for an organisation have a greater probability of leaving such organisation. This implies an inverse relationship between affective commitment and turnover rate. Normative commitment refers to a situation where an employee is morally obligated to remain with an organisation (Grego-Planer, 2019). Employees who are normatively committed feel that their exit from an organisation would have dire consequences on the performance of such organisation thereby, being compelled by their own will to remain with the organisation. Continuance commitment on the other hand is the commitment that exists because of an employee's perception of the potential economic cost of leaving an organisation (Grego-Planer, 2019). Employees are labelled to be continuously committed when they perceive that the contributions they have made towards the success of an organisation is too much for them to lose or when he or she is unable to find another job opportunity. Beck and Wilson (2002) referred to this form of commitment as an attachment to an organisation for contractual reasons or benefits.

### **2.3 Empirical Review of Literature**

Balay (2007) evaluated the relationship between different dimensions of teachers' commitment and their various conflict strategies. Based on a sample of 418 teachers, multiple regression analysis and t-test were made use of to analyse the data. Findings from the study showed that as teachers grow older, there is more likelihood of them being committed based on internalisation and identification and also more likelihood of them utilising problem-solving conflict management strategies than the younger teachers.

Asyraf et al. (2014) assessed the relationship between conflict management styles and organisational commitment among bank employees in Penang. In carrying out this study, a sample of 65 bank employees in Penang. The study made use of factor analysis to analyse the data. Results indicated that integrating, dominating and compromising are the styles

used by employees in the banks. It further concluded that the use of integrating style produces more employee commitment to the organisation.

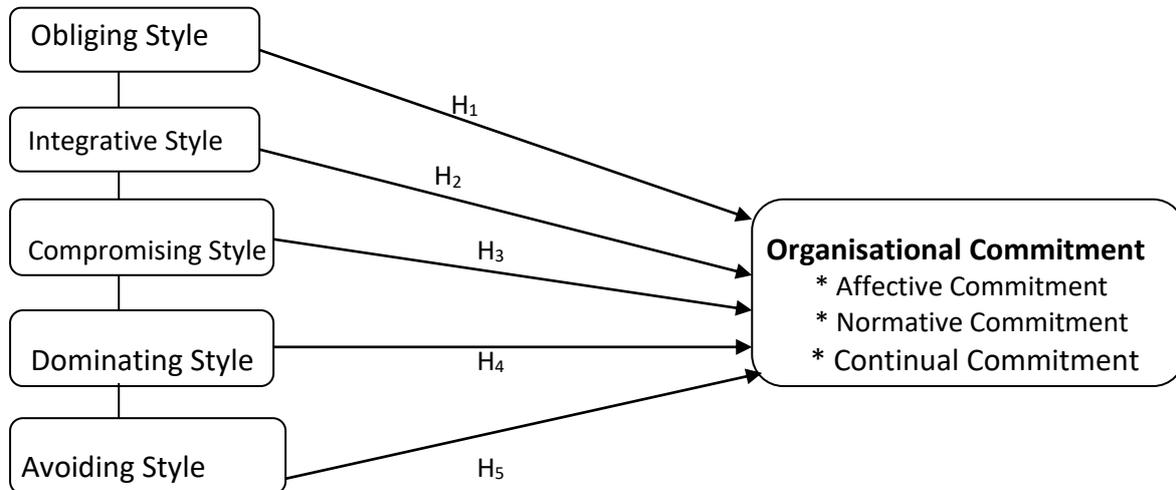
Ahmed and Ahmed (2015) conducted a study on the relationships between conflict management styles, job satisfaction and organisational commitment among workers in public and private sectors in Egypt. The study made use of a sample of 329 employees and data was analysed with the aid of correlation analysis. Results showed that a significant relationship existed between conflict management styles and both job satisfaction and organisational commitment in the public sector than private sector.

Abazeed (2017) investigated the effect organisational conflict strategies have on organisational commitment in Jordan's public universities. The study made use of a sample of 305 public universities' employees. Data collected were analysed with the aid of multiple regression and path analysis. The study results showed that compromising, integration, domination, and avoiding had a significantly positive effect on organisational commitment.

Hussein, Al-mamary and Hassan (2017) investigated the relationship between conflict management styles and organisational commitment in Sana University. The study made use of a sample of 204 employees from different faculties, centres and departments. Correlation was used to assess the relationship between five conflict management styles and organisational commitment. Findings from the study showed that the university's management makes use of the five conflict management styles which are: forcing, avoiding, compromising, cooperation and accommodating. The study further revealed that the conflict management styles had a positive relationship with organisational commitment except the forcing style. The study concluded that the use of forcing style reduces organisational commitment.

## 2.4 Conceptual Framework

### Conflict Management Styles



**Source:** Adapted from Asyraf et al. (2014)

**Fig.2.1:** Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship between Conflict Management Styles and Organisational Commitment.

Fig. 2.1 is a representation of the relationship between the styles of conflict management and organisational commitment. It shows how the obliging style, integrative style, compromising style, dominating style and avoiding style interact with organisational commitment. From this conceptual framework, the hypotheses for the study were formulated. Below are the study's hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub>: Obliging style has no effect on organisational commitment

H<sub>2</sub>: Integrative style has no effect on organisational commitment

H<sub>3</sub>: Compromising style has no effect on organisational commitment

H<sub>4</sub>: Dominating style has no effect on organisational commitment

H<sub>5</sub>: Avoiding style has no effect on organisational commitment

H<sub>6</sub>: Conflict management styles have no relationship with organisational commitment

## 2.5 Theoretical Framework

### 2.5.1 Conflict Theory

This theory was propounded by Karl Marx (1848) in his seminal work titled, "Communiste Manifesto". The fundamental proposition of this theory is that there is a continuous competition for available limited resources and power by different individuals or groups

with the end result of the more powerful ruling over the less powerful. Proponents of conflict theory believe that competition rather than cooperation is an inevitable phenomenon in every human interaction and this competition is as a result of the scarcity of resources. This theory is relevant to this study because it buttresses the inevitability of conflict and exposes why management are to properly manage conflicts in their respective organisations.

### **3.0 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Sample**

This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional research design. The rationale behind the adoption of this research design is that the study seeks to describe an already existing social phenomenon at a given point in time. This study aimed at examining the effect and relationship of conflict management styles and organisational commitment amongst library staff in ABUAD. Hence, the suitability of the chosen research design.

To determine the sample for this study, census sampling technique was used. This is because the total population of the study is so small that it was adopted as the sample for the study. Hence, 27 library staff were used for the study. Data was collected from the study's participants with the use of close-ended survey questionnaires. Respondents were assured of the privacy of the data and that it would be solely used for research purposes.

#### **3.2 Measurements**

Subsequent to a thorough literature review, the study's constructs measurements were adapted. All constructs were measured on a three-point Likert scale: 1 – Agree (A), 2 – Indifferent (I) and 3 – Disagree (D). As regards conflict management styles, obliging, integrating, and avoiding styles were measured using a five-item scale each while compromising and dominating styles were measured with a four-item scale. All the scales used for the measurement of these conflict management styles were adapted from Asyraf et al. (2014). Concerning organisational commitment, each dimension (affective, continuance and normative) were measured on a three-item scale adapted from Allen and Meyer (1990).

#### **3.3 Analytical Techniques**

To achieve the objectives of this study, descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics (simple regression and correlation) were used. Multiple regression was used to achieve objectives (i) – (v) of the study while correlation was used to achieve objective (vi). These were done with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0.

## 4.0 Results and Analysis

### 4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Items	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	12	44.4
Female	15	55.6
Total	27	100.0
<b>Age</b>		
Under 21 Years	0	0.0
21-30 Years	4	14.8
31-40 Years	15	55.6
41 and above	8	29.6
Total	27	100.0
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	4	14.8
Married	23	85.2
Divorced	0	0.0
Widow	0	0.0
Total	27	100.0
<b>Education</b>		
NCE/OND	2	7.4
B.Sc./HND	14	51.9
M.Sc./MBA/PhD	9	33.3
Others	2	7.4
Total	27	100.0
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	24	88.9
Islam	3	11.1
Total	27	100.0
<b>Level in the Firm</b>		
Junior	3	11.1
Middle	4	14.8
Senior	20	74.1
Total	27	100.0
<b>Duration of Employment</b>		
1-3 years	5	18.5
4-6 years	13	48.1
7 years and above	9	33.3
Total	27	100.0

**Table 4.1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

**Source: Field Survey (2021)**

Table 4.1 is a representation of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. In the table above, 55.6% of the respondents were female while 44.4% were male, indicating that more female are librarians in the school. As regards the age category of respondents, 14.8% of the respondents are within the age range of 21-30 years. 55.6% are between 31-40 years while 29.6% are 41 years and above. This shows that most of the librarians in the school are within the age range of 31-40 years. Concerning the marital status of respondents, 14.8% are single while 85.2% are married. None is divorced or widowed. This analysis shows that most of the librarians are married people. With regards to the educational qualification of respondents, 7.4% of respondents are NCE holders, 51.9% are B.Sc./HND holders, 33.3% have either an M.Sc., MBA or PhD while 7.4% have other qualifications. From this analysis, it can be seen that most of the librarians are either a B.Sc. or HND holder. In the aspect of religion, 88.9% are Christians while 11.1% are Muslims. None belong to other religion. With respect to level in the institution, 11.1% belong to the junior category, 14.8% belong to the middle category while 74.1% belong to the senior category. This means that most of the librarians are senior staff. Concerning duration of employment, 18.5% of the respondents have worked with the institution for a duration of 1-3 years, 48.1% within a duration of 4-6 years while 33.3% for a duration of 7 years and above.

## 4.2 Multiple Regression Analysis Output

**Table 4.2.1:**

Variables Entered/Removed			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Avoiding Style, Dominating Style, Integrative Style, Obliging Style, Compromising Style <sup>b</sup>	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Organisational Commitment

b. All requested variables entered.

**Table 4.2.2:**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.815 <sup>a</sup>	.664	.584	3.10727

a. Predictors: (Constant), Avoiding Style, Dominating Style, Integrative Style, Obliging Style, Compromising Style

**Table 4.2.3:**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	400.206	5	80.041	8.290	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	202.757	21	9.655		
	Total	602.963	26			

a. Dependent Variable: Organisational Commitment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Avoiding Style, Dominating Style, Integrative Style, Obliging Style, Compromising Style

**Table 4.2.4:**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.648	4.140		1.847	.079
	Obliging Style	.278	.244	.185	1.141	.267
	Integrative Style	.822	.245	.660	3.356	.003
	Compromising Style	-.047	.451	-.021	-.105	.917
	Dominating Style	-.263	.219	-.170	-1.204	.242
	Avoiding Style	.062	.339	.028	.184	.856

a. Dependent Variable: Organisational Commitment

Source: Field Survey (2021)

The above tabular representations give a report of the multiple regression analysis conducted to test the five hypotheses of the study. From the Model Summary table, the adjusted R square is seen to be at 0.584 which means that 58.4% of the variations in the dependent variable (organisational commitment) can be explained by all the independent variables used. With regards to whether the model is significant or not, the F-statistics (8.290) is seen to have a p-value of 0.000 as shown in the ANOVA table. Recall that a significance level of 0.05 is used in this study. And with the  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ , it is reported that the regression model is a statistically significant one.

Furthermore, to test the study's hypotheses, attention would be shifted to the Coefficients table. Here, it is seen that obliging style has a p-value of 0.267, integrating style has a p-value of 0.003, compromising style has a p-value of 0.917, dominating style has a p-value of 0.242 and avoiding style has a p-value of 0.856. From this analysis, it is obvious that integrative style is the only independent variable that has a p-value that is lesser than the significance level of 0.05 ( $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ). This shows that hypothesis two of the study is the only hypothesis said to be rejected in its null form while hypotheses, one, three, four and five ( $H_1$ ,  $H_3$ ,  $H_4$ , &  $H_5$ ) are all accepted in their null form since their p-values are greater than

the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, it can be said that integrating style is the only independent variable that has an effect on organisational commitment amongst library staff in ABUAD.

### 4.3 Correlation Analysis Output

**Table 4.3.1**

Correlations		
	Conflict management styles	Organisational Commitment
Conflict management styles	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.683**
	N	27
Organisational Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.683**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	27

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Survey (2021)

The above table gives a representation of the correlation analysis of the study's independent and dependent variables. It was used to test the study's sixth hypothesis that states that conflict management styles have no relationship with organisational commitment. From the table above, the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) is seen to be at 0.683. The implication of this is that a strong positive relationship exists between conflict management styles and organisational commitment. Moreover, to ascertain whether to accept or reject the hypothesis, attention is paid to the p-value. It is seen in the table above that the p-value is 0.000 and with it being lesser than the significance value of 0.05 (p-value<0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, it can be said that conflict management styles have a strong positive relationship with organisational commitment. This means that a slight change in the use of conflict management styles would result in a change in organisational commitment.

### 5.0 Discussion of Findings

This study aimed at evaluating the effect of five different conflict management styles on the organisational commitment of library staff in Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti. In addition, it also sought to examine the relationship between conflict management styles and organisational commitment. To achieve this, six objectives were formulated. The results obtained showed that avoiding, dominating, compromising and obliging styles have no effect on organisational commitment amongst library staff in ABUAD. Only integrative style had an effect on the organisational commitment of library staff in ABUAD. This means that

where there is a conflict between two or more parties, taking into consideration their concerns in an equal manner would trigger such parties to be committed to the organisation and vice versa. This result also shows that adopting the integrative style of conflict management means that when the superior collaborates with his/her subordinates in an attempt to resolve their conflict, it causes such subordinates to be committed to the organisation. A reason for this is that superiors take into consideration both their concerns and that of their subordinates. Hence, it makes subordinates feel important and belonging to the organisation unlike the dominating style. This now results in subordinates being more committed to the affairs of the organisation. This finding is in tandem with that of Akhtar and Hassan (2021) who in their study also discovered that integrative style strongly predicted the commitment of teachers to their organisation. Further to the foregoing, this finding is in consonance with Asyraf et al. (2014) who concluded that the use of integrative style in the management of conflicts induces more employee commitment to the organisation. However, Abazeed's (2017) study contradicts this finding. According to his study, it was discovered that integrative, dominating, compromising, and avoiding styles all had a significantly positive effect on organisational commitment. This is against this study's finding that showed that only integrative style had a significant and positive effect on organisational commitment.

Moreover, the study discovered that a strong positive relationship exists between conflict management styles and organisational commitment. This means that a slight change in the conflict management style used would result in a corresponding change in the organisational commitment of library staff in ABUAD. This finding aligns with that of Hussein, Al-mamary and Hassan (2017) who in their study revealed that conflict management styles have a positive relationship with organisational commitment.

## **6.0 Conclusion, Limitation and Suggestion for Future Studies**

From the study's findings, it can be concluded that conflict management styles play a significant role in inducing organisational commitment. More precisely, the study revealed integrative style to be the most ideal conflict management style that stimulates organisational commitment. Due to this, it is therefore recommended that organisations increasingly adopt the use of integrative style in their quest to achieve organisational commitment when faced with conflict crisis.

Having concluded on this study, it is pertinent to point out some weaknesses the study possesses. One of which is, the sample size used in arriving at the study's conclusion is small. A study that involves a larger sample size needs to be carried out so as to either confirm or disprove the results provided by this study. Another weakness of the study is that only one research approach was used in achieving the study's results – quantitative approach. Hence, it is recommended that another study be conducted that utilises the mixed method approach in arriving at a conclusion.

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