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Leung (1996) proposed that harmony and avoiding conflict have two distinct motives in Chinese society. Disintegration avoidance is instrumental in nature in that the maintenance of harmony is a means to other ends. With this motive, people avoid conflict as a way to further their self-interest and avoid potential interpersonal problems Hwang (1996). However, harmony Can also refer to the desire to engage in behaviours that strengthen relationships, a motive called harmony enhancement Leung, (1996. 1997); Leung, Koch and Lu (2002). These arguments on contrasting motives for conflict avoidance also suggest that there may be quite different behaviours used to avoid conflict. In addition to the common understanding of avoidance as outward conforming and agreeing employees, though they do not directly discuss the issues with the person they disagree with may actively try to have their ideas and interests considered and implemented. They may try to get their ideas accepted by powerful third parties or in other ways work around

the person to further their own interests. These strategies as well as the relationship and motives may affect the outcomes of conflict avoidance.

Based on the foregoing, we hypothesized thus:

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between avoidance conflict management strategy and affective commitment of academic staff in government owned universities.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between avoidance conflict management strategy and continuance commitment of academic staff in government owned universities.

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between avoidance conflict management strategy and normative commitment of academic staff in government owned universities.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross sectional survey research design. The population of the study was two thousand, eight hundred and ninety-four (2,894) academic staff of the three universities in this region. A sample of size of 353 academic staff was determined using the Taro Yamane sample size formula. The reliability of the survey instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient with all the items having values above 0.7. The hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Moment Correlation with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences at a 95% confidence interval.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### Tests of Hypothese

The tests cover hypotheses Ho<sub>1</sub> to Ho<sub>3</sub> which were bivariate and all stated in the null form. We have relied on the Spearman Rank (*rho*) statistic to undertake the analysis. The 0.05 significance

level is adopted as criterion for the probability of either accepting the null hypotheses at ( $p>0.05$ ) or rejecting the null hypotheses at ( $p<0.05$ ).

### Test of Hypotheses One

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between avoidance and affective commitment of academic staff of government owned universities.

**Table 1: Correlation between Avoidance & Affective Commitment**

		AVOD6	AFFE6
	Pearson Correlation	1	.021**
AVOD6	Sig. (2-tailed)		.697
	N	333	333
	Pearson Correlation	.021**	1
AFFE6	Sig. (2-tailed)	.697	
	N	333	333

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

The above (table 1) indicates the Pearson correlation coefficient of the relationship between avoidance & affective commitment with r value of .021\*\* which confirms what appears to be a weak positive correlation. With PV (0.697)  $>0.01$ , correlation is statistically “not significant”. This means that it just occurred by chance because in the sample, a small (weak) positive correlation was observed (.021) but not enough evidence to say that this correlation exists in the population. Hence we accept the null hypothesis one (H<sub>01</sub>). This means that avoidance has no significant relationship with affective commitment of academic staff of government owned universities.

### Test of Hypothesis Two

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between avoidance and continuance commitment of academic staff of government owned universities.

**Table 2: Correlation Analysis between Avoidance and Continuance Commitment**

		AVOD6	CONC6
AVOD6	Pearson Correlation	1	.087**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.115
	N	333	333
CONC6	Pearson Correlation	.087**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.115	
	N	333	333

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

The Table (2) above indicates test result which displays the relationship between avoidance and continuance commitment. The r value of .087\*\* implies a very weak and positive correlation. The PV (0.115) > 0.01 indicates that this correlation is statistically “not significant”. Going by the decision rule, with this PV output, the test has failed to reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>02</sub>). In other words, the null hypothesis two is accepted. Hence we conclude that avoidance has no significant relationship with continuance commitment of academic staff of government owned universities.

### Test of Hypothesis Three

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between avoidance and normative commitment of academic staff to government owned universities.

**Table 3: Correlation for Avoidance and Normative Commitment**

		AVOD6	NORC6
AVOD6	Pearson Correlation	1	.185**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.021
	N	333	333
NORC6	Pearson Correlation	.185**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021	
	N	333	333

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

A cursory look at table 3, of the Pearson’s correlation coefficient of the relationship between avoidance and normative commitment with .185\*\* shows a very weak and positive correlation. Also the presence of PV @ 0.021 > 0.01 is indicative of an insignificant correlation. The observed r values (.185) is not enough evidence to say that this correlation exists in the population. Therefore, we accept the null hypotheses (H<sub>03</sub>), and establish that there is no significant relationship between avoidance and normative commitment of academic staff to government owned universities.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Regarding the foremost objective of our study which was to ascertain the relationship between avoidance and academic staff commitment, it disclosed a very weak and insignificant relationship between Avoidance dimension and the three measures of academic staff commitment (Affective; Continuance; and Normative). Cronin and Bezrukova (2006) in their study titled: “Sweet and sour conflict: information, aggravation, and their effects on Conflict Functionality” found that: poorly managed issues concerning employees’ welfare in organization typical with avoidance is negatively related to emotional aggravation, which also affects commitment to work. This can further reduce staff ability to process information adequately. Applying avoidance strategy in managing industrial conflict might escalate causing skirmishes between the employees an employer leading to nonproductive results. Also an empirical study by Fatile and Adejuwon (2011) on “Conflict and Conflict Management in Tertiary Institution: The case of Nigerian universities” reveals that: Avoidance or poorly managed conflicts produces breakdown of mutual trust, breeds chaos and leads

to loss of productive man-hour. The duo further stated that in the university system where success often centers on the cohesion of a collective whole, avoidance can create mistrust between the employer and employee. Avoidance can trigger requisite lack of commitment to work/unproductivity, especially in terms of the value of lost time as staff suspend performance of routines due to incessant strike actions and academic disruptions.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study concludes that there is a no significant relationship between dimension of avoidance conflict management and academic staff commitment measures of affective; continuance; and normative commitment.

Based on this the recommends the use of avoidance strategy in conflict management by government is totally unaccepted and should be dropped as it often causes rancor due to it perceived application as a tool to outwit the academic staff.



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