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## ***Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi***

### **Conflict Management and Organizational Performance in The Nigerian Public Service**

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#### **Abstract**

The word Conflict connotes unpleasantness yet it is as old as Mankind. Man as a social animal has need of interaction and in the process of interacting or working, conflict ensues because of divergent interests which surface in his/her views, beliefs, system, desires, expectations and shared values; that disposes him/her to act in a peculiar way. This study seeks to investigate conflict management effects on employees' performance in organization in the Nigerian Public Service.

If properly handled, Organizational conflict can increase productivity and innovation thereby positively affecting organizational performance.

The survey design was used for the study and the findings showed collective bargaining to be the most effective strategy in the management of conflicts.

This study also pointed out, that there are so many causes of conflicts amongst employees such as interests, individual and organizational goal but the collective bargaining strategy is recommended for conflict resolution.

**Keywords:** Managing conflict, Organizational conflict and Employees performance.

#### **Objectives**

This study investigated conflict management effects on employees' performance in organization in the Nigerian Public Service, as its broad objective.

The specific objectives of this study, which will be investigated also are to:

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1. Evaluate the relationship between conflict management and organizational performance.
2. Determine the relationship between Collective bargaining strategy and organizational performance.
3. Examine the relationship between Compromise strategy with organizational performance
4. Assess the impact of Accommodation strategy on organizational performance.
5. Ascertain the relationship between Confrontation strategy and organizational performance.
6. Determine the relationship between Competition strategy organizational performance.
7. Examine the relationship between Avoidance strategy and organizational performance.

### **Data Analysis**

As an attempt by this research to unravel the effect of managing conflict on performance in organizations in the Nigerian Public Service, an empirical model was developed using data collected through questionnaires. Participants were 300 workers who were picked through the process of the technique of random sampling. The Data gotten through primary source were used. The statistical tools that were applied in the data analysis to determine the relationship between Organizational performance and managing conflict, were: Regression analysis and spearman correlation analysis. Regression analysis was used for the measurement of conflict management effect on organizational performance and it showed collective bargaining as most effective in the management of conflict. Spearman correlation analysis, also showed a positive relationship with the application of integrative strategies such as collective bargaining, compromise, and accommodation, and a negative relationship in the usage of a non-integrative strategies like competition, domination and avoidance.

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

Conflict could be defined as group, community or individual negative or destructive relationship resulting from a clash of interests or value (Sani, 2007). In our contemporary Public Service with its structurally differentiated character, inevitably generates conflicts of interest. An organization where there is no conflict, will in turn, breed unmotivated workers which will drastically affect productivity, negatively. Research has shown that some level of workplace conflict can bring about increase in initiative, creativity and motivation among employees which will enhance their performance. Although the reverse will be the case for an Organization that experiences frequent or much conflict, as it will also observe hostile working environment, non-workers' cooperation and decrease in production. This research found out that the presence of conflict cannot be wished away in an organization as it contributes to either an increase or decrease in organizational performance, depending on the conflict management methods adopted in the workplace. It behooves the managers to learn and implement conflict management strategies that foster performance.

Due to scarce resources and differences of interest, people find out that their expectations are not often met as expected. As a result of that, misunderstandings and frictions do ensue. Through Conflict, teamwork and cooperation, amongst the employees can be built and this will lead to, the attainment of organizational goals and objectives, since tough conflict can be managed through bonding, dialogue and negotiation.

Conflict involves communication which makes it present, itself in human relations.

Adomie and Anie (2005) posited that as long as human beings will aspire for positions, safety, authority and leadership comfort, conflict will remain in our society. Managers are therefore obliged to effectively handle conflict in order to positively affect organizational performance.

Indeed, conflict is an inevitable vice in organizations no matter their sizes, what makes the difference is the way and manner different managers handle it in their various workplace.

Conflict generally represents, negative things. It involves the disagreement between people and will show up where people with individual differences converges to do business. Conflict, cannot be completely disregarded in Organization because it can be the biggest driver of change that will increase profit if properly handled.

Strategies for conflict management focused on in this study, are as follows: Avoidance, Accommodation, Competition, Compromise Confrontation and Collective bargaining.

## **Literature Review**

### **2.1 Conflict in Workplace**

Organizations are made up of groups of people with interpersonal relationships designed to transform inputs into the desired output by putting together technologies and procedures to attain organizational goals.

Conflict, on the other hand is not strange to any organization or workplace, as it could be seen as a clash of interest amongst the workforce ((Olulu and Udeorah, 2018).

Conflict as is like a two edged sword which can be manipulated by both the employers and the employees to drive home their points, in order to garner attention for their request. Agitation is seen in Organization when people feel not been accommodated in their workplace goals.

In every Organization as argued by Francis, et al. (2011) conflict is seen as inevitable and a natural process of the setting, that would be handled whenever it comes up, so that it will not affect workers' performance. In organization, people with different races, color, thoughts, objectives come together to occupy different positions, and roles, these automatically causes conflict. Also conflict that is not properly managed can lead to poor and unsafe working environment, that encourages insubordination, poor communication and decrease in productivity. Every organization is facing both internal and external challenges and would want to identify and manage all the negative and positive conflict in

other to remain in business. Conflict in organization can be grouped into two; the informal conflict and the formal conflicts. The informal conflict is stirred up with non-related work problem, but it has impacts on the organization. The formal conflict is work related and it is not hidden as it seeks to place demand on the organization.

## **2.2 Causative factors of conflict**

Studies have shown that limited resources, needs, unaccomplished desires, diversity of goals and limited information can gear up conflict in Organization.

Conflict can manifest also where there are goal differences, skill rivalry, and divergent of views. This is why conflict is been described by Kohlriseser (2007), as a disagreement between people that is manifested in lack of cooperation, hostility and suspicion among workers.

Traditionally, conflict is seen as a conflicting interest among opposing party that breeds mistrust and discomfort. Also Conflict is found where there is competition and divergent interest. Although conflict could manifest where there are things to compete for while bargaining come to play, where there are cooperate elements that are beneficial to the parties concerned (Plunkett et al, 2005).

## **2.3 Workplace conflict management**

Managing conflict is not the total removal of it but it is about employing diverse strategies that will lessen its negative impact on workers and enhance goal attainment in organizations (Ovieghara, 2011).

To arrive at concrete decision in an organization, Integrative approaches to conflict management is preferred to non-integrative approach. The integrative approaches are : inquiry, evaluating, negotiating, designing and implementing, which produce positive results.

For the settlement of conflict between employers and employees, the collective bargaining approach is the most preferred, this is according to Nigerian Trade Union Amendment Act

of 2000. Managing conflict, practically entails negotiations between the hurting parties, which will lead to proffering solution to their requests (Ibietan, 2012).

These strategies for conflict management which was researched on in this study are as follows: Avoidance, Accommodation, Competition, Compromise Confrontation and Collective bargaining. In simple terms these strategies can briefly be explained as: Avoidance, the meaning is when parties that are involved in conflict avoid themselves. The strategy of Accommodation, is when a disagreeing party decide to be considerate for the sake of harmony.

Applying the Competition strategy, is when the parties involved in a conflict are not ready to bulge, they don't care whose horse is gorge. With the strategy of compromise, those involved in the conflict are ready to let go of something just to reach an agreement. While Confrontation strategy deals with behaviours and their direct reactions in expression of views, in a conflict situation. Lastly in Collective bargaining strategy, it is a cordial agreement reached between workers and their employers, with regard to their working conditions, their take-home pay, entitlements etc. of which both parties adhere to the decision reached (Olulu and Udeorah, 2018).

## **2.5 Hypotheses**

The Hypotheses that were used for this study are:

H1: There is no significant relationship between conflict management and organizational performance.

H2: There is a significant relationship between Collective bargaining strategy and organizational performance.

H3: Compromise strategy has significant relationship with organizational performance.

H4: Accommodation strategy has significant relationship with organizational performance.

H5: There is significant relationship between Confrontation strategy and organizational performance.

H6: Competition strategy has significant relationship with organizational performance

H7: There is significant relationship between Avoidance strategy and organizational performance.

## **The Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Design - Population and Technique of sampling**

Research model is composed of Conflict Management as an independent variable, Organizational Performance as a dependent variable. A descriptive and Survey research design, making use of 1280 total staff population from some selected Public Service Establishment, was used for this study. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select 320 participants, which made the sample size to be 25% of the total workforce in the organizations. The basic criteria for sample inclusion were: each Organizations attendance register and the ranks of Staff categorized (Manager and Non-manager) into two working cadres.

### **3.2 Method of data collection**

Out of the 320 structured self-administered questionnaires used for data collection, the respondents returned only 300 copies, making it a total 94% collected and used for the analysis. The researcher developed an instrument titled “The Conflict, Management and Organizational Performance Questionnaire” (CMOPQ). The instrument consisted of two sections, A and B. Section A sought for demographic information of the respondents, and section B sought information on Conflict Management as well as Organizational Performance (dependent and independent variables). Section A contained 3 questionnaire items while section B contained 7 questionnaire items to be answered by staff of the various Organizations, selected. The likert scale were provided with responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, to answer section B.

### **3.3 Validity of instrument**

In order to ascertain the appropriateness of the instrument for the study, 25 workers of other organizations were given questionnaire and were tested with the TEST and re Test technique. At first the questionnaire was given to three experts for face validation. Two of them came from Department of Management in the Faculty of Social Sciences while one was a lecturer on research in the Faculty of Arts, Nile University of Nigeria. The inputs from the research experts led to the adjustment of the instruments especially in terms of ambiguous questions, difficult vocabulary and excessive wording. The instrument was finally ratified by the researcher's supervisor as being capable of measuring what they were supposing to measure.

### **3.4 Reliability of instrument**

A pre-test of instrument of Conflict, Management and Organizational Performance Questionnaires (CMOPQ) was carried out on 25 persons who were not used for the main study. The data obtained were analyzed by cronback's coefficient Alpha technique at the level of 0.05, it. The questionnaire reliability coefficient index obtained, ranges from 0.796 to 0.895 coefficient. This is an evidence of the reliability of the questionnaire for this study.

### **3.5 Data analysis method**

As this study attempts to determine the effect of conflict management and organizational performance in the Nigerian Public Service, an empirical model was developed using data collected through questionnaires. The statistical tools that were used for the analyses of the collected data were: spearman correlation coefficient, means and standard deviation, Shapiro-wilk, frequency and percentage counts (descriptive statistics).



## **Study Results/Findings**

### **4.1 Demographic**

The demographic findings revealed that the respondents job rank portrayed, non-managerial workers to be 65.2% while respondents on managerial cadre, were 34.8% of the total number. The mean of 9.6 years and a standard deviation of 3.4 years were the organizational tenure of the respondents. This helped to reveal the duration, maturity, rank, and the educational status of the organizations' employees, majority of them are non – managerial Officers.

### **4.2 Strategies of conflict management**

The table below shows 6 strategies for the management of conflict, in their order of effectiveness and importance. Top on the chart is Collective bargaining which has a mean score of 4.0 and a (sd=1.01). Next is Compromise with a mean score of 3.35 and a (sd=1.07). Accommodation was third in order of importance, with a mean score of 3.25 and a (sd=1.08). These 3 strategies are called the integrative management conflict strategies. The other 3 conflict management strategies which are not too effective in managing conflict are: Confrontation, on the table it has a mean score of 1.24 and a (sd=0.76). Competition follows with a mean score of 1.22 and a (sd=0.52). Avoidance, is the least in the scale of preference for managing conflict, it has a mean score of 1.10 and a (sd=0.62).

**Table 1:** Strategies of conflict management – Means and Standard deviation

Conflict Management Strategies	Sample Size	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Collective Bargaining	300	1	5	4.0	1.01
Compromise	300	1	5	3.3	1.07
Accommodation	300	1	5	3.25	1.08

Confrontation	300	1	5	1.24	0.76
Competition	300	1	5	1.22	0.52
Avoidance	300	1	5	1.10	0.62

**Sources:** *Primary Data*

### 4.3 Hypotheses test

**Hypothesis 1:** The spearman correlation technique was used to test hypothesis 1, which states that, there is no significant relationship between conflict management and organizational performance. This study shows that there is a significant relationship between conflict management and organizational performance, thus the null hypothesis as postulated was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted.

For Hypotheses 2 to 7, Spearman correlation method was applied and Collective bargaining, Compromise and Accommodation strategies, all have a positive correlation with performance in organization, when used for conflict management. But the relationship between conflict management and organizational performance, for hypotheses 5 to 7 (confrontation, competition and avoidance strategies) were rejected. As their application did not have a positive correlation with organizational performance.

### 4.4 The regression analysis

In determining the management of conflict strategy, that is best for performance in organization, the regression analysis technique was used. It was observed that 3 of the conflict management strategies that have positive relationship with performance were; Collective bargaining which has the highest beta -coefficient of 0.460, Compromise is next and has beta coefficient of 0.430, and the third is Accommodation, having a beta coefficient of 0.401.

While the other 3 conflict management strategies that have negative significant relationship with organizational performance are: Confrontation with a beta coefficient of 0.212, next is Competition with beta of 0.210 and lastly, Avoidance with a beta coefficient of 0.206.

**Table 2:** Indicating Regression analysis

Indicators	Proposed Effects	Beta	Coefficients	Observed t-value	Sig. Level
Collective Bargaining	+ve	.460		5.515	000*
Compromise	+ve	.430		5.202	000*
Accommodation	+ve	.401		5.102	000*
Confrontation	-ve	.212		2.158	0.036
Competition	-ve	.210		2.303	0.101
Avoidance	-ve	.206		2.126	0.213

Significance level \*p, 0.001, N = 300

**Sources:** *Primary Data*

## 5. Findings

The findings in this study of Conflict management and organizational performance in the Nigerian Public Service, showed that managing conflict depending on the particular strategy applied, could have positive or negative effect on performance in organization. Through this research, it was observed that the 3 most effective conflict management strategies are; collective bargaining, compromise and accommodation, this agrees with previous studies on conflict management. The 6 conflict management strategies used for this research, showed in order of their effectiveness and importance in the management of conflict, that Collective bargaining is the most effective strategy. Next is Compromise, followed by Accommodation. These 3 strategies are called the integrative management conflict strategies. The other 3 conflict management strategies which are not too effective in managing conflict are: Confrontation, Competition and Avoidance.

## 6. Conclusions/Recommendations

This research work sought to find the effects of managing conflict on employees performance in organizations in the Nigeria Public Service. The literature review showed

strong evidence of integrative strategies of managing conflict and their relationship with performance of employees. This empirical study is in support of the results of previous studies, regarding the existence of relationship of conflict management and Organizational performance in the Nigeria Public Service. The integrative conflict management strategy was portrayed as a technique for proper constructive management of conflicts as an enhancer of organizational performance in the workplace.

However, the limitation of this study is that the research is centered only on some public organizations in the Nigeria Public Service. The findings cannot be generalized due to the restrictive nature of the small size of the sample. Nevertheless, this research has contributed to a better understanding of the management of conflict and organizational performance in the Nigerian Public Service.

Based on this research, these recommendations are made; Collaborative strategies be adopted in organizations as the most effective in conflict management. Workers representatives to be involved in vital issues while, there should be deliberate harmony in workplaces between management and employees and lastly, open interaction should be encouraged with conscious effort.

Future research will be recommended to include other Organizations (private and public), when researching into conflict issues among workers in performance.

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