

Organizational Conflicts Management In Selected Organizaions In Lagos State, Nigeira

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Abstract: *This study examined positive management behaviours that lead to more motivated, committed and harmonious teams in managing conflict at work. To achieve the objectives of this study, 3 research questions were raised while 3 hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The sample for the study was drawn through systematic random sampling technique which was used to select the 12 organizations with target population of 3631 and sample size of 416. Descriptive survey research design was used as instrument. A 5-point Likert-type scale was adopted. The hypotheses were tested with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). This was an indication which showed that the selected organizations handled their Accessibility and Follow-up on Conflict after Resolutions differently therein might lay the unending conflicts in organization that leads to the ceaseless unions protests and strike actions in organizations in Nigeria since our areas of study is in Lagos metropolitan city with its beehive activities of organizations. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) computer analysis software was used for all data analysis in this study.*

Key words: *E-learning, ICTs, integration, interactive, students-centred learning*

I. Background of the Study

Armstrong (2012) asserts that an organization is an entity that exists to achieve a purpose through the collective efforts of the people who work in or for it. Hence, an organization can be described as systems which, as affected by their environment, have a structure that has both formal and informal elements for getting work done. As defined by Harrisson and Shiron (1999:263) echoed in Armstrong (2012), organizational climate refers to “members” perceptions of organizational features such as decision-making, leadership and norms about work”. Ivancevich, Konopaske and Matteson (2008:528) describe organizational climate as “A set of properties of the work environment, perceived directly or indirectly by the employees, that is assumed to be a major force in influencing employee behaviour.” A number of social processes take place in organizations that affect how they function. These are: interaction and networking, communication, group behaviour, leadership, power, politics and conflict.

Conflict which is perpetual to life, with varying views of it being held, is the main focus of this study. Conflict definitions are opposition, incompatibility and some form of interaction. These factors set the conditions that determine the beginning point of the conflict process. Conflict, can be viewed, as a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something which the first party holds dear. This illustrates the point in which any ongoing activity transforms into an interaction that turns into an interparty conflict. This involves a wide range of conflicts which people experience in organizations, that is; incompatibility of goals and differences over interpretations of facts. This definition is flexible enough to cover the full range of conflict levels from overt and violent act to subtle forms of disagreement.

Armstrong (2012) emphasized conflict is inevitable in organizations because they function by means of adjustment and compromises among competitive elements in their structure and membership. Conflict also rises when there is change, because it may be seen as a threat to be challenged or resisted, or when there is frustration. Conflict is always deplorable. It can be a result of progress and change just as it can be used constructively. Organizations are living systems consisting of interacting unit performing a task in a mutually dependent manner within a structure of scarce resources. It seems common place to suggest that conflict would be present in such a setting. The parties in an organization may have conflict about the distribution of resources, or they have a more fundamental conflict about the very structure of their organization and basic nature of their interaction. Once the parties are in a situation of goal incompatibility, their conflict develops in a dynamic

fashion thereby initiating valuable and much-needed constructive changes or leading to escalating strategies and destructive consequences.

As there is nothing pre-determined about its course or development, it seems erroneous to view conflict from negative perspective only as destructive or dysfunctional. It is true that conflict may be uncomfortable, it may even be a source of problems, but this is absolutely necessary if change is to occur, if organizations are to survive and adapt. Organizational change and innovation does not just happen, it requires a stimulant. That stimulant is conflict. Administrators must accept the need to influence the developmental dynamics of a conflict so that the parties' attitudes and actions will lead to better coordination and a more appropriate interdependence. Administrators must accept and indeed occasionally encourage conflict, because change and other desirable consequences are products of conflict. The challenge administrator's face is to utilize such conflict management techniques that would ensure that as a conflict passes from a latent to a manifest phase, it proceeds towards its potential and realizes its constructive values.

Managing conflict at work is becoming an increasing challenge for employers. According to a work survey report at the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) in (2007), an average organization devotes more than 350 days in management time a year in managing disciplinary and grievance cases. The survey also found that employers face average annual cost associated with employment tribunal claim and hearings of £20,000. These findings show the very significant costs that organizations face if disputes escalate to the point where the formal disciplinary or grievance process has to be used. In fact, it is not just management time wasted and financial costs that employers must take account of the personal cost of individuals under stress, employee absence, dysfunctional teams and damage to morale and productivity among others. If conflict is not managed effectively, in several cases there will be high turnover of employees. In Nigeria there have been cases of incessant strike action emanating from unresolved crises resulting in conflict which have led to unending loss in industrial harmony between labour and management relations in Nigeria.

II. Statement of the problem

Today, more than ever before, the interface between work, interpersonal, intrapersonal and intergroup interactions at work place cannot ignore conflict. The complexity of conflict increases as organizations become more open and diverse in nature and environment in which they operate. Conflict which is inevitable and even desirable is part of human consciousness in all phases of life. Managing conflict at work is becoming an increasing challenge for employers. Besides the management time wasted and financial costs, the employers must take account of, the personal cost of individuals under stress, employee absence, dysfunctional teams and damage to morale and productivity among others. If conflict is not managed effectively in several cases, employees will simply vote with their feet and leave the organization to other organizations that are competitors of such organizations. Often times, line managers can be both the solution to, as well as the cause of workplace conflict as management style is also the number-one cause of stress at work according to CIPD (2007). There is no doubt that managing conflict permeates every facets of the administrative role. This necessitates the need that identifies the positive management behaviours that manage and militate against conflict at work which this study sought to find out.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated the area of behaviour in managing conflict in some selected organizations in Lagos state. Specifically, the study sought to find out:

1. Managing conflict at work place with people focus.
2. Managing conflict at work with accessibility.
3. Procedure of follow-up on conflict after resolutions in organizations.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the focuses of people in conflict management in organization?
2. How can one be accessible in managing conflict in organizations?
3. What are the procedures of follow-up on conflict after resolution in organizations?

Hypotheses

- H₁ People focus is not significantly different in managing conflict at work place.
H₂ Accessibility in managing conflict at work place is not significantly different.
H₃ Follow-up on conflict after resolution is not significantly different in organizations.

III. Significance of the Study

Conflict is not always deplorable as it can be a result of progress and change which can be used constructively as a stimulant for innovation because conflict-free organization has never existed and will never exist. Organizational conflict is beneficial to management and organizations, the employees, and other stakeholders of the organization if they utilize the conflict to improve their structure, role and relationships. Furthermore, the application of the team focus with participative approach in addition to monitoring team

relationships and competency skills will significantly add value to managing conflict process in the organization through intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intergroup mutual understanding that would exist between management and employees. Besides, personal style through role modeling, integrity, people focus, accessibility and follow-up on conflict after resolution will promote positive management behaviors that lead to more motivated, committed and harmonious teams at work in the organization.

IV. Review of Related Literature

Concept

Ezizma (2009) defines management as the process of planning, organizing, directing and controlling both the human and material resources efficiently towards achieving individual, group and organizational goals. Wehrich and Koontz (2005:4) in Ezizma (2009) define management as a process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals, working together in groups, efficiently accomplishes selected aim. Onwuchekwa (2002) defines management as a process of achieving the objectives of organization by organizing the activities of organizational members.

Conflict is the process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party (Wall and Callister 2006). Conflict to Rahim (2002) is defined as the interactive process manifested in incompatibility disagreement, or dissonance within or between solid entities. Onwuchekwa (2002) said organizational conflict is a disagreement between two or more organization members and groups arising from the fact that they must share scarce resources or work activities and or from the fact that they have different status, goals, value, or perception. Stoner in Onwuchekwa (2002) says that conflict exists when organizational members or subunits in disagreement attempt to have their own cause or point of view prevail over that of others. Ezizma (2009) deduces that conflict is a process that continues either overtly or covertly and if not resolved on time, will usually cause a lot of discomfort to either or both parties.

Theoretical Underpinning

The justification of this study is substantiated by theory of evolution by Charles Darwin and classical organization by Elton Mayo. Darwin (1809 to 1882), a naturalist, formulated the theory of evolution which indicated that biological species survive and grow by confronting environmental challenges. He indicated that all nature is at war, one organism with another, or with external nature. Seeing the contented face of nature this may at first be well doubted but reflection will inevitably prove it is true. This called for a re-examination of the classical views of the role of social conflicts in human development. Darwin and his followers recognized the role environment conflict play in human growth, which led to the development of the doctrine of the survival of the fittest.

Darwin believed that the growth of human beings is a function of their response to conflict with the environment, if conflict were altogether absent as appears to the ideals in much classical philosophy, the progress of human beings would be retarded. Therefore, to Darwin, conflict is necessary and essential in the society, but it must be minimal. Also in an organization the element of conflict is necessary for the growth and the development because various changes would occur in the process of solving conflict in organization. Mayo studies of 1933 led to the – human relation movement, emphasized the need for corporation for enhancing organizational effectiveness. To him, conflict was an evil and should be minimized or if possible, eliminated from organizations altogether.

Mayo and his colleagues assume that ordinary employees were largely governed by logic of sentiment which was of a different order from manager's rational appraisal of the situation in terms of costs and efficiency. Conflict with management was thus an aberration that threatened the effectiveness of organizations. Mayo denotes that conflict in an organization must be minimal; therefore, as good as conflict is, if organization is to grow there is a need to solve conflicts in the organization. Resolving it with stake holders in the organization would result to smooth running and improvement in the production.

Empirical Studies

Empirically this study was supported by the work of Ojo (2006) and Adeyemi (2011). Ojo (2006) carried out a study on conflict management; the useful instrument for the growth of the organization in Asa local government Kwara state. The researchers sought to investigate the impact of conflict management in organizations. The study was guided by three research questions. The research design adopted was survey research design. The population for the study consisted of all the employers in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State. Random sampling technique was used to sample 800 respondents. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation and the study found out that management must as much as possible settle the conflict in the organization. Also, the management must try to find out some areas that may likely cause conflict and amend such areas. It was concluded that conflict management in organization increased productivity. It was recommended that for smooth running and peaceful atmosphere, conflict must be quickly resolved in the organization. This study is related to the present study because both studies dealt with solving conflict in the organization.

Adeyemi (2011) carried out a study on investigation in to the impact of conflict settlement on organizational growth in Owo Local Government, Ondo State; specifically, to investigate on how conflict is negatively and positively affects the organization if not quickly settled. The study was guided by two research questions. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The populations for the study are all employees in Owo Local Government of Ondo State. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 310 employees in Owo Local Government area of Ondo state. Questionnaire was the instrument used to collect data. Mean and standard deviation were used as well to analyze the data collected at cut off point (3.00), regression analysis and the Pearson correlation coefficient. The findings of the study showed that if the conflict in organization is quickly settled at the right time negative outcome in the organization would be prevented and the positive outcome would be increased. It was recommended that conflict must be resolved as early as possible and manager must find means of preventing the conflict in the organization. Both studies are related in area of conflict settlement in the organization.

V. Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was used as instrument with simple random style to select the 12 organizations located in Lagos. The questionnaire titled: organizational conflicts management in organizations in Lagos state (OCMOLS) consisted of two sections. Section A: biographic background which was not analyzed in this study due to majority of respondents not ticking the section as requested. section B: is based on the structured 50 specific competencies behavioural indicator necessary to managing conflict needed by managers to manage conflict at work adopted from CPID (2007). A competence framework for line managers with little moderations was administered and 15 assistants in the listed organizations with the numbers of questionnaires retrieved: Manufacturing, - Bagco Super Bag 27, and Guinness Nigeria Plc 8, Telecommunications, - Huawei 15, and Glo 42. Oil and Gas - Total E and P Nigeria Limited 18, Service Delivery, - Triple Gee and Company Plc. 12, Banking/Finance, - First Bank, Yaba Branch Sabo Yaba, Lagos 34, Union Bank Nigeria Plc. Yaba Model Branch, Sabo Yaba, Lagos 8, Ministries, - And Bureau Governor’s Office, Alausa, Ikeja - Lagos 31 and Ministry of Works 54, and Parastatals, Eko Distribution Company EKODC 15 and National Lottery Trust Fund 20. These organizations are under Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Trade Union Congress (TUC), National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) and Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGSAN) Lagos State Chapter.

A 5-point Likert-type scale was used for the staff’s responses to each item of the questionnaire. (Strongly Agree (SA = 5), Agree (A = 4), Undecided (U = 3), Disagree (D = 2) and Strongly Disagree (SD = 1) were adopted. The hypotheses were tested with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Acceptance and rejection of null hypothesis depended on 0.05 alpha and the degree of freedom in relation to the F-value. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) computer analysis software was used for all data analysis in this study.

Population of the Study

The total population of the target organization stands at 3631. It comprises of manufacturing staff, a shift batch of 500 and a Unit of 200. Telecommunication – 150 and 500 staff. Oil and Gas - 300 staff. Service Delivery staff 110, Banking - 35 and 24 staff in each branch. Ministry staff - 310 and 940. Parastatals - 352 and 200. The sample of 357 plus 35 and 24 = 416 staff respondents that is 10% and the entire two banks branch staff were used due to their population size.

Presentation of Results and Discussions

Table 1: ANOVA competencies behavioural indicators necessary to managing conflict needed by manager to mange conflict at work.

ANOVA					
	Sum of square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.

Organizational Conflicts Management In Selected Organizaions ...

A. Challenging the Status Quo	Within Groups	1372.703	137	10.020	2.000	.000
	Total	1419.888	142			
	Between Groups	67.815	5	13.563		
B. People focus	Within Groups	922.417	136	6.782	8.274	
	Total	990.232	141			
	between Groups	258.833	5	51.767		
C. Accessibility	Within Groups	707.016	113	6.257	4.200	.001
	Total	965.849	118	16.744		
	Between Groups	83.718	5			
D. Follow-up on conflict after resolution.	Within Groups	518.253	130	3.987		
	Total	601.971	135			

Based on the factors in A to B in Table 1 above F-values and P-values show, testing at an alpha level (0.05), the p-values are more than the alpha level. So, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in dependent variables is retained. This is an indication that in the various selected organizations under this study, their conflict management was handled in the same way.

While, factors in C shows F-value (8.30) and p-value (.000), D shows F-value (4.20) and p-value (.001) respectively. Testing at an alpha level (0.05), the p-value is less than the alpha level. So, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference among responses of manufacturing, telecommunication, oil and gas, service delivery, banking and finance, ministries and parastatals in their accessibility and follow-up on conflict after resolutions respectively is rejected. Consequently, there is a significant difference among responses of manufacturing, telecommunication, oil and gas, service delivery, banking, ministries and parastatals in their accessibility and follow-up on conflict after resolution. This is an indication which shows that the selected organizations handle their accessibility and follow-up on conflict after resolutions differently. Herein may lie the unending conflicts in organizations that lead to the ceaseless unions protest and strike actions in organizations in Nigeria since our area of study is in Lagos metropolitan city with its beehive activities of organizations.

Note: The following steps should be taken in the order listed below in each of the table:

Table 2: Challenging the status quo in organizational conflict management.
Descriptive Statistics

Behavioural Statement	N	Mean	Rating
You should openly challenge unacceptable behavior	150	3.95	2
You should seek out prejudiced attitudes.	151	3.89	3
You should critically examine policies and procedures to make sure they are fair to everyone.	151	4.17	1
Valid N (listwise)	145		

- You should critically examine policies and procedures to make sure they are fair to everyone.
- You should challenge unacceptable behaviour.
- You should seek out prejudiced attitudes.

Table 3: Managing conflict at work place with people focus.

Descriptive Statistics

Behavioural Statements	N	Mean	Rating
You should give people personal responsibility	151	4.26	5
You should actively seek out the views of others	152	4.34	4
You should be committed to team development	150	4.47	1
You should instill confidence in others.	154	4.40	2

You should encourage open feedback and debate	150	4.37	3
Valid N (listwise)	144		

- You should be committed to team development.
- You should install confidence in others.
- You should actively seek out the views of others.
- You should give people personal responsibility

Table 4: Managing conflict at work with accessibility
Descriptive Statistics

Behavioural statements	N	Mean	Rating
You should be actively promoting an ‘open door’ approach	122	4.40	3
You should champion a culture of respect and dignity	152	4.48	2
You should be ‘available’ to listen to the views of others.	151	4.50	1
You should be prepared to talk to customers and clients about the need for respect and dignity at work.	151	4.17	5
You should put building a culture of dignity and respect on your main agenda	151	4.28	4
valid N (listwise)	121		

- You should be ‘available’ to listen to the views of others.
- You should champion a culture of respect and dignity.
- You should be actively promoting an ‘open door’ approach.
- You should put building a culture of dignity and respect on your main agenda.
- You should be prepared to talk to customers and clients about the need for respect and dignity at work.

Table 5: Procedure of follow-up on conflict after resolutions in organizations.
Descriptive Statistics

Behavioural Statements	N	Mean	Rating
It is important you use ‘temperature checks’ through regular communication to ensure that old disagreements are not brewing again	142	4.04	3
You should speak to each party individually to identify the crux of the problem and hear the different individual perspectives on what is happening and the grievances that they bear.	152	4.12	2
You should gather ideas of how to address issues with the team to ensure that their views are taken into account before making changes that effect their work or working environment.	148	4.34	1
Valid N (listwise)	138		

- You should gather ideas of how to address issues with the team to ensure that their views are taken into account before making changes that affect their work or working environment.
- You should speak to each party individually to identify the crux of the problem and hear the different individual perspectives on what is happening and the grievances that they bear.
- It is important you use ‘temperature checks’ through regular communication to ensure that old disagreements are not brewing again.

VI. Conclusion

Pace (1983) re-echoes in Fleetwood (1987)... affirms that the conflict-free company has never existed and never will exist. Therefore, antagonisms, tensions, aggressions, stereotypes, negative attitudes, disagreements based on behavioural expectation, and the frustrations of perceived conflicting needs, among others will always be present wherever man live and work together. These then, are sources or bases upon which organizations conflict brew and thrive. This situation is counterproductive. When such dispute has escalated to the point where the disciplinary procedure is been initiated or a formal grievance reported, opinions are often hardened and confrontational stance on both sides have developed to the extent that are very hard to change. To avert this, it is essential that managers have the skills, knowledge and confidence to identify and manage workplace disagreements, behavioural expectations and harassment promptly. Although, often times, managers can be both the solution to, as well as the cause of organizational disputes through their actions or inactions. It is necessary therefore, that organizations develop clear policies and procedures underpinned by appropriate training for managers and employees, outline organizational values and rights as well as responsibilities of individual in a corporate environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made for competency in organizational conflict management:

1. It is essential that managers have the skills, knowledge and confidence to identify and manage workplace disagreement, harassment, behavioural expectations and prompt application of the competency conflict managing skill in the descriptive statistical tables 2 to tables 3 in the order to rating list.
2. Table 4 and table 5 which indicated significant difference in the handling of conflict in the selected organizations should be looked into and emphasized for maximum compliance to enhance manager's competency in managing conflict in workplace.
3. It is necessary that organizations develop clear policies and procedures underpinned by appropriate training for managers and employees, outline organizational values and rights as well as responsibilities of individuals in a corporate environment.
4. Organizations should be fair in their dealings with their employee and not to capitalize on economic meltdown in the way and manner they handle the affairs of their employees because as can be seen in the Section A of the instrument for this study, majority shy away from completing the session. Most probably, their organization can clamp down on them with their biographic data which points to the fact of presence of bullying, harassment and job insecurity among employees and in some cases other even avoid completing such instrument for fear of losing their job when their organization discover they divulge such relevant information.

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