

Conflict Management Strategies and Sustainable Industrial Peace Among Workers In Osun State University, Ejigbo Campus

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of conflict management strategies on sustainable industrial peace in government owned tertiary institution. The population of the study was 490 employees of Osun State University. A total of 230 respondents were selected for the study using stratified random sampling and then, simple random sampling was used. The major instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire. The formulated hypotheses were tested with the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 alpha levels. Four hypotheses were tested The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace ($r_{(228)}=.45^{**}, p<.01$). Also, findings show that there was significant relationship between collaborative and compromising conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace ($r_{(228)}=.35^{**}, p<.01$). Similarly, findings on competing conflict management strategies revealed that there was no significant relationship between competing conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace ($r_{(228)}=.10, p>.05$) while hypothesis four revealed that there was a significant relationship between compromising conflict management strategy and sustainable industrial peace ($r_{(228)}=.46^{**}, p<.01$). Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that managers should develop diverse but appropriate strategies to manage conflicts as they arise before escalating to unimaginable level. To this effect, compromising conflict management strategy should be used for managing conflict followed by collaborating conflict management strategies.

Key Words: Conflict Management Strategies, Sustainable Industrial Peace, Osun State University, Ejigbo Campus

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I. Introduction

Conflict is inevitable in every society as well as organization. It occurs within groups, individuals, organization, and government and even among family members. Conflict between groups or organization potentially improves team dynamism (Mary, 2018). Conflict management skills are necessary for management of conflict in any organisation. For an organisation to be effective and efficient in performing its activities there is need for mutual co-existence and understanding among members of the organization. However, conflict within an organization can emerge as a result of individual difference, ambitions or from villainy between sub-groups or factions (Dennis, 2019). Conflict is generated from emotions and frustration and has a detrimental impact on group or organizational outcomes. For instance, poor information processing ability could cause conflict. Conflict is an inevitable friction in any organization. Efficient and effective management of conflicts is fundamental to the development of any society particularly tertiary institution of learning (Albert, 2016). Conflict in tertiary institution is inescapable. Conflict exists at every level of our academic world. And while conflict can be negative and can cause deep rifts in the frame work of the institution, it can also be used as a tool to take the institution and the people in it from stagnation to a new level of effectiveness. What makes the difference is conflict management (Hotton, 2018). Albert (2016) averred that there are productive and destructive conflicts. According to him, A conflict is said to be positive when it is constructively discussed by the parties and amicable terms for settlement reached.

Organizational conflict is a state of discord caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, value and interests between people working together. Conflict takes many forms in organization there is the inevitable clash between formal authority and power and those individual and group. Conflicts exist when parties employ various means to protect or further their interests in the relationship. Therefore conflicts can be managed

through appropriate and effective conflict management strategy. The progression from grievances to dispute and to conflicts depends on the presence and influence of variables which aggravates or moderates the parties (Abiodun, 2018). Conflicts will always occur but a well-managed conflict will not degenerate to violence. Since violence will not erupt without conflict as antecedents, one can assume that many of the conflicts in tertiary institutions and insecurity degenerated is because their antecedents/cause were not properly managed or that the conflicting parties did not explore the power of communication and conflict manager's personality in resolving the crises (Hotton, 2018). While conflict is generally perceived as dysfunctional, it can also be beneficial because it may cause an issue to be presented in different perspectives. Conflict has both negative and positive effects its outcome depends largely on how well it is managed using the appropriate and effective conflict management strategy. It can turn out to be positive when it encourages creativity, new looks at old conditions, clarification of points of view, and the development of human capabilities to handle interpersonal differences. Conflict can be negative where it creates resistance to change, establishes turmoil in organization, builds a feeling of defeat or widens the chasm of misunderstanding. An industrial organization exists in order to achieve a common objective which is the production of goods and services in order to make profit. Fajana (2016) opines that industry is associated with work and pay. This is an exchange system involving supply and demand of labour and wage payment. Employers pay wages in return for labour and services rendered by workers. This leads to the existence of mutual relationship between employers and workers. This is known as industrial relations system. In every industrial organization or industrialized countries there are three main actors in the relationship these are: Government and its various agencies, Employer and their organisations, Employees and their trade unions. The interaction of these parties could produce both agreement or consensus and disagreements or conflicts. Unfortunately, the term "conflict" has only a connotation of "bad" for many people; so much that they think principally in terms of suppression, giving little or no attention to its more positive sides. The absence of conflict may indicate autocracy, uniformity, stagnation, and mental fixity; the presence of conflict may be indicative of democracy, diversity, growth, and self-actualization.

Therefore conflict is not seen as the opposite of cooperation but a mechanism that allows perceiving benefits of cooperative work. Furthermore, conflict is considered psychologically and socially healthy. It is psychologically healthy because it encourages opposition to the status quo and provides conditions for social change and democracy stemming from pluralism and respect to diversity. Ikeda (2015) observed that organizational conflict involves interpersonal conflicts with colleagues or supervision, or intergroup conflicts within different sections of an organization. Conflicts have become part and parcel of human organisations world over time. This indeed is a paradox because of the amount of energy and resources expended by organisations to prevent and resolve conflicts. Communication strategy has been used to resolve conflicts in many organizations by breaking down the resistance among workers. Managers and researchers have long agreed that communication processes are major factor in performance. Organisations that increased their performance over time had a good communication strategy in place whereas those that decreased in performance over time were more particularistic and focused on solutions to address negative reactions to conflict rather than expertise in managing conflict through communication This study sought to examine the influence of conflict management strategies on sustainable industrial peace in UNIOSUN, Osun State

Statement of Problem

The economic downturn in Nigeria in past years has led to poor salaries and wages for workers. The attendant disparity in incomes and inflation has produced great dissatisfaction and agitation among Nigerian workers, which has often resulted in industrial disputes and conflicts in almost every work place Akintayo, (2018). This study focuses on conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace with the view of establishing how conflict management strategies could be used to attain sustainable industrial peace in tertiary institutions (Fajana, 2016). Conflict is a constant phenomenon. So many organisations are faced with problems of conflict of interest, industrial unrest, rampage, strike, lockout and some other industrial actions which occur from their inability to manage the subsequent conflict in the organization which majorly breaks out between employers and employees, employees and employees, employers association and trade union in the organization (Oloyede, 2017). More importantly, tertiary institutions which are organisations offering services in the line of education are also faced with the same industrial unrest. It is on the basis of this that the present study examines the effect of conflict management strategies on sustainable industrial peace, using UNIOSUN, Ejigbo Campus as a point of reference

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study is to examine the relationship between conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace in Osun State University, Ejigbo Campus. The specific objectives are to:

1. examine the relationship between conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace in Osun State University, Ejigbo Campus

2. find out the relationship between collaborative conflict management strategy and sustainable industrial peace
3. investigate the relationship between competing conflict management strategy and sustainable industrial peace.
4. ascertain the relationship between compromising conflict management strategy and sustainable industrial peace.

Research Hypothesis

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between collaborative conflict management strategy and sustainable industrial peace.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between competing conflict management strategy and sustainable industrial peace.

Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between compromising conflict management strategy and sustainable industrial peace.

II. Literature Review

Conflict is a natural and inevitable phenomenon in every human grouping (Ajala, 2018). There is no universal agreement regarding the definition of conflict. It has many definitions and conceptions, depending on the issues being addressed (Roland-Otaru, 2018; Pakia, 2018). Flippo (2017) attempted an explanation when he remarked that, “a total absence of conflict would be unbelievable, boring, and a strong indication that conflicts is being suppressed”. Armstrong (2001) states that conflict management is the ability of an organisation to identify the sources of conflict and put strategic measures in place to minimize or control conflict. According to Petkovic (2018) conflict management involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, establishing structures of conflict models, putting strategic measures as well as approaches in place.

Newell (2018) asserted that conflict management focus on the principle that conflicts cannot necessarily be resolved but can be managed using appropriate actions such as accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, compromising and confrontation. Brigs (2017) added that strategies to conflict management are a futuristic detailed approach that looks into achieving long term wins for the parties involved in conflict. Strategies include negotiation, collective bargaining, mediation, third party intervention, brainstorming and communication (Akintayo, 2018). This study focuses on the strategies of conflict management specifically negotiation, third party intervention and communication, studies shows that the strategy of negotiation, third party intervention and communication have worked in organisations globally for instance Canada, United State of America(U.S.A), Nigeria.

Negotiation is the most common strategy of resolving conflicts and it is successful when interest of the opposite sides is partly common and partly different (Ajala, 2018).Negotiation is a process by which compromise and agreement is reached while avoiding argument and dispute. The other strategy in conflict management is third-party intervention whereby management hires an external consultant to solve the problem. A third party is defined as an actor that helps the conflict parties resolve the conflict or regulate the level of violence. The consultant can be a mediator, whose task is to give instruction to both sides in conflict on how to solve the problem, or an arbitrator (Petkovic, 2018). Managers adopt the third party strategy when all their attempts to solve conflict internally have failed. Since they are responsible for the performance of the organization, they involve a third party before the conflicts escalates to the point where organisation performance is affected. The third strategy adopted by organizations to manage conflict is communication. Communication is a process that contains expressing, listening, and understanding (Flippo, 2017). Communication is a strategy to conflict management and is fundamental to organisation productivity.

Different scholars have subjected conflict as a phenomenon to diverse definitions. Bankole (2019) asserts that conflict occurs when two or more people or groups perceive that they have incompatibility of goals and interdependence of activity. Rammé (2017) defined conflict as the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals. Conflict is a situation in which two or more human beings derive goals which they perceive as being attainable by one or the other but not by both Newell (2018). Bloisi (2017) defines it as a disagreement between two or more parties who perceive that they have incompatible goals and needs. Petkovic (2018) also noted that a conflict can occur when interests, goals or values of different individuals or groups become incompatible with one other. A similar definition was earlier proposed by Mary (2018) when he defined conflict as a difference or disagreement of opinions, ideals or goals between parties, individuals or groups.

The Process of Conflict

In truism, conflict takes time to develop. As such, various factors breed conflict in an organisation. Most of these factors take time to be observed in most cases by the groups involved in the conflict. It follows, therefore, that at the beginning of conflict the parties to it may not notice it. This shows that there is a process that may be followed in manifestation of conflict. The process of conflict development is significantly imperative, as it will aid administrator to understand the changing nature of conflict and how it can be effectively managed. Rue and Byars as cited in Binuyo (2019) theorized that conflict is a dynamic process that involves some stages such as latent, perceived, felt, manifest and aftermath.

Latent Stage: This is the state in which the basic conditions of conflict exist but have not been noticed by either of the parties.

Perceived Stage: One or all the parties now notice the basic conditions for conflict.

Felt Stage: The perception of the conflict by one or both parties now lead to a change of behavior, internal tension starts to build in one or both parties.

Manifest Stage: The building of tension occasioned by change in behavior is now noticed to any party who care to notice. This stage is usually marked by such common negative behavioral changes as lying, stealing, strike, and sabotage among others.

Causes of Conflict

There are usually various factors that instigate conflict. These are some of them:

Communication Barrier: Poor communication, communication overload, total absence of information or feedback mechanism, poor perception pernicious, ambiguity in communication and ignorance can degenerate into either conflict or crises. Thus, the basic problem of interpersonal communication could play up and lead to conflict. Communication conflict usually arises from misunderstanding in the communication process – transmission of messages and meaning from one person to another. This is usually due to lack of well-defined communication network in a school organization. Inadequate systems of communication on educational institution policies, changes in working practices and the introduction of new policies affecting the lives of staff lead to disputes, feelings of insecurity, confusion and resentment among staff. Bankole (2019) identified communication gap between management and workers as the leading cause of conflict in the universities. Also, Albert (2016) identified communication lapses as a problem to administrative effectiveness in Nigerian institutions of learning. This suggests that communication gap between management and staff might cause conflict and adversely affects administrative effectiveness in the universities.

Situational Factors/Issues: A good number of situational factors may create conflict in the tertiary institutions such as broken and inadequate facilities on campus. As noted by Udejah (2018), it has become difficult for the university management, even government to provide certain support services and facilities needed for conducive learning, teaching and research on the institution. This often sparks off conflict and other related actions. Other situational factors/issues that can lead to conflict in tertiary institutions are poorly planned and executed retirement exercise, relocation of office and internal transfer of staff (as in the case of non-academic staff), as well as, control from opposition outside the institution.

Management Style: Management style can also lead to conflict in the tertiary institutions. There are two theories of style of management such as X and Y. According to theory X, man has. Inherent dislike for work and will avoid it if he can. The theory explained further that he (man) must be coerced, controlled, directed, or threatened with punishment to get him to put forth adequate effort. Managers who adopt this style are usually dictatorial and allow limited initiative and independence.

Competition: Unhealthy workplace competition is a cause of employee conflict. Some industries foster competitive environments more than others. When salary is linked to employee production, a workplace may experience strong competition between employees. Competition that is not properly managed can result in employees sabotaging or insulting one another, which creates a hostile work environment. Unhealthy workplace competition discourages teamwork and promotes individualism.

Power and status differences: As pointed out by Abraham (2019) "Organizations are political structures". They operate by distributing authority and setting a stage for the exercise of power. Similarly, status inconsistencies lead to conflict.

III. Methodology

Research design is the framework, which specifies the information to be collected, the source of data and the data collection procedure (Asika, 2001). The descriptive survey research design was found appropriate for the study because it describes the present situation of variables; and affords the researchers to collect data from the respondents without manipulation of any variables of interest in the study. It also guaranteed equal chance of participation in the study on the part of the respondents. The target population for the study consisted

of all employees of Osun State University, Ejigbo Campus. This research was conducted using a population size of 490 Staffs including Academic staff and Non-Academic Staff from various departments. A stratified sampling technique was adopted to select a total of two hundred and fifty respondents (250). Stratified sampling technique was used for sample selection to reflect the junior, senior, and contract staffers. Simple random sampling was used to select respondents on the basis of gender, age, ethnic, religion and experience on the job. The information obtained from this sample is the basis on which deduction and conclusion were made. The questionnaire schedule is the main instrument that was used in the collection of data. The research instrument used to collect data for the study is the Conflict Management Strategies Scale (CMSS). This measured the level of conflict management strategies. It was measured by asking questions on particular areas of conflict management strategies like: Causes of conflict, effects of conflict and the strategies that have been helpful in curbing conflict. The instrument comprised of four (4) sections, A, B, C, and D. Reliability is the degree to which a research instrument produces stable and consistent result. The reliability analysis of the research instrument was conducted with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.9 and above is excellent, between 0.7 and 0.9 is good. But the coefficient between 0.6 and 0.7 is considered acceptable. The reliability coefficient was 0.86. The instrument was pilot tested using test-retest method. Expert in measurement and evaluation ascertained face and content validity. Thereafter, the modified copy of the instrument was submitted to my supervisor for final approval. The data collected with the structured questionnaire was collated and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Pearson Product Moment Correlation, was used for measuring the significant relationship among the variables of the study as contained in research questions generated for the study.

IV. Results

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: *There is no significant relationship between conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace.* Pearson, r Correlation, tested the hypothesis. The result is shown in table 4.6 below. Table 4.1: A summary table of Pearson r correlation showing the relationship between conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace among workers in Osun State University, Ejigbo Campus.

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	T	P
Conflict Management Strategies	230	108.43	25.81	228	.45**	<.01
Sustainable Industrial peace	230	18.78	5.54			

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2020

The result in table 4.1 above revealed that there was a significant relationship between conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace, $r(228) = .45^{**}, p < .01$. Importantly, the result portrayed that the relationship between conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace was positive, indicating that the more favourable the conflict management strategies, the more the sustainable industrial peace while the less favourable the conflict management strategies, the less the sustainable industrial peace. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 2: *There is no significant relationship between collaborative conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace.* The hypothesis was tested by Pearson r correlation. The result is stated in table 4.7 below. Table 4.2: A summary table of Pearson r correlation showing the relationship between collaborative conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace among workers in Osun State University, Ejigbo Campus.

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	R	P
Collaborative Conflict Management Strategies	230	9.43	2.10	228	.35**	<.01
Sustainable Industrial Peace	230	18.78	5.54			

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2020

The result in table 4.2 above revealed that there was a significant relationship between collaborative conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace. $\{r(228) = .35^{**}, p < .01\}$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 3: *There is no significant relationship between competing conflict management strategy and sustainable industrial peace among workers in Osun State University, Ejigbo Campus.* The hypothesis was

tested by Pearson r correlation. The result is shown in table 4.8 below:Table 4.3: A summary table of Pearson r correlation showing the relationship between competing conflict management strategy and sustainable industrial peace among workers in Osun State University, Ejigbo Campus.

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	r	P
Competing Conflict Management Strategy	230	8.73	2.14	228	.10	>.05
Sustainable Industrial Peace	230	18.78	5.54			

Source: Author’s Fieldwork, 2020

The result in table 4.3 above revealed that there was no significant relationship between competing conflict management strategy and sustainable industrial peace. $\{r(228)=.10,p>.05\}$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted while the alternative hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 4: *There is no significant relationship between compromising conflict management strategy and sustainable industrial peace among workers in Osun State University, Ejigbo Campus.* The hypothesis was tested by Pearson r correlation. The result is shown in table 4.9 below:Table 4.4: A summary table of pearson r correlation showing the relationship between competing conflict management strategy and sustainable industrial peace

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	R	P
Competing Conflict Management strategy	230	9.85	2.48	228	.46**	<.01
Sustainable Industrial Peace	230	18.78	5.54			

Source: Author’s Fieldwork, 2020

The result in table 4.4 above revealed that there was a significant relationship between compromising conflict management strategy and sustainable industrial peace, $\{r(228)=.46**,p<.01\}$. And the relationship between competing conflict management strategy and sustainable industrial peace was found positive. This indicated that the more the use of competing conflict management strategy, the more the sustainable industrial peace in Osun State University, Ejigbo Campus while the less the use of competing conflict management strategy the less the sustainable industrial peace. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

V. Discussion of Findings

The study investigated conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace in tertiary institutions in our state using Osun State University, Ejigbo Campus as a case study.The first research question shows that there is a significant relationship between conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace. Importantly, the result portrayed that the relationship between conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace was positive, indicating that the more favourable the management strategies, the more the sustainable industrial peace while the less favourable the conflict management strategies, the less the sustainable industrial peace. The second research question predicted that there is no significant relationship between collaborative conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace.

But the findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between collaborative conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace. The third research question shows that there is no significant relationship between competing conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace. The findings revealed that there was no significant relationship between competing conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace. In this case the null hypothesis was accepted while the alternative was rejected. The fourth research objective suggests that there is significant relationship between compromising conflict management strategies and sustainable industrial peace. The findings show that there was a significant relationship between compromising conflict management strategy and sustainable industrial peace. The relationship between compromising conflict management strategy and sustainable industrial peace was found positive. Akintayo, (2018) and Oloyede (2017), who carried out a similar study on college administrators and the findings showed that the compromising style of conflict management was more dominant followed by collaborating, avoiding, accommodating and competing.

However,Hotton (2018), a study previously carried out in North Carolina prior to Abraham (2019), it was observed that the college administrators preferred using collaborating, compromise and the least preferred

style was competing styles. These two studies show that college administrators in the western world preferred using conflict management styles that have a high concern for self and for others (Newell, 2018). And the reason for this might not be far-fetched considering the fact that the desire for effective team work seems to be gaining global recognition. This indicates that the more the use of compromising conflict management strategy, the more the sustainable industrial peace in Osun State University, Ejigbo Campus. While the less the use of compromising conflict management strategy the less the sustainable industrial peace.

VI. Conclusion

This study establishes that conflict management strategies have a positive impact on sustainable industrial peace i.e. when harmonious labour management relationship expected them effective conflict management strategies must be put in place. It further concluded that if collaborative or compromising conflict management strategy is adopted in an organisation, there will be sustainable industrial peace among employer in such organisation. Competing conflict management strategy should not be adopted in an organisation because it will escalate industrial conflict and erode sustainable industrial peace. Finally, conflict management strategies predict sustainable industrial peace because it used to know the method and strategy for managing conflict. For any organisation that desires to survive there should be adequate conflict management strategies to stem the tide of industrial disagreements and engender sustainable industrial.

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