CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES: ITS IMPACT ON ORGANIZATION'S GOAL ATTAINMENT ON SELECTED MANUFACTURING FIRMS IN ABUJA

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to examine Conflict Management Strategies: Its Impact On Organization's Goal Attainment on Selected Manufacturing Firms in Abuja. Respondents comprised 145 employees across selected manufacturing through the use of stratified random sampling technique. Data were generated through the use of validated structured questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze data collected from the respondents. The study used Spearman correlation analysis as methodology tool. Findings indicated that there is a significantly positive relationship between conflict management strategies (collective bargaining, compromise, and accommodation) and organizational goal attainment. Non-integrative conflict management strategies (competition, domination and avoidance) had a negative statistically determinate effect on organizational goal attainment. The result also indicated that collective bargaining strategy displayed the highest significant positive correlation with organizational goal attainment. The study recommended that management should adopt an inclusive and collaborative strategy of conflict management as well as involving unions in making key strategic decisions to avoid conflict insurrection in the organization. The study concluded that conflict is unavoidable in organization and could make or man organizational goal attainment depending on the conflict management strategies adopted.

Keywords*: Conflict Management Strategies, Organizational Goals Attainment.*

1. Background of the Study

Conflict in organizations is of immense importance to different organizations. Conflict can be relationship-based and task-based (Koval, et-al 2019). However, conflict of interest arises in group scarcity of freedom, position and resources. Employees who have different personalities have an attitude toward organizational conflict. As a result, they have different behaviours during conflicts, for employees, both the personality and the situational factors are essential.

But there are people who are inflexible in organizational conflict. It is important to respect and or consider the motives of their behavior in order to control them during conflict management process (Al-Shourah A. 2015). Conflict is disastrous despite the best management practices and manifest of various forms as unavoidable of employee-management relationship in organization.

Conflict management impact on organizational goal attainment has been investigated and showed that it establish a condusive environment which lead to better employee performance for goal attainment depending on the strategic impetus applied (Olang, B.A 2017) A properly managed conflict promotes open communication, collaborative decision making, regular feedback and timely resolution of conflict. Open communication and collaboration enhances the flow of new ideas and strengthen work relationship, which can have positive effect on employee's morale. Regular feedback and timely resolution of conflict has the potential of improving employee satisfaction and organization goal attainment (Awan and Anjum (2015) they also argued that a negative work environment that does not promote conflict resolution can result in poor behavior on the part of morale and caused the non-attainment of organizational goal.

It is on this light that this study examined the impacts of the various strategies of conflict management and there impact of organizational goal attainment.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

With the inevitable nature of conflict in work-place, high performance and organizations goal attainment will be those that may constantly develop the appropriate methods of managing conflict to achieve set-standards goals. As is now established, the Nigerian establishments have for a long time been concerned with the effect of conflict management on business goal attainment. However, empirical confirmation of findings across establishment is very limited at best.

The available few studies in Nigeria are centered mainly on service and construction industries. Empirical research efforts are still passive in focusing on the manufacturing industries. Therefore, this study is an attempt to address the situation by providing valuable insights to management in selected manufacturing firms in Abuja about the strategic importance of conflict management strategies as a resource tool for accomplish business goal attainment.

1.2. Research Objectives

The broad objective of the study is to examine Conflict Management Strategies: Its Impact On Organization's Goal Attainment on Selected Manufacturing Firms in Abuja. The study also seeks the following specific objectives, which are to:

1. Identify the factors that causes conflicts in selected manufacturing firms in Abuja
2. Examine the types of conflict that are much consistence in selected manufacturing firms in Abuja
3. Determine the conflict management strategies adopted by selected manufacturing firms in Abuja.
4. Determine the effect of organizational conflict management on attaining of organizational goal in the selected manufacturing firms in Abuja.

1.3. Research Hypotheses

In view of the above objectives, the following hypotheses are being examined

$H0_1$:   There is a significant relationship between organizational conflict management and organizational goal
attainment.

$H0_2$:   There us a significant relationship between organizational conflict management strategies (collective bargaining, compromise, accommodation, confrontation, competition and avoidance) and organizational goal attainment.

1.4. Scope and Limitation

The study covers management and non-integrative strategies of managing conflicts in selected manufacturing companies in Abuja (i.e 7up Bottling company, Coca-Cola, Nigerian Breweries, Glasco Plastic Company, Ero table water, Alpha Ceramics and Aslo Glass manufacturing companies). The study is aimed at establishing relationship between management strategies and organizational goal attainment. Only 146 respondents were selected across nine (9) selected manufacturing firms in Abuja

The limitations of the study research is centered mainly on selected manufacturing firms in Abuja. The restrictive nature of the study to few selected manufacturing firm and the small size

of the sample used, pay pose a threat to the generalizability of the findings and may make them not applicable to other firms. Despite these limitations, the study is of important contribution to the understanding of the relationship between organizational conflict management and organization's goal attainment in the Nigerian manufacturing industry.

2. Review of the Related Literature

Conceptualization in line with set objectives

Organization conflict has been defined in several ways by authors. Obi (2012) defined organization conflict as an act of discontentment and contention which either the workers or employers of labour utilize to put excessive pressure against each other so as to get their demands. This view is consistent with Henry (2009); Ikeda, Veludo and Campomar (2005); Azamoza (2004) and Ajala and Oghenekohwo (2002) descriptions of organization conflict as a dispute that occurs when interests, goals or values of different individuals or groups are incompatible with each other in organizations. On this premise, organization conflict within the context of employment relationship can be regarded as an inevitable clash of interests and resulting disputes of varying intensity between and within any or all of the active actors in organizations. Thus, in the absence of common values in organizations, conflict is bound to occur.

Empirical research findings have provided insights into causative factors of organization conflict. Hotepo, Asokere, Abdul-Azeez and Ajemunigbohun (2010) found lack of resources, different expectation, competition, lack of cooperation, interdependence and communication problems as factors that have caused conflicts in the Nigerian service industry. Relatedly, in the banking sector in Nigeria, Obasan (2011) identified unacceptable terms of employment, poor human relations between management and workers , non – consultation with employees before making key decisions affecting them, anti-union posture of management and lack of effective mechanism for prevention of conflict as multiple causal factors of workplace conflict. A Philippian study also conducted in the banking industry by Tsevendorj (2008) rated communication failure, perception, values and culture problems as moderately serious sources of conflict. Thus, most organizational conflicts have economic and goal incompatibility orientations in the workplace.

On the Classification of organizational conflict Ogunbameru (2006) classified workplace conflict into two broad types: informal and formal organizational conflicts. According to him,

conflict in work-relations is informal when it is not based on any systematic organizational problem but results directly from a source of grievance and supposedly is wholly expressive in nature. In this connection, the underlying sources cannot be openly seen, but can be inferred from unconscious form of protest, sabotage, unruly behaviour and poor work-attitudes by employees in organizations. If the situation is sufficiently widespread, it can significantly affect employee job description focus, turnover and impact on the prosperity of an organization (Kazimoto, 2013). On the other hand, formal organizational conflict is referred to as an organized expression of conflict articulated through a trade union or other workers representatives (Ogunbameru, 2006). This type of conflict is highly visible, since it is often a conscious strategy or calculated attempt to obtain alteration in employment relationship. To sum all, Albert (2001) averred that there are two sides to workplace conflict, whether formal of informal, one is destructive and unhealthy and the other is productive and healthy, having a problem solving base. However, the two conflict situations are neither bad nor good, since disagreement and dissatisfaction must occur in work-relations for adjustment to be made to improve total organizational performance.

On the strategy for managing organizational conflict, Uchendu, Anijaobi and Odigwe (2013), since conflict is inevitable in organizations, its management determines whether it will generate positive or negative effect on the organizational performance. The timely recognition and immediate explication of the underlying tension before the conflict issues go out of hand are germane to effectual management of conflict in the organizational.

Consequently, conflict management orientation is a highly obtrusive process which can be implemented in a number of diverse ways in organizations. Ford (2007) posited a four-way process which includes assessment and inquiry, design, implementation and evaluation aimed at achieving efficacious and objective conflict decision in the workplace. This integrative approach is often employed to encourage management to satisfy the needs of stakeholders in the resolution of conflict. Vigil and King (2000) observed that the use of integrative style of managing conflict is likely to create better result and higher commitment in individuals than teams using non-integrative conflict management. The integrative approach broadens the understanding of the conflict problem and increases resolution.

Consequently, collective bargaining strategy has been suggested as the approach for managing union-management conflict in organizations. The approach is internationally acclaimed as the legal instrument by which workers and management settle conflicts arising from employment

contracts (Fajana and Shadare, 2012). Presently, faster rates of adoption of collective bargaining strategies have been encouraged in Nigeria by the Trade Union Amendment Act (2000) and by the positive use of this machinery for resolving conflict by some multinational firms in the country. In practice, this collaborative approach of managing conflict, involves negotiation between union and management in a process of meeting demands, discussing, presenting counter demands, bluffing and sometimes threatening all in a bid to reach collective agreement.

Thomas (1976) also put forward some approaches for managing conflicts. These are avoidance, accommodation, competition, compromise and collaboration. The avoidance strategy is called conflict avoidance. Any organization using this method is sitting on a keg of gun-powder. The accommodation strategy believes that no amount of sacrifice is too much to allow peace to reign. It is a palliative technique which involves capitulation and appeasement. The competition strategy involves the survival of the fittest and win-lose method, without taking other party into consideration. In the compromise strategy, parties to the conflict are willing to give up something in order to settle the conflictual problem. The last approach is collaboration which is a win-win approach whereby parties to a conflict are prepared, willing and ready to satisfy each other demands fully. Except for the collaboration strategy which is reflected in behaviours that are both cooperative and assertive, all other approaches depend majorly on the structure of the organization, because they provide a short term solution to conflict situations.

Another conflict management approach for resolution of conflict in Nigeria is offered in the provision of the Trade disputes Amendment Decree, 1988, No. 39 and Trade dispute Act CAP 18, 2004 which provided five steps for legal management of conflict in organizations in the country. These are voluntary settlements of conflict using internal machinery of grievance procedures and the external machinery involving appointment of mediator, conciliator, reference of disputes to industrial arbitration panel, National Industrial Court and the constitution of a Board of Inquiry if such is considered necessary. In conflict resolution, the award of the National Industrial Court is final and binding on the employees and employers from the date of the award in the country.

3. Methodology

The study adopted descriptive research design. A survey was conducted in a purposively selected manufacturing firms in Abuja, with a total population of 607, stratified random

sampling technique was used to select 145 participants, and sample size restricted to 28% of the total workforce. each selected firms participants were categorized into managerial and non-managerial employees. Structured questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. Out of the 145 copies of the questionnaire self administered, 130 copies were retrieved for analysis, with a response rate of 95% comprising 30 items-questions to be answered in Likert scale format, collating data on independent and dependent variables.

Validity and Reliability

The validation of the questionnaire was ensured through Test and Re – Test method with 25 employees of a related manufacturing firm. Using Cronbach alpha at 0.05 level, the reliability of co-efficient of the variables ranged from 0.786 to 0.885 reflecting appropriate adequacy and adjudging the questionnaire as valid and reliable.

4. Data Analysis and Result Discussion

Data was analyzed by descriptive statistics using Spearman Correlation Coefficient and Shapiro-Wilk test. The Shapiro-Wilk test was undertaken to determine the normality of data. The results indicated that the significance level is not above 0.05 in all distributions and is not less than 0.05 with respect to other variables. Based on this outcome, Spearman correlation matrix was used for the test of hypotheses, since it does not require any particular requirement for the distribution of variables.

4.1. Factors that causes organization of organizational conflict in selected manufacturing firms in Abuja

Information was obtained from respondents by asking them the causal factors of organizations conflict. Data presented in Table 1 show means and standard deviations analysis of the causative factors: mean scores of 4.5 (sd = 1.18) for conscious of workers, 4.3 (sd = 1.20) for inequitable treatment, 3.75 (sd = 1.21) for non – consultation with employees on key issues affecting them, 3.35 (sd=1.35) for cumbersome grievance and dispute procedure, 3.24 (sd= 1.36) for nature of work activities and 3.05 (sd=1.38) for differences in perception. More than one–third, that is (34%) of the respondents rated consciousness of workers as creating the greatest source of conflict, followed by inequitable treatment (20%), non–consultation with employees (18%) cumbersome of grievance and dispute procedure (15%), nature of work activities (8%) and differences in perception (5%).

Table 1. Means and standard deviation of causal factors of workplace conflicts

Variables	Sample Size	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Consciousness of workers	250	1	5	4.5	1.18
Inequitable treatment	250	1	5	4.3	1.20
Non – consultation with employees on key issues affecting them	250	1	5	3.75	1.21
Cumbersome grievance an dispute procedure	250	1	5	3.35	1.35
Nature of work activities	250	1	5	3.24	1.36
Differences in perception	250	1	5	3.05	1.38

Source: Field survey, 2018.

4.2. On the common types of conflict in the selected manufacturing firms in Abuja

Data presented in Table 2 indicate the types of conflict that were common in the organization. On the whole, union – management conflict has the highest mean score (4.51) on a Likert scale of 1 – 5 numeric values, thereby presenting this conflict as the most predominant in the organization. By contrast, personal conflict has the lowest mean score (2.50) and the least rife type of conflict in the establishment.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of prevalent types of conflict in the organization

Variables	Sample Size	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Union – management conflict	250	1	5	4.51	1.20
Procedural conflict	250	1	5	3.75	1.22
Job task-related conflict	250	1	5	3.50	1.36
Interpersonal conflict	250	1	5	3.02	1.38
Personal conflict	250	1	5	2.50	1.42

Source: Field survey, 2020.

4.3. On conflict management strategies adopted by selected manufacturing firms in Abuja

Data presented in Table 3 reveal collective bargaining with mean score of 4.4 (sd=1.21), compromise, 3.75 (sd=1.27) and accommodation 3.65 (sd=1.28), as the integrative conflict

management strategies being used in the manufacturing firm. Other methods of managing conflict rated below 2.5 include confrontation with mean score value of 1.64 (sd=0.96), competition, 1.62 (sd=0.72) and avoidance 1.50 (sd=0.82). Respondents were also asked to rate the importance of each indicator using 5-point. Likert scale with end point labelled least important with numeric value (1) and most extremely important (5). Results indicate collective bargaining as the most extremely important and most productive conflict management strategy. Worthy of note is that the organization hardly uses the palliative methods of avoidance, competition and confrontation which are non-integrative collaborative are regarded as conflict management strategies.

Table 3. Means and standard deviation of conflict management strategies adopted by the organization

Conflict Management Strategies	Sample Size	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Collective Bargaining	250	1	5	4.4	1.21
Compromise	250	1	5	3.7	1.27
Accommodation	250	1	5	3.65	1.28
Confrontation	250	1	5	1.64	0.96
Competition	250	1	5	1.62	0.72
Avoidance	250	1	5	1.50	0.82

Source: Field survey, 2018.

4.4. Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between workplace conflict management and organizational performance

Spearman correlation was used to test the hypothesis of the link between organization conflict management and organizational goal. Data presented in Table 4 show that there is a significant statistically determinate effect between organization conflict management and organizational goal with the coefficient of 33.5% at the significance level of 0.01. The result reveals that the null hypothesis as postulated for the study was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was accepted. Thus, a statistically significant relationship between organization conflict management and organizational goal attainment was found.

Table 4. Matrix of correlation between workplace conflict management and organizational performance

Conflict Management	Organizational Goal	Variables
	1	Organizational Goal
1	0.335**	
	0.001	Conflict Management

Source: *Field survey, 2018.*

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between organization conflict management strategies (collective bargaining, compromise, accommodation, confrontation, competition and avoidance) and organizational goal.

In order to test hypothesis (2), Spearman correlation method was used. Data in Table 5, indicate that collective bargaining strategy has a positive correlation with organizational goal at the confidence level of 0.001 and thus the hypothesis about the collective bargaining strategy was accepted. Relatedly, both compromise and accommodation strategies have positive and significant correlation with organizational performance at the confidence level of 0.05. Thus, the hypotheses were also accepted that integrative conflict management strategies significantly enhanced organizational goal in the organization.

The non-integrative strategies of confrontation, competition and avoidance did not have any significant correlations with organizational goal, thus, the relationship were rejected.

Table 5. Correlation matrix of organization conflict management strategies and organizational goal

Variables	CB	COM	ACC	CON	COMP	AV	OP
CB	0.675**						
	0.000						
COM	0.481*	0.450*					
	0.002	0.003					
ACC	0.406*	0.316*	0.397**				
	0.003*	0.003	0.002*				
CON	0.110	0.102	0.358	0.196			
	0.235	0.257	0.023	0.012			
COMP	0.102	0.112	0.395	0.343	0.342		
	0.256	0.220	0..22	0.111	0.026		
AV	0.111	0.023	0.361	0.380	0.293	0.097	
	0.234	0.012	0.034	0.095	0.016	0.294	
OG	0.546**	0.408*	0.340*	0.086	0.026	0.096	1.002
	0.000	0.003	0.003	0.341	0.022	0.291	0.221

**Significance at p < 0.01 level (2 tailed)

CB = Collective Bargaining Strategy

COM = Compromise Strategy

ACC = Accommodation Strategy

CON = Confrontation Strategy

COMP = Competition Strategy

AV = Avoidance Strategy

OG = Organizational Goal

4.5. Regression Result

Regression analysis was employed to predict the most effective of the conflict management strategies on organizational goal. The results of the findings based on independent variables of (collective bargaining, compromise, accommodation, confrontation, competition and avoidance strategies are shown in Table 6. The overall model fit for regression equation was determined by F-statistics. The model reveals positive and statistically significant relationship (F = 12.735 P< 0.001). The independent variables accounted for 51.2% (R2 = 0.51

2) of variance in the dependent variable of organizational goal. Collective bargaining strategies with highest beta -coefficient (0.480) is the most effective, with higher significant impact of the integrative conflict management strategies followed by compromise, with beta coefficient (0.450), accommodation (Beta = 0.421), confrontation (Beta = 0.216), competition (Beta = 0.214) and Avoidance (Beta = 0.210) respectively.

Table 6. Regression analysis of the most effective conflict management strategies on organizational goal attainment

Indicators	Proposed Effects	Beta Coefficients	Observed t-value	Sig. Level
Collective Bargaining	+ve	.480	5.575	000*
Compromise	+ve	.445	5.302	000*
Accommodation	+ve	.421	5.102	000*
Confrontation	-ve	.216	2.198	0.046
Competition	-ve	.214	2.393	0.111
Avoidance	-ve	.210	2.186	0.223

Significance level *p, 0.001, N = 250

Overall model 12.735, p < 0.00 R^2 = 0.512, Adjusted R^2 = 0.482

5. Discussion of Findings

This study contributes to the understanding of Conflict Management Strategies: Its Impact On Organization's Goal Attainment on Selected Manufacturing Firms in Abuja. The results of the study offered strong empirical support for the existence of a positive and statistically significant effect of conflict management on organizational goal attainment. Evidences abounds in the analysis that if an organization adopts integrative conflict management strategies, organizational performance will increase. To a very large extent, the findings of this present study concur with earlier empirical studies on conflict management and organizational performance that the use of integrative strategies in conflict management yields positive results (Kazimoto, 2013; Obasan, 2011; and Henry, 2009).

Review of literature identified diverse causal factors of organizations conflict as consciousness of workers, inequitable treatment, cumbersome grievance and dispute procedures and difference in perception amongst others (Obi, 2012; and Obasan, 2011). The results of this present study are consistent and in harmony with those in literature and further replicate previous empirical studies of Uchedu, Anijaobi and Odigwe (2013); Tseveendorj (2008) and Ikeda, Veludo and Campomar (2005) on causative factors of organizational conflict. As such, empirical evidence from the study did confirm that conflict in work relations could arise over multiple factors of organizational experiences based on economic and goal incompatibility orientations in the organization.

Furthermore, the empirical study has shown that there are dissimilarities in the types of conflict in work-relations. Study findings indicate that job-task related conflict, procedural conflict, interpersonal conflict and union-management conflict are the common types in existence in the organization. This result however is significant in providing evidence on consensus rating of union-management conflict as the most prevalent type in the organization. The finding buttressed the views of Fajana and Shadare (2012) that in employment relationship, the interests of employers represented by management and employees represented by the union have often been diametrically opposed in work-organizations. This has historically been the major cause of conflict in unionized organizations, not only in Nigeria, but also in developed economies. The results of the present study were aligned with those of Comboh (2014) and Mugal and Khan (2013) on conflict management and organization performance. What has emanated within the context of this present study deviated from Comboh's study that all types of industrial conflicts are negatively associated with employees and organizational

performance. Empirical evidence from this study has suggested a positive link between conflict management strategies of collective bargaining, compromise and accommodation and organizational performance. This position was reinforced by the previous findings of Mugal and Khan (2013) as re-affirmed by the study hypotheses. Specifically, regression analysis indicated that collective bargaining strategy displayed the highest significant positive correlation with organizational performance. Non-integrative conflict management strategies (competition, domination and avoidance) showed a negative statistically determinate effect on organizational goal.

Thus, the findings corroborated with the assertions of Mba (2013) and Henry (2009) that managers prefer the use of integrative management strategies which are relatively useful in minimizing the incidence of disruptive conflict and having positive impact on corporate productivity and organizational goal. With integrative conflict management strategy, there is often high confidence and trust in one another among organizational members, loyalty to the work group and to the organization in the achievement of corporate performance.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

A review of literature in the study provided strong evidence of integrative conflict management strategies and their relationship with organizational performance. The study reinforced the results of previous studies with regard to the link between organizational conflict management and goal attainment. The study concluded that management of manufacturing firms in Abuja should imbibe integrative conflict management as a technique of changing from the destructive status of conflict situation to constructive handling of conflicts in the enhancement of organizational goals in the organization.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are considered imperative. Management in the organizational must try to adopted an inclusive and collaborative strategies and at the same time strive to involve union – leadership or employee representative in vital decisions that affect the workforce. Both management and employees must resolve to work together amicably by formulating potent strategies and sustaining acceptable policies as effective machinery for managing conflict on continuous basis in organizations.

Credible channels of communication and open discussions of conflict in work relations must be encouraged with an attempt to avoid confrontation, competition and domination as conflict management strategies. Mutual survival and continued sustenance of optimum organizational

performance are both the goal and basis for the existence of employees and employers in the industrial work setting.

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